



BLACK SEA NEWS UPDATE

EU – BLACK SEA OBSERVATORY

28 July 2009

No. 10

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I. ARMENIA

1.

The Caucasus Research Resource Centres Present the 2008 Armenia Corruption Survey of Households

21.07.2009, Public Radio of Armenia

READ MORE: <http://www.armradio.am/news/?part=soc&id=15466>

On July 21st the Caucasus Research Resource Centers, a program of the Eurasia Partnership Foundation in Armenia, presented the key findings from the USAID Mobilizing Action Against Corruption (MAAC) Activity's 2008 Armenia Corruption Survey of Households. The survey sample included 1,549 adults from all over the country. The current economic crisis has had drastic effects on Armenia, and the South Caucasus in general, but what persists throughout both the global crisis and periods of prosperity is the presence of corruption. The Corruption survey provides a unique and valuable opportunity to examine the general perceptions, personal experience, and perceptions of the government's anticorruption activity.

II. BULGARIA

1.

Kuneva Turns down MEP Seat

10.07.2009, EurActiv

READ MORE: http://www.euractiv.com/en/eu-elections/kuneva-turns-mep-seat/article-184010?_print

Unlike other commissioners who were elected as MEPs in the European elections recently, Bulgarian Commissioner Meglena Kuneva, responsible for consumer protection, said today (10 July) that she will complete her mandate in the EU executive and not take up her seat in the European Parliament, announced Dnevnik, EurActiv's partner in Bulgaria.

2.

Borisov's Turn

09.07.2009, The Economist

READ MORE: http://www.economist.com/world/europe/PrinterFriendly.cfm?story_id=13996439

Exasperated voters boot out a bad government and install an unknown one. That is the Bulgarian election in a nutshell, after the defeat of the Socialists (excommunists) by a centre-right populist party led by Boyko Borisov, a cigar-chomping ex-bodyguard. Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria, known by its Bulgarian acronym of GERB, took 39.7% of the vote on July 5th, entering parliament and government for the first time.

III. GEORGIA

1.

U.S. Military Cooperation with Georgia 'Increasingly Important'

24. 07.2009, Civil Georgia

READ MORE: http://www.civil.ge/eng/_print.php?id=21286

The U.S. will have military-to-military relations with Georgia as Washington supports Tbilisi's NATO aspirations and this type of relation "becomes increasingly important, given the current situation in and around that country," Philip J. Crowley, assistant secretary of state, said at a press briefing in Washington on July 23. Asked if the United States were "contemplating rearming Georgia" Crowley responded: "Georgia is on a path that the United States supports towards NATO

membership. Clearly, a fundamental tenant of NATO membership is to have a military that meets NATO standards and would add to the capability of the alliance. So it is logical that the United States would have a military-to-military relationship with Georgia.”

2.

Georgia's Counterweight to Power

24.07.2009, The Washington Post

READ MORE: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/07/23/AR2009072303626.html>

They arrive at the graceful, tree-shaded villa clutching handwritten letters and sheaves of documents. Mothers tell of sons wrongly arrested; homeowners complain of houses forcibly requisitioned; people come to report what they feel is unjust treatment by their government. The house once belonged to the local chief of the Soviet secret police. But today a tall, broad-faced man who is Georgia's ombudsman occupies it. Over the past five years, Sozar Subari has turned the position, created in 1997, into a counterweight to a government that many Georgians say has become increasingly authoritarian.

3.

US Vows to Stand by Georgia

23.07.2009, The Financial Times

READ MORE: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/7cc6adec-7770-11de-8c68-00144feabdc0.html>

Joe Biden, US vice-president, received a rapturous welcome in Georgia on Thursday as he pledged continuing support for Washington's troubled ally in the South Caucasus. "We, the United States, stand by you on your journey to a free, democratic and once again united Georgia," Mr Biden said in an address to parliament.

4.

State Minister Says Russia's 'Provocations Expected'

13.07.2009, Civil Georgia

READ MORE: http://www.civil.ge/eng/_print.php?id=21227

Georgian State Minister for Reintegration, Temur Iakobashvili, said on Monday Tbilisi expected "lots of provocations" from Russia. "I think, there will be lots of provocations; there will be lots of attempts to drag us into some kind of military confrontation, but we are not going to yield to these provocations," Iakobashvili told reporters on July 13.

5.

Obama Moscow Visit Tops Headlines in Georgia

06.07.2009, Civil Georgia

READ MORE: http://www.civil.ge/eng/_print.php?id=21201

U.S. President Barack Obama's trip to Russia is a top story in the Georgia media sources as expectations are high in Tbilisi that Georgia will be among the issues raised during the meetings with the Russian leadership. The national television stations opened their news bulletins with the story, accompanied by live link-up to their correspondents in Moscow and main Georgian newspapers run front-page articles on the matter. An article in the largest Georgian weekly, *Kviris Palitra*, has a headline "PutinObamaMania"; the daily *Rezonansi* runs a front-page article with a headline "Obama, Medvedev and Georgia" and the daily *24 Saati* – "Principled 'Reset'".

6.

Georgia: Between War and a Future

08.07.2009, Open Democracy

READ MORE: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/georgia-between-war-and-a-future>

A year after the disastrous war with Russia, the political elite in Tbilisi remains uncertain about how to define a way forward for the country. Vicken Cheterian assesses its predicament for

openDemocracy.

A new war in and over Georgia may be in the making. For over two decades, local conflicts have spiralled to make the south Caucasus region a new frontline of east-west proxy wars - most recently in the Georgia-Russia conflict of 8-12 August 2008. The confusion between local political dynamics and international intervention has been at the heart of this process; as long as it lasts, a bad situation will be made worse.

IV. GEORGIA-RUSSIA

1.

Russia Says it Will Take 'Concrete Steps' Over any US Attempt to Rearm Georgia

23.07.2009, Guardian

READ MORE: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jul/23/russia-warns-us-over-georgia/print>

Russia warned today it would not allow Georgia to rearm amid signs that the government in Tbilisi had actively sounded out the Obama administration about rebuilding the military during a visit by the vice-president, Joe Biden, on the eve of the anniversary of last year's war. Russia's foreign ministry said it would take "concrete steps" to prevent Georgia from rebuilding its military capability, and served notice that it would sever military cooperation with any country that supplied arms to Tbilisi. It said it was "deeply worried" Georgia was preparing for another conflict, as tensions continue to rise ahead of the 7 August anniversary of last year's brief war.

2.

Russia Warns against 'Rearming Georgia'

23.07.2009, Civil Georgia

READ MORE: http://www.civil.ge/eng/_print.php?id=21280

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Grigory Karasin, said in an interview with Itar-Tass news agency Moscow "will continue to prevent the rearming of Saakashvilis regime and will take concrete measures against this." In January, 2009 Russian President, Dmitry Medvedev, ordered the government "either to restrict or cut military-technical and military-economic cooperation" with countries providing Russian or Soviet made or designed weapons to Georgia.

3.

Georgia Wants U.S. to Monitor Conflict

21.07.2009, The New York Times

READ MORE: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/21/world/europe/21georgia.html>

Georgian leaders hope the United States will join the European Union's monitoring effort along the boundary with two breakaway Georgian enclaves, a step they believe could deter aggression from Russian or separatist forces, a senior Georgian official said Monday. The European Union's 246 monitors in Georgia are unarmed civilians and are not allowed into the enclaves, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which Russian forces wrested from Georgian control in a short war a year ago. Still, the official, Eka Tkeshelashvili, the secretary of Georgia's National Security Council, said broadening the monitoring mission to include the United States and other nonunion members would make it "politically very costly to Russia to do anything on the ground."

V. UKRAINE

1.

Intensification of Ukraine-Russia Interparliamentary Dialogue more than Vital

10.07.2009, BSANNA News

READ MORE: <http://bsanna-news.ukrinform.ua/newsitem.php?id=9644&lang=en>

First Deputy Head of Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada (parliament), Oleksandr Lavrynovych, during his meeting with Vsevolod Loskutov, charge d'affaires ad interim of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, called for intensification of the Ukraine - Russia interparliamentary dialogue.

VI. CAUCASUS

1.

Experts Call for Closer Ties between Turkey, Georgia

24.07.2009, Today Zaman

READ MORE: <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=181876>

Experts attending a workshop on Turkish-Georgian relations in Istanbul yesterday highlighted the need for cooperation between the two countries to encourage stability in the volatile South Caucasus. "All Turkey's strategic and economic regional cooperation projects run through Georgia," said Sava^o Barkçýn, a senior advisor for Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, at the workshop, organized by the SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA).

2.

Triangulation in the Caucasus

22.07.2009, The Financial Times

READ MORE: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/89bace9a-7700-11de-b23c-00144feabdc0.html>

In Tbilisi on Thursday, US vice-president Joe Biden will combine the roles of courier, comrade-in-arms and counsellor. His first objective will be to reassure nervous Georgians that their interests have not been forgotten. But warm words in public must not be allowed to substitute for hard truths in private. Mr Biden's trip to Georgia and Ukraine follows hot on the heels of President Barack Obama's trip to Moscow. In part, it is intended to allay fears in both countries that their interests will be forgotten in Washington's search to "reset" relations with Moscow. The vice-president's mere presence in both countries, while not as good as a trip by Mr Obama himself, is meant to underline that improving ties with Moscow does not mean cutting them with Kiev and Tbilisi.

3.

Caucasus Solution Called at G-8 meet

11.07.2009, Hurriyet Daily News

READ MORE: http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/english/domestic/12047991_p.asp

The United States, France and Russia called Friday for the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan to settle their long-running dispute over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. In a statement released from the Group of Eight summit in Italy, the three co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or OSCE, said they affirm their commitment to efforts by Armenia and Azerbaijan to finalize "the basic principles for settlement" of the conflict. Nagorno-Karabakh is an enclave in Azerbaijan that has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces since a six-year conflict that killed some 30,000 people and displaced 1 million before a truce was reached in 1994.

VII. ENERGY

1.

A Tale of Two Pipelines

22.07.2009, Guardian

READ MORE: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/jul/22/gas-energy-europe-serbia/print>

The EU's long-delayed Nabucco pipeline has received an important boost with the signing of an inter-governmental transit agreement between Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Austria. With Russia's rival South Stream project having already secured the support of Italy, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece, the Balkans is gradually becoming a tale of two pipelines. The outcome of these respective projects, therefore, will have far-reaching implications not only for Europe's long-term energy security, but for the strategic balance of the Balkans and the pressures facing the EU's enlargement agenda.

2.

He who Pays for the Pipelines Calls the Tune

16.07.2009, The Economist

READ MORE: http://www.economist.com/world/europe/PrinterFriendly.cfm?story_id=14041672

Tragedy and farce have too often been the hallmarks of European efforts to improve energy security. Dependence on Russia, which supplied a third of its gas imports through Kremlin-controlled east-west pipelines, seemed to be rising inexorably and worryingly. Squabbling between Russia and Ukraine led to repeated supply cuts. The Russians exploited energy to divide and rule their Western neighbours. Big energy companies in countries such as Germany and Austria sought cosy relations with Russia's state-controlled gas giant, Gazprom.

3.

Bulgaria Gets Cold Feet over South Stream

14.07.2009, EurActiv

READ MORE: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/bulgaria-gets-cold-feet-south-stream/article-184086>

One day after Sofia officially lent its backing to the Nabucco pipeline project, Russia said it was "unpleasantly surprised" by Bulgaria's announcement to freeze its participation in the Gazprom-favoured South Stream project, a rival of Nabucco. The Russian side was "unprepared" for Bulgaria's change of position on South Stream, Russian agency Prime TASS reported today (14 July) after Bulgaria's incoming Prime Minister Boyko Borissov requested the outgoing government to freeze major energy deals until he takes over the country's leadership.

4.

EU Countries Sign Geopolitical Nabucco Agreement

13.07.2009, EurActiv

READ MORE: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/eu-countries-sign-geopolitical-nabucco-agreement/article-184062>

Four EU countries and Turkey signed an agreement yesterday (13 July) on the legal framework for the Nabucco gas pipeline, which is expected to decrease Europe's dependence on Russian gas. Iraq has pledged to supply the pipeline with half of its capacity, without giving a detailed timeframe. After months of heavy negotiations, the signature was hailed as a significant step towards the construction of the pipeline, which will run from Turkey's eastern border through Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary to a gas hub in Austria. Nabucco, with its capacity of 31 billion cubic metres, should provide Europe with an alternative to Russian gas after the January gas crisis between Russia and Ukraine.

5.

Iraq Offers Half Gas Needed for Nabucco

13.07.2009, The Financial Times

READ MORE: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/cd846434-6f93-11de-bfc5-00144feabdc0.html?ftcamp=rss>

Iraq has offered to supply enough gas to fill half the capacity of the proposed Nabucco pipeline, the prime minister said, giving the project a boost even as heads of government met to sign a historic agreement approving the plan. The offer from the Iraqi government to supply 15bn cubic metres a year of gas by 2015 helps address the greatest obstacle to the 3,300km pipeline from eastern Turkey to Austria: the prospect of there not being enough gas to fill it.

6.

EU Ministers Endorse Final Energy Project List

08.07.2009, EurActiv

READ MORE: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/eu-ministers-endorse-final-energy-project-list/article-183865>

The EU's Council of Ministers yesterday (7 July) approved a list of 47 projects for building more gas and electricity interconnections, allocating €3.98 billion of EU funding under a broader economic recovery plan. The adopted economic recovery programme includes all the European Parliament's proposed amendments, following months of squabbling between the two EU co-legislators over the plan's priorities. The EU executive had hoped for the swift adoption of the programme to give Europe a headstart in the drive for greener growth. But its adoption dragged on for months as member states argued over the size of their allocations. Many governments were also considering returning money to their national budgets instead of spending it at EU level.

Black Sea News Update (BSNU) is a fortnightly brief of political and economic developments covering the Black Sea region. It is produced by the **ICBSS**, a think-tank aiming to foster regional cooperation in the Black Sea area.

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