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In Kazakhstan, UN Chief Urges Global Nuclear Disarmament



The world should follow Kazakhstan's disarmament example, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, says standing less than two kilometers away from Ground Zero, the location of the first Soviet nuclear explosion on the Semipalatinsk test site. The test site was closed by President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 1991. Standing next to Ban Ki-moon is Kazakhstan's Secretary of State - Minister of Foreign Affairs Kanat Saudabayev.

Photo by the Foreign Ministry

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon made a strong call for the world to make meaningful progress towards nuclear disarmament today as he visited the former Soviet nuclear weapons test site in eastern Kazakhstan.

“Kazakhstan has shown extraordinary leadership in nuclear disarmament. In 1991, President Nazarbayev made a courageous decision to shut down the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and renounce nuclear weapons. That was a visionary step... a true declaration of independence.” Ban Ki-moon said at visit the former test site where the Soviet Union conducted more than 450 nuclear tests with radiation affecting the lives of 1.5 million people in Kazakhstan. “I urge leaders of all countries, especially nuclear weapon states, to follow Kazakhstan's example. For inspiration they should look to Kazakhstan's example,” he added.

Ban Ki-moon arrived in Kazakhstan on his first official visit on April 6, landing at Semey, the new name of the city of Semipalatinsk.

He was then taken by a helicopter to Kurchatov, the administrative centre of the Soviet notorious nuclear weapons testing programme, and the former nuclear test site itself.

The test site was closed by President Nursultan Nazarbayev on August 29, 1991, in a defiant and courageous gesture as the Soviet Union was still alive, and the test site was still managed by the Soviet government.

A visit to the former test site by the UN Secretary General is a vivid confirmation of Kazakhstan's strong contribution to reducing global nuclear threats and the process of freeing our planet from these deadly weapons.

Kazakhstan was the first to set an example for the world, completely and entirely closing one of the world's largest nuclear test sites, and voluntarily renouncing the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal.

In December 2009, the UN General Assembly unanimously accepted a resolution proclaiming August 29, the day when in 1991 President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a decree on the closure of Semipalatinsk Test Site, as the 'International Day against Nuclear Tests'.

In Kurchatov, Ban Ki-moon got familiar with the exhibition at the Museum of the Institute of Radiation Safety and Ecology of the National Nuclear Center, founded in 1972 on the basis of the scientific and experimental unit of the test site.

The exhibition reflects the history of the creation of the Soviet nuclear arsenal and consists of more than 100 models, photo materials and other artifacts brought from the test site, as well as instruments and equipment used in the preparation and carrying out of nuclear experiments. The UN delegation also visited the Tokamak experimental thermonuclear material-testing unit in Kurchatov, created for conducting scientific research and testing structural materials of thermonuclear reactors.

Ban Ki-moon visits Kazakhstan at the invitation of President Nursultan Nazarbayev. They are set to meet in Astana on April 7. The purpose of the visit is to strengthen political contacts, discuss with the leadership of the country current issues of bilateral cooperation and international issues in light of Kazakhstan's Chairmanship in the OSCE.

On the evening of April 6, Kazakhstan's Secretary of State - Minister of Foreign Affairs Kanat B. Saudabayev and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon met in Astana. They noted that the visit will give a new impetus for further productive cooperation between Kazakhstan and the UN, and will promote closer interaction between the UN and the OSCE.

Kazakhstan Presses on with Building Professional Army



Increasing its military potential, Kazakhstan is strictly committed to peaceful non-military principles of conflict resolution, foremost for its every soldier to be able to return home after serving.

Photo by the Ministry of Defense

The spring call for compulsory military service has started in Kazakhstan, which again brought into the focus Kazakhstan's efforts for many years to modernize its military.

As part of these efforts, since 2004, the term of military service for conscripts was reduced from two years to one to create conditions for forming professional forces, as contracted soldiers would be gradually replacing conscripts. Today, 65 percent of troops already serve under contract.

Foreign experts consider Kazakhstan's armed forces among the leading armies in the former Soviet Union. For 14 years, the army has been getting smaller in Kazakhstan to its current level of 65,000 people. Since 2007, the army is being reformed significantly.

One of the main results of optimization is Kazakhstan's transition from a system of military districts to a system of regional commands, "Astana", "East", "West" and "South".

The first phase, from 2007 to 2008, has divided the Kazakh army into regional commands, which independently solve the problems of military security and infrastructure development. Moreover, they have the right without any prompting from the center to equip their units with modern weapons, equipment and special means. During the second phase, from 2009 to 2010, the main efforts of the

military authorities of Kazakhstan will be aimed at improving the quality parameters of troops and technical re-equipment of the armed forces. Next year, the formation of the structure of military control is scheduled to be completed.

Starting in 2011, Kazakhstan will increase the number of its armed formations and units, and develop a unified system of monitoring and control of its airspace. Kazakhstan's military-related industry plans to begin cooperation with the world's leading weapons manufacturers.

Kazakhstan's armed forces maintain friendly contacts with the militaries of post-Soviet countries and other parts of the modern world. They engage regularly in international exercises (see *Astana Calling*, issue # 4). Among permanent arrangements the Kazakh military participates in the joint rapid reaction force of the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

In 1992, Kazakhstan joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (currently, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council). In 1994, Kazakhstan signed the Partnership for Peace agreement with the NATO. The cooperation has since evolved into a deeper and more wide-ranging Individual Partnership Action Plan, with Kazakhstan remaining the only country in Central Asia to have an IPAP with the world's largest military bloc.

Kazakhstan has allocated an airborne assault battalion, Kazbat, as a peacekeeping unit for deployment in NATO-led operations conducted under UN Security Council mandates. The battalion has joined its NATO colleagues in a number of exercises.

There are now plans to develop Kazbat into a Kazakh peacekeeping brigade (Kazbrig). The Kazbat proved itself worthy militarily during the five-year deployment to Iraq of its engineers, where they were engaged in demining and passing their skills to Iraqi soldiers, as well as providing technical and medical assistance to the locals.

Another channel through which Kazakhstan contributes to international security is its participation in the Partnership Action Plan on Terrorism (PAP-T). This provides for sharing intelligence and analysis with NATO, improving border control, and enhancing national counter-terrorist capabilities through the exchange of expertise.

Air Astana Expands its Aircraft Fleet



By increasing the number of aircraft suited to fly on domestic and shorter regional routes, Air Astana aims to link all Kazakhstan's regions to each other.

Photo by The Fokker Aircraft Page

One more short-haul turboprop aircraft Fokker 50 has joined Air Astana's fleet of aircraft last week to serve its Caspian destinations. The aircraft acquired under an operating 3 year lease is the sixth and the last aircraft of this type in Kazakhstan's national airline fleet, destined to operate on the regional routes in Western Kazakhstan. This will facilitate connections around key cities of the Caspian region and enable people living in the west of the country to better access international flights from Atyrau and Uralsk to Amsterdam and Istanbul.

"Fokker 50 is our twenty second aircraft. The aircraft will be based in Atyrau, linking the key cities of the Caspian region. People who live and work in the west of the country will find the flight route rather convenient," President of Air Astana Peter Foster explained.

Fokker 50 is best suited to fly on domestic and shorter regional routes because of its efficiency and ability to take off and land at airports with basic technical infrastructure. The sixth Fokker 50 will be used to perform flights from Atyrau to Aktobe, Uralsk and Aktau. The aircraft has excellent experience with operations from unpaved runways. Given its low runway bearing strength requirements an even wider scope of airfields may thus be served. Fokker 50 aircraft is also equipped with integral air stairs making it independent of ground equipment and facilitating comfortable passenger boarding and disembarkation.

The seating capacity of Fokker 50 meets current passenger flow in Kazakhstan. It has fifty passenger seats in economy class and can perform flights at a maximum distance of 2,800 km with a cruising speed of 450 km/hour. The introduction of one more aircraft to the airline's fleet will provide flexibility when planning flights and repairing other aircrafts of this type.

"This will be the last Fokker Air Astana acquires. Although the aircraft has become a real workhorse operating on many of the smaller and less developed routes since our early days, we will very soon turn our mind to the next generation turbo-prop aircraft. I think it will happen somewhere in the middle of 2011. We are also planning to take Embraer 190, the aircraft of a Brazilian manufacturer, on operating lease. In 2011, we expect the first two Embraer aircrafts to be delivered, opening up new opportunities for the development of regional flights," Peter Foster added.

The purchase of Fokker is consistent with the company's long-term development program. As late as in 2008, Air Astana was the first airline company in the history of Kazakhstan's civil aviation to place an order for the production of six A 320 Airbus aircrafts, delivery of which is expected to start in 2012.

Air Astana is a full member of the Air Transport Association (IATA) and the only airline in Kazakhstan certified to perform aircraft maintenance on EASA/Part 145 European standards. The airline, which is 51-percent owned by the Kazakh government and 49-percent by Britain's BAE Systems, started its flight operations in May 2002.

In 2008, Air Astana was included in the IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) registry and became one of a small number of airlines in the Commonwealth of Independent States to have achieved such status. Today, the airline has a fleet of 22 Western aircraft with an average five year period of use, operating on more than fifty domestic and international routes.

Newly Dedicated Reservoir to Prevent Floods in Southern Kazakhstan



President Nursultan Nazarbayev thanked all those who took part in the construction of this grand object, essential both for people and for the dynamic development of the whole region.

Photo by Akorda.kz

The newly built Koksaray reservoir in the South Kazakhstan oblast has now been filled with almost 700 million cubic meters of water, making it an essential instrument of water management in the region. This is the amount planned for the first phase of construction of the reservoir located next to the Syr Daria, one of Central Asia's two greatest rivers.

The Koksaray's main task is to hold excessive amounts of water to prevent flooding during the melting season in the area, from February to April, and use it for irrigation purposes during the summer heat.

One of the most devastating floods on the Syr Daria happened in spring 2008, when more than 3,000 homes and social facilities in the South Kazakhstan and Kyzylorda oblasts were destroyed. These firmed the Kazakh government in its intention to build the reservoir, also known as the counter-regulator.

Speaking at its opening ceremony in March 2010, President Nazarbayev said, "Every year several areas here used to be flooded. We have to save people, spend money on restoring dams, housing and property of the population. At the same time, Kyzylorda suffers from water deficit in the summer. In order to eliminate the causes of this condition and help people, we have built this reservoir. In the current situation, if we had not caught 600 million cubic meters of water in the proper time, several areas in the lower reaches of the Syr Darya and the city of Kyzylorda could have been flooded. We should be grateful to the builders who have completed the reservoir in time."

The President stressed that Koksaray serves not only to collect water, but also to satisfy the region's economic needs as well. He called it "the first major project under the program of intensive industrialization of our country."

Two years ago, the government adopted a decision stipulating that Kazakhstan should build the water reservoir and construct it as quickly as possible. The location was chosen in order not to harm neither local residents nor irrigated lands or pastures.

Every year floods, evacuation and rehabilitation of settlements in Kazakhstan has cost at least one million dollars. Due to the lack of effective regulators of water levels, annually nearly 70 villages in the South Kazakhstan and Kyzylorda oblasts with more than 400,000 people were living under the threat of flood.

The 52.3-billion-tenge Koksaray reservoir (KZT 147 = 1 USD) can hold up to three billion cubic meters of water. The full completion of the project is expected in 2012. Now it has already accumulated 680 million cubic meters of water in the capacity of the first stage of up to one billion cubic meters. Descent of water is to begin on May 10.

The main purpose is to ensure trouble-free passage of water through the Shardara, the older upstream Soviet-era reservoir, and the security of inhabited areas in the South Kazakhstan and Kyzylorda regions. It is set to improve the environmental situation in the delta of the Syr Darya by accumulating its winter runoff, which can be used for the irrigation during the dry season, mostly for irrigating rice fields.

Kazakhstan's water resources depend largely on the river and lake runoff. Glaciers are a major source of the rivers in the country. There are 85,022 rivers in Kazakhstan.

The Irtysh in North-Eastern Kazakhstan is the country's longest river. Its length within the country is 1,700 km or 1,056 mi (its total length 4,248 km (2,639mi)). The Syr Darya is the second largest river within the country with the length of 1,400 km (its total length is 2,219 km).

There are 12 manmade reservoirs in the country, mainly used for power production and irrigation. Most of them were built in the middle of the last century and require rehabilitation. A special government program is now being developed for these purposes.

Shubat and Kumys, Kazakh National Drinks, See Revival



Due to its content of vitamins, camel and mare milk are considered more beneficial than cow's milk. Today almost all shops and restaurants of Kazakhstan offer foreign visitors these delicious national drinks.

Photo by Sarzhailau.kazprom.net

Scientists from southern Kazakhstan will soon launch a yogurt made from shubat (fermented camel's milk), and a new treatment centre in northern Kazakhstan will soon be opened where visitors will be offered kumys (fermented mare's milk) drinking therapy.

These developments offer new insights into the world of nomadic cuisine of yore and contemporary efforts to extract maximum benefits from their use, unjustly lampooned by a British comedian in his Borat series.

Since ancient times, the nomads in the steppes of central Eurasia used milk in cooking various dairy products. Easy and quick cooking of these products corresponded to their lifestyle. With frequent and lengthy migrations, when they

had to spend most of their time in the saddle, milk food was very convenient for the riders in the warm season. Dairy products were poured into leather flasks, which nomads strapped to the saddles to quench their hunger and thirst on the go.

Indeed, these products rich in minerals and vitamins served as both drink and food. Studies have shown one liter of shubat can provide a person with the daily norm of A, C, B1, B2 vitamins and a number of minerals making it healthier than cow's milk. Shubat helps in healing asthma, tuberculosis, liver inflammation, diabetes and psoriasis.

The technology of shubat's preparation is simple. First, leaven is put in a leather bag, then fresh camel's milk is poured. The bag is then tied with a knot or closed with a lid and left for a day or more to sour.

There are three types of shubat depending on the strength, one day consistency (young), two day (medium strength) and three day (strong).

In addition to shubat, Kazakhs make many other products from camel's milk, such as suzbe (cottage cheese), uuz (sweet cheese from colostrums), kurt (spicy cheese), ezhegey kurt (fresh cheese), irkit mai (oil from sour mix).

In the summer, nomads slaked their thirst with ayran, made from sour cow's, sheep's or goat's milk. Kazakhs flavored various soups with ayran, which were simultaneously food and soft drinks in hot weather. It is also well known for its laxative effect. Ayran mixed with cold water was used as a soft drink or was eaten with bread.

In addition to products made from camel's milk, beverages made with horse's milk were widely spread as well. Kumys, a toning drink with negligent amounts of alcohol made from mare's milk, served as the prime refreshment at all celebrations, especially weddings. In fact, cooking abilities of the housewife were assessed on the way she prepared kumys.

Kumys provides restorative and rejuvenating effect, normalizes metabolism, and has beneficial effect on the composition of blood. It also improves heart and blood vessels. The drink was and is valued not only for its taste and nutritional properties, but also for rejuvenating qualities that are helpful for fighting fatigue, exhaustion, lung diseases.

People dedicated songs to kumys, it is mentioned in many proverbs and superstitions. The first mentioning of kumys occurs in the writings of Avicenna (Ibn Sina).

There are more than thirty different varieties of kumys. In addition to Kazakhstan, it is also popular in Kyrgyzstan and a few of Russia's regions, including Bashkortostan, Buryatia, and Sakha-Yakutia.

Also in the News:

- President Nursultan Nazarbayev congratulated the people of Kazakhstan with Easter. The President stressed that a multicultural and multi-confessional Kazakhstan has good tradition of mutual respect between people of different faiths. "Dear people of Kazakhstan! This day brings into our homes good hope and sincere joy. This is the time of care and attention not only to family and friends, but to all who need care and compassion. As we are kind and merciful to each other, let us further strengthen peace and harmony in our hearts, in our families, and our common home, the Republic of Kazakhstan. I wish you all happiness and health, welfare and prosperity!" the President said.
- President Nazarbayev signed the Law "On Enforcement Proceedings and Status of Bailiffs", aimed at introducing the institute of private law enforcement and improving the existing system of enforcement of executive orders.
- The President also signed the Law "On introducing amendments and addenda to some legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on improvement of the budgetary process", aimed at further implementation of a system of government budget planning, making it more results-oriented.
- An engineering and construction company McDermott will bring into operation a plant for production of steel constructions in Kazakhstan by the end of 2010. The design capacity of the enterprise is 12,000 tons of steel per year. The project will cost 5.7 billion tenge (KZT 150 = 1 USD). The plant will provide services to oil companies working in Kazakhstan's sector of the Caspian Sea. In particular, the plant will work with customers during design and installation of offshore pipelines, offshore installations for mining, drilling and production, as well as the construction of underwater technology systems.
- Speaking at the International Hindi Day celebrations at the Al Farabi Kazakh National University in Almaty on April 2, India's Ambassador to Kazakhstan Ashok Sajjanhar offered support to the University for sending a larger number of students and teachers to India for higher studies in subjects and disciplines related to India. He also presented electronic equipment to the university's India Study Centre to facilitate the study of Hindi and other Indian subjects. The Indian embassy assists the university by providing books and audio-visual material for promoting the study of Hindi as well as Indian history, culture, politics and philosophy.

- Representatives of the U.S. Smithsonian Institution have collected in Kazakhstan material for the online exhibition about the history of the country. According to the Director of Smithsonian Asian department Paul Taylor, the exhibition opens April 14 at the webpage of the Institute in the framework of the Kazakh cultural festival in the U.S.
- Kazakhstan will open a grain terminal in the Iranian port of Amirabad on the Caspian Sea. Head of agricultural holding KazAgro Asylzhan Mamytbekov said at the International Grain Conference in Astana the terminal will start operating in mid-May. KazAgro plans to export up to 2 million tons of grain to Iran this year.
- The commander of U.S. Central Command Gen. David Petraeus visited Astana on April 5. He met with representatives of the Government and the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan to develop the existing strong strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and the USA. Petraeus also acknowledged the work undertaken by Kazakhstan to support coalition efforts in Afghanistan, and discussed ways of closer cooperation between the two countries on security matters, including the reconstruction and stability of Afghanistan. “There is no way to ensuring stability and sustainable development in Central Asia without the stabilization of Afghanistan,” Kazakhstan’s Secretary of State – Minister of Foreign Affairs Kanat Saudabayev told Gen. Petraeus as they met in Astana. The U.S. General noted both successful bilateral military cooperation and interaction in the sphere of nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as he praised the Kazakh-U.S. military cooperation under the second five year plan for military cooperation in 2008-2012. The U.S. commander expressed his sincere appreciation for effective five year service of Kazakh sappers in Iraq in 2003 and 2008, and thanked Kazakhstan for its “excellent contribution” to the stabilization of Afghanistan, as well as for the allocation of \$50 million for professional education of 1,000 Afghans in Kazakhstan.



Things to Watch:

- President Viktor Yanukovich of Ukraine is set to visit Kazakhstan on April 7 to advance bilateral ties in meetings with President Nursultan Nazarbayev and other top officials.
- Prime Minister Nikoloz Gilauri of Georgia is visit Kazakhstan on April 8 to discuss economic cooperation between the two countries.
- A conference *Oil Tech Kazakhstan* to take place in Atyrau on April 6-7. It will bring together about 130 delegates and 20 speakers. About 100 companies from 10 countries, including Britain, Germany, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, France, the company KazMunaiGaz, Tengizchevroil and North Caspian Operating Company will be present at the exhibition, held in the framework of the conference.
- From April 5 to 9, Co-Chairman of the Kazakh-British Trade and Industry Council John Stuttard will visit Kazakhstan accompanied by a business delegation. The guests will meet with officials of the country, the leadership of several ministries, departments and national companies. The parties will discuss the current state and prospects of economic cooperation.

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