

# Central Asia news update

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FORUM

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## Recent Developments

### Economic

Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have [failed](#) to meet minimum requirements for fiscal transparency, although the data is not expected to impact US aid donations to the region.

Kyrgyzstan [joined](#) the Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union after three years of negotiations on December 23. It will become a [full](#) member of the Union in May 2015.

The Russian Ruble [dropped](#) below the value of the Kyrgyz Som for the first time ever in December.

[Declining](#) world oil prices forced the Kazakh government to revise its 2015-2017 budget.

Kazakhstan and China [signed](#) 30 agreements worth \$14 Billion dollars in Astana on December 14.

Uzbekistan [recommenced](#) shipping gas to Osh in Southern Kyrgyzstan on December 30.

The Eurasian Economic Union came into [force](#) in January, made up of Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia.

### Politics

The Kyrgyz government is [seeking](#) to amend press laws to enhance its ability to close down media outlets.

The Kazakh President called for [compromise](#) between Russia and Ukraine.

A court in Kazakhstan [extended](#) the house arrest of former Prime Minister, Serik Akhmetov, who was detained on corruption charges in February last year.

The Kazakh President's grandson has been given a [top](#) political job in Astana, raising concerns that he is being groomed to be Nazarbayev's successor.

Vladimir Putin [announced](#) on December 10 that Russia would write off Uzbekistan's \$1 billion debt to enable it to buy military equipment from Russia.

The Kyrgyz President signed an order that will make way for the Kyrgyz Republic to [open](#) an embassy in the UAE.

Uzbekistan has [announced](#) the candidates for the March 29 presidential election.

Several hundred Afghans [protested](#) Charlie Hebdo's decision to depict the Prophet Muhammad.

Five Kazakh nationals were [sentenced](#) to jail for being members a banned Islamic group on January 16.

Tajikistan [sentenced](#) an award-winning human rights lawyer to nine years in jail for bribery and fraud.

Hundreds of Kyrgyz citizens [protested](#) in the northern cities against significant increases in electricity prices.

### Security

A Kyrgyz diplomat was [detained](#) on the Kyrgyz-Kazakh border on December 9. He was carrying classified documents.



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A Tajik opposition leader [accused](#) of being an “extremist” was reportedly arrested in Turkey.

Kazakhstan will carry out [joint](#) naval exercises with Russia in the Caspian Sea during the 2015 summer.

Investigators [questioned](#) a Kyrgyz man who was accused of facilitating the travel 60 Kyrgyz citizens to Syria.

Five armed men [robbed](#) Osh Airport’s VIP section and kidnapped one traveller on December 27.

Kyrgyzstan’s government [blocked](#) an opposition news website after accusing it of supporting terrorists.

Tajikistan will [establish](#) a military base in Kulab, near the Afghan border, to protect Tajikistan from the Taliban threat.

Tajik border guards [exchanged](#) fire with an armed group from Afghanistan that was attempting to cross the border.

A Tajik court [sentenced](#) four men to five years in prison after being found guilty of following Salafi Islam.

A Tajik citizen was killed in [eastern](#) Ukraine, where he was fighting alongside pro-Russian forces.

The Russian military will [train](#) almost 3,000 Uzbek military officers and cadets in 2015.

Shaykh Abdullah Bukhoroy, a [prominent](#) Uzbek imam and government critic, was shot dead in Istanbul in December.

Five men [suspected](#) of involvement in the December Pakistan school massacre were arrested by Afghan security near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

An unidentified group [based](#) in Afghanistan abducted four Tajik border guards in December.

One policeman and two civilians were [killed](#) in eastern Afghanistan after police attempted to stop a vehicle carrying armed men and explosives.

### ISAF’s Afghanistan mission formally ended

The United States and NATO’s combat mission in Afghanistan officially ended in a ceremony held in Kabul on December 28. However, Afghanistan and the US signed a new long-term strategic cooperation agreement on 30 September 2014, which enables US troops to remain in Afghanistan “until the end of 2024 and beyond.” The former-Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, had initially refused to sign an agreement, but later began negotiations with Washington. Afghanistan’s neighbours - particularly Iran - raised concerns about the new agreement, which prolongs the US presence on Iran’s eastern border.

### Afghan President announces cabinet nominees

The new Afghan President, Ashraf Ghani, finally announced 25 cabinet nominees on January 12. The announcement’s long delay raised concerns that government might fall apart. The list is not without controversy: the nominated Agriculture Minister is on the Interpol wanted list for charges of tax avoidance in Estonia, while 11 out of the 25 prospective cabinet ministers hold dual nationalities. According to Afghan law, dual citizens cannot hold cabinet posts.

Germany will [continue](#) to use the Termez air base in Uzbekistan to supply remaining troops in Afghanistan.

The US has [donated](#) 328 ‘defensive’ military vehicles to Uzbekistan to be used in counter-narcotics and counterterrorism efforts.

Four militants [arrested](#) in Osh in Kyrgyzstan’s south are purported to have undertaken military training in Syria.

A Kazakh woman was [jailed](#) for producing and disseminating Islamist extremist propaganda via the Internet.