



In Focus Transatlantic News Digest *Electronic Newsletter of the Atlantic Council of Canada*

ACC Patron Sponsors:



Issue #28 – Released: April 16, 2010

Editors: Jonathan PREECE and Tanah SULLIVAN
**Contact: jonathan.preece@atlantic-council.ca
tanah.sullivan@atlantic-council.ca**

Issue Highlights:

- **Collateral Damage in Afghanistan: Losing Hearts and Minds**
- **Nuclear Security Tops Global Security Agenda**
- **Kyrgyzstan Faces New Stumbling Block on the Road to Democracy**
- **Poland Mourns**

Collateral Damage in Afghanistan: Losing Hearts and Minds

By: Jonathan Preece

Efforts by coalition forces to gain the support of the Afghan population took another hit this week when American troops operating on the outskirts of Kandahar city opened fire on a packed commuter bus killing four – including a woman and child – and injuring over a dozen. According to early reports, the American forces involved was conducting a road-side sweep for improvised explosives when the bus ignored repeated flare and flashlight signals and approached the American convoy at high speed just before dawn. Witnesses including at least one passenger on the bus reported that a lack of visibility was likely the cause of this incident. ISAF has confirmed such reports, stating that the American troops in question were unable to identify the vehicle due to the lack of predawn light and the speed at which the bus was traveling. However such explanations have done very little to quell public distrust at a time when winning the trust of local Afghans has been touted as a central pillar of America's counter-insurgency strategy. Several hundred men took to the streets of Kandahar protesting this unprovoked attack and shouting slogans such as "death to Americans" and "death to the government." For their part, American military representatives were quick to issue an apology stating that the American military "deeply regrets this tragic loss of life."

In the past, NATO operations in Afghanistan have been hampered by civilian casualties as support from local Afghan populations is critical to intelligence gathering, bolstering support for the Afghan government, and undermining insurgent recruitment. Echoing this rationale, American General David Petraeus said Tuesday: "[y]ou cannot achieve your strategic goals, your strategic objectives, if tactical activities result in the loss of innocent civilian life. It undermines all that you are trying to do."

At present, this issue is of particular concern in Southern Afghanistan as coalition forces prepare for a major offensive in Kandahar: the economic, military and spiritual home of the Taliban. While NATO is set to launch Operation Omid which will see tens of thousands of NATO troops move into Kandahar in the coming months, civilian-military representatives have struggled to gain support amongst tribal leaders

and ordinary Afghans due in large part to feared collateral damage. For many Afghans, Monday's attack seemed to confirm these fears as anti-American sentiments reached a boiling point.

Since Gen. Stanley McChrystal announced America's new counter-insurgency strategy for Afghanistan in late 2009, minimizing civilian casualties has been a central policy objective for NATO troops. Commenting on Monday's events, American Defence Secretary Robert Gates stated: "[w]e investigate every single one of these incidents, not only to determine accountability, but to see if there are lessons to be learned on how to avoid them the next time around." In addition to creating tension between NATO forces and the Afghan population, civilian casualties also have the effect of straining relations between NATO leaders and the Afghan government. In reaction to Monday's events, President Hamid Karzai condemned the killings, stating that such an attack blatantly violates NATO's commitment to safeguard civilian life.

The most recent UN report on civilian casualties in Afghanistan indicates that insurgent activities were responsible for 55% of war-related civilian deaths in 2008 while coalition forces accounted for 39%. However, in a fight over the hearts and minds of Afghanistan, perception will trump any such statistics: NATO must be increasingly vigilant.

[Afghan Fury after US Troops Kill Four Civilians](#), [Anti-American Anger Grows in Afghanistan](#), [Gates vow US probes all Afghan Civilian Deaths](#), [US Commander Says Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan Undermine Military Mission](#), [NATO Firings Kills Afghan Civilians in Kandahar](#), [NATO Investigates New Afghan Civilian Deaths](#), [NATO Probes Fresh Civilian Deaths in Afghan Raid](#), [Gates says Afghan Civilian Casualties Test War Strategy](#), [Afghan Anger as US Casualty Payment](#)

Sources: American Free Press, Asia Times, BBC, The Globe and Mail, New York Times, Voice of American, Wall Street Journal

Nuclear Security Tops Global Security Agenda

By: Tanah Sullivan

The end of US President Obama's Nuclear Security Summit on April 13, 2010, brought the beginning of nuclear security as the top of the global security agenda. 47 world leaders gathered in Washington D.C. for a two-day summit on how to safeguard nuclear materials from terrorists and non-state actors. A joint declaration from the leaders stated that they "welcome and join President Obama's call to secure all vulnerable nuclear material in four years, as we work together to enhance nuclear security".

However, the agreement from the Summit is not legally binding, nor are there any legal mechanisms in place to enforce its measures. This does not faze President Obama, nonetheless, as he asserted his confidence in the pledges that world leaders made to ensuring nuclear security is at the top of every participating country's security agenda. The world leaders at the Summit did decide that the UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) would have a central role in strengthening global efforts to prevent terrorists from obtaining access to nuclear material. However, one challenge will be to ensure the IAEA is aptly equipped to take on its mandated nuclear-security role, and this will depend on the commitment of other countries to solve the issues of the IAEA's lack of funding for its new responsibilities.

During a press conference, President Obama stated that this shows a commitment from world leaders to "embrace our shared responsibility and confront a shared challenge". The next nuclear security summit is to be held in 2012, in South Korea. Joel Rubin, deputy director and chief operating officer at the American non-governmental organization National Security Network, believes that the biggest challenge will be to "build on the momentum that came out of the communiqué", ensuring that the multilateral process does take hold and that the world leaders who made the commitments live up to them.

The topic of sanctions against Iran also overshadowed President Obama's Nuclear Security Summit, especially with Tehran announcing that it would be holding its own nuclear summit on April 17 and 18, 2010. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's conference will assumedly seem like a gathering of countries with shared anti-US sentiments, as both Iran and the U.S. were excluded from one another's conferences. The turnout for the Iranian nuclear conference will be an indication of the success of President Obama's calls for non-nuclear states to avoid any dealings with Iran during his speech in

Prague in April, 2009. *The Guardian* reported that Tehran has invited states supporting the Non Aligned Movement, such as China, Brazil and South Africa.

China was one of the countries to publicly declare that it still had concerns about sanctions against Iran, particularly in regards to the potential economic ramifications, as most of Chinese supplies of oil comes from Iran. Russia is also another country that has significant economic ties to Iran, and has also stated its concerns regarding the consequences of sanctions against Tehran. The US Government has warned against leaders planning to attend Iran's nuclear conference, stating that it only serves as a way for President Ahmadinejad to divert attention from Iran's issues of NPT compliance with the IAEA by manipulating the disarmament cause.

[Iran issues challenge to the world's nuclear powers](#), [Vow to safeguard nuclear materials](#), [India Satisfied with Outcome of Washington Nuclear Summit](#), [NSS states affirm vital role of IAEA](#), [Obama hosts nuclear security summit](#), [Terrorism: The Nuclear Summit's 'Straw Man'](#),

Kyrgyzstan Faces New Stumbling Block on the Road to Democracy

By: Tanah Sullivan

The recent ousting of Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev has brought yet another new chapter in Kyrgyzstan's journey towards democracy since the collapse of the Soviet Union. *The Washington Post* claims that the interim government, headed by foreign minister Roza Otunbayeva, is attempting to reclaim Kyrgyzstan's status as an "island of democracy" within Central Asia. Yet looting and violent protests are still occurring in the capital, Bishkek. Amid fears of a civil war, President Bakiyev has fled to Kazakhstan. To date, at least 84 people have died from the violence.

This will be another chance for democracy for the mountainous nation, as President Bakiyev's term yielded only corruption and despotism. The anti-government sentiments which had been simmering amongst the Kyrgyz population for months erupted into wide spread protests and violence, leading to President Bakiyev's fleeing the capital on a plane and a replacement government taking control. Brought to power by the Tulip Revolution in 2005, President Bakiyev allowed NATO to use the Manas air force base, 30 kilometers north of Bishkek, as a launch pad for NATO forces and warplanes on refueling missions into Afghanistan. With the Kyrgyz interim government's warmer relations with Russia, there are reports that Washington is concerned about how this will affect its five year lease of the air base.

There has been speculation about Moscow's involvement in the civil uprising and ousting of President Bakiyev. Weeks prior to last week's revolution, several Kyrgyz opposition members travelled to Moscow to meet with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. There have been reports that the Russian Federal Security Service were present on the ground during the protests and that Moscow had prepared 150 Russian paratroopers the day after the revolution to fly into Russian bases in Kyrgyzstan. Moscow has already thrown its weight behind the new interim government, working to ensure the Muslim nation does not become a 'second Afghanistan'.

Furthermore, the Kyrgyz people have voiced their discontent with US presence in the country, accusing the US of turning a blind eye to incidences of corruption with the sale of fuel on the base. Combined with the deaths of independent Kyrgyz journalists and the imprisonment of opposition members, allies of interim leader Otunbayeva have also thrown accusations against the US for overlooking human rights violations under President Bakiyev.

The biggest challenge for Kyrgyzstan will be to recognize that a quick change of government may not be enough to resolve the underlying political and social problems. With significant geopolitical importance to Russia, the US and NATO, there will be many hoping for Kyrgyzstan's new government to successfully attain a healthy, functioning democracy that will bolster the country's role in the international arena.

[Kyrgyz interim leader details democratic plans](#), [Out of Kyrgyzstan's chaos, another chance for democracy](#), [NATO troops in Kyrgyzstan surprised by revolt, Is the unrest over in Kyrgyzstan?](#), [Warily Watching Kyrgyzstan](#), [Bakiev's departure from Kyrgyzstan prevented civil conflict](#), [Kyrgyzstan's new leader tackles challenging job](#)

Poland Mourns

By: Jonathan Preece

Parliament Speaker and acting President Bronislaw Komorowski has announced a national week of mourning in Poland following the tragic death of President Lech Kaczynski, first lady Maria Kaczynski and a number of Polish military, economic and civic leaders in a deadly plane crash over the weekend.

Hundreds have gathered outside the Presidential Palace in Warsaw to pay tribute, lighting candles and leaving letters of condolence for the late President and others killed in this tragic crash. Kaczynski and his Polish delegation were traveling to Russia for the 70th anniversary of the massacre of 20,000 Polish prisoners of war in Katyn, when their refurbished Tupolev-154 crashed late Saturday morning. Among those believed to have been killed are Aleksander Szczyglo head of Poland's National Security Office, Slawomir Skrzypek head of the National Bank of Poland, and Chief of Staff for the Polish Army, Gen. Franciszek Gagor. The exact cause of the crash has yet to be determined, however aviation officials in Russia have stated that the plane ignored repeated requests by air traffic control to divert their landing to another airport in order to avoid inclement weather conditions. On a fourth aborted landing attempt, the Polish aircraft appears to have clipped the tree line and crashed into a wooded area outside Smolensk. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has been announced as the head of the commission charged with investigating the cause of this tragedy.

Kaczynski had been President since December 2005 when, as leader of Poland's Law and Justice Party, he defeated rival Donald Tusk in a second round election. For many, Kaczynski carried a larger than life persona. He was a leader steeped in middle class Polish values, and a distinguished statesman who was characterized as gutsy, scrupulous and principled. He was an unabashed Atlanticist who embraced Poland's leadership role in Easter Europe. As an influential player in Poland's solidarity movement, Mr. Kaczynski earned respect in Poland and admiration amongst those fighting for freedom and democracy in the post-soviet world. Arrangements have been made for Mr. and Mrs. Kaczynski to be laid to rest in Krakow this Saturday.

The Atlantic Council of Canada would like to extend our warm and heart-felt condolences to the Polish community in Canada for their deep and tragic loss. We wish you strength and resolve moving forward. Formal letters of condolence have been sent to the Polish Ambassador and the Consul General.

[Obama Honors Polish President at Nuclear Summit](#), [Poles Protest Presidential Burial Site](#), [Biography of Poland's Lech Kaczynski](#), [Polish First Lady's Remains Returned](#), [Barrack Obama to Attend Polish President's Funeral](#), [Polish Crash Victims Remembered in Book of Condolences](#), [Lech Kaczynski – Obituary](#), [President Lech Kaczynski Dies at 60](#), [Poland's Tragedy: In Memorandum – Lech Kaczynski](#).

Sources: The Associated Press, BBC, CBC, CNN, The Guardian, The Economist, New York Times - International Herald Tribune, The Vancouver Sun

We would like to know your opinion. Please, [email us](#) with your comments and suggestions!

Disclaimer: Any views or opinions expressed in this newsletter are solely those of the authors and the news agencies and do not necessarily represent those of the Atlantic Council of Canada. This newsletter is published for information purposes only.

The Atlantic Council of Canada is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to the idea that the transatlantic relationship between Canada and the United States, and the nations of Europe, is of critical importance to Canadians in cultural, security and economic terms. The Council's mandate is to promote a broader and deeper understanding of international peace and security issues relating to NATO.