



# Kazakhstan News Bulletin

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*Say it in Kazakh:*

*Visit --- Sapar*

*Strategic partnership --- Strategiyalyk seriktestik*

*Growing friendship --- Dostyk nyghaiuda*

## **Kazakhstan Brings Assistance to Louisiana Schools Damaged by Katrina**

Ambassador Kanat Saudabayev of Kazakhstan, visiting South Louisiana on April 24 at the invitation of U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon (D-LA), presented \$50,000 in donations from Kazakhstan to the St. Bernard Unified School and the Ursuline Academy of New Orleans.

The presentation took place at the Governor's mansion in Baton Rouge in the presence of Governor Kathleen B. Blanco, Rep. Melancon and invited guests.

Presenting the checks to officials of the two schools, Ambassador Saudabayev said: "The Kazakhs have a saying, 'there is no such thing as somebody else's disaster,' and what happened to Louisianans had a painful echo in the hearts of the people of Kazakhstan. Immediately after Hurricane Katrina, President Nursultan Nazarbayev sent a large donation on behalf of the Kazakh people to the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund. Today, again with instructions from our head of state, I present checks to two educational institutions in Louisiana, the Ursuline Academy of New Orleans and the St. Bernard Unified School. These institutions were chosen because by providing financial assistance to children in tough times we want to strengthen their young hearts' belief in charity and compassion."

Governor Blanco said the people of Louisiana are grateful for the generosity of Kazakhstan and its assistance directly to schools in areas affected by last year's hurricanes, because "by restoring solid education we can help our children get back to a normal life."



**Rep. Charlie Melancon points out some of the devastation left behind by Hurricane Katrina to Kanat Saudabayev, Kazakhstan's Ambassador to the USA, while visiting St. Bernard's Parish on April 22.**

Speaking at the presentation, Rep. Melancon said, “This gesture on the part of Kazakhstan and President Nazarbayev is an important one to a parish that has often been looked over when it comes to getting helped. Kazakhstan is quickly becoming one of Louisiana’s great international friends and this support for the children of St. Bernard only strengthens that relationship.”

The Ambassador and Rep. Melancon visited the parish earlier, meeting with the people there and assessing the devastation from Katrina and Rita firsthand.

The St. Bernard Unified School with 2,300 students today is the only school in the parish which used to have 15 schools with 11,500 students. Dorris Votier, the St. Bernard Parish School Superintendent, said the children at the school, many of them living in trailers with little or no comforts, will “be very grateful for assistance from Kazakhstan, which we will put to good use.”

Earlier in the day Ambassador Saudabayev met Governor Blanco and addressed the State House of Representatives on the growing ties between Kazakhstan and Louisiana. He said: “Kazakhstan will continue to assist Louisiana. A more tangible support will be the expansion of Louisiana’s business presence in Kazakhstan. Under the Melancon Initiative, a large group of businessmen from Louisiana has already visited Kazakhstan and reached initial understandings and agreements. I am confident this cooperation will further strengthen friendship and bring closer ties between the United States and Kazakhstan.”

## **Economic Conference Strengthens Kazakhstan-Louisiana Ties**

Ambassador Kanat Saudabayev of Kazakhstan and U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon (D-LA) outlined the “Melancon Initiative” at an economic conference of Louisiana oil and gas industry leaders in Thibodaux, South Louisiana on April 23.

The conference, hosted by the South Louisiana Economic Council (SLEC), highlighted a growing partnership between Kazakhstan and Louisiana and gave representatives of key energy industry sectors an opportunity to learn firsthand how those stronger ties will benefit both economies.

“After two devastating hurricanes, economic development in Louisiana is now more important than ever,” explained Melancon. “This new partnership with Kazakhstan plays to one of our great strengths, our homegrown oil and gas industry. Louisiana companies pioneered offshore drilling and energy development and now we can put our expertise to work in the Caspian Sea, one of the largest underdeveloped oil reserves in the world.”

The Kazakh Ambassador said Louisiana businessmen with their rich expertise in servicing offshore oil drilling facilities in the Gulf of Mexico for the past half century, should have good prospects for applying their skills in partnerships in Kazakhstan. Significant potential also exists for cooperation in agricultural processing and using those products for oil and gas services. As an example, Valentine Chemicals, a local drilling fluids company typical of the businesses that could benefit from the Melancon Initiative with patented technologies for producing drilling liquid from sugar cane, could potentially have a business in Kazakhstan producing the same product from locally grown sugar beets. Another opportunity is in education. Under the Bolashak program, Kazakh students could get degrees from the Nicholls State University in Thibodaux which offers extensive programs in oil and gas industry.

After the conference the Ambassador and Rep. Melancon visited Valentine Chemicals in Lockport, LA, and toured Port Fourchon, a sprawling oil services facility on the Gulf of Mexico that could be an example of what Louisiana expertise could bring to Kazakhstan.

Last year, Congressman Melancon traveled to Kazakhstan meeting with President Nursultan Nazarbayev. The result of that trip was the Melancon Initiative, a framework agreement for increased economic and educational partnerships with Louisiana. The Melancon Initiative focuses on opening the door for Louisiana oil and gas companies to help develop Kazakhstan’s energy infrastructure and fully realize its potential as a major supplier of oil to the world. Kazakhstan has an estimated 100 billion barrels in untapped oil reserves, much of it located in conditions very much like those off the coast of Louisiana.

## **Boucher Notes “Momentum” in U.S.-Kazakh Strategic Partnership, Says VP Cheney’s Visit Will Strengthen Ties**

Richard Boucher, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, testifying before a congressional committee on April 26, stressed the growing partnership between the United States and Kazakhstan and said the upcoming visit to Astana by Vice President Richard Cheney will further strengthen bilateral ties and pave the way for even more cooperation.

Boucher was testifying to a hearing on “U.S. Policy in Central Asia: Balancing Priorities” held by the Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia in the House International Relations Committee. He said U.S. strategy in Central Asia “rests on three integrated pillars: security cooperation; our commercial and energy interests; and political and economic reform.”

In a written testimony, Boucher noted: “The United States’ strategic partnership with Kazakhstan has gained momentum over the past year with the visits of Secretary Rice to Astana last October and by Agriculture Secretary Johanns and Energy Secretary Bodman this year. We expect that Vice President Cheney’s trip to Astana next month will further elevate our strong relations and pave the way for enhanced cooperation.”

Boucher stressed: “Kazakhstan, an economic success story, is rapidly becoming one of the top energy-producing nations in the world. We look to Kazakhstan to be a true leader in the region by further advancing democratically, together with continued progress on economic development and infrastructure investment.” He said that with extensive economic reforms in place “Kazakhstan has an opportunity to achieve stability by upholding standards of democracy and human rights.”

According to Boucher, “Kazakhstan can also play a leading role as an investor in regional infrastructure projects, including in Afghanistan. We are also working closely to ensure that Kazakhstan has multiple channels to bring its energy resources to world markets.”

Noting Kazakhstan’s growing role in world oil and gas production and heavy and continuing investment by U.S. companies, Boucher said “transport of energy resources to markets remains a challenge.” The U.S. is “working on securing the flow of oil from Kazakhstan’s North Caspian fields via tanker to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and encouraging Russia to agree on terms to expand the Caspian Pipeline Consortium pipeline. Kazakhstan, as well as Turkmenistan, could also be a new source of natural gas for European markets, particularly if a trans-Caspian gas pipeline were built.”

According to Boucher, “Kazakhstan still has major challenges to meet in democratic reform, as illustrated by its December 2005 presidential election, which fell short of OSCE standards. We have encouraged Kazakhstan to lead a new regional “corridor of reform” by working swiftly to implement democratic and additional economic reforms at home. We look forward to increased cooperation on democracy, including implementing OSCE recommendations for electoral reform.”

Boucher also noted the United States supports Kazakhstan’s goal of joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the U.S. has been working with Kazakhstan’s government toward that end.

The U.S. diplomat explained the priorities for the U.S. assistance to Kazakhstan with emphasis given to help the country in diversifying its economic growth, both geographically and industrially, and in building momentum for democratic reforms. “Our security and law enforcement programs continue to support Kazakhstan’s partnership in the Global War on Terror and improve its abilities to fight narcotics trafficking and protect its borders. Our energy and water programs support the development of regional energy markets and water-sharing,” Boucher said.

Speaking of the U.S. policies for the Central Asian region, Boucher said: “Our policy objectives for Central Asia are ambitious, but we can not afford to fail. As we pursue our security interests, commercial and energy interests, and democratic and market reform simultaneously, Central Asia can re-establish itself as a commercial and cultural crossroads with greater links to South Asia. Our support to this region is a key ingredient to Afghanistan’s stability as well as to our own security.”

## **Things to Watch:**

- The visit to Astana by U.S. Vice President Richard Cheney in early May and his meetings with President Nursultan Nazarbayev.
- The launch of the KazSat, the first Kazakh satellite, is scheduled for early June of this year.

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