



# Kazakhstan News Bulletin

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## **Nomad vs. Borat:**

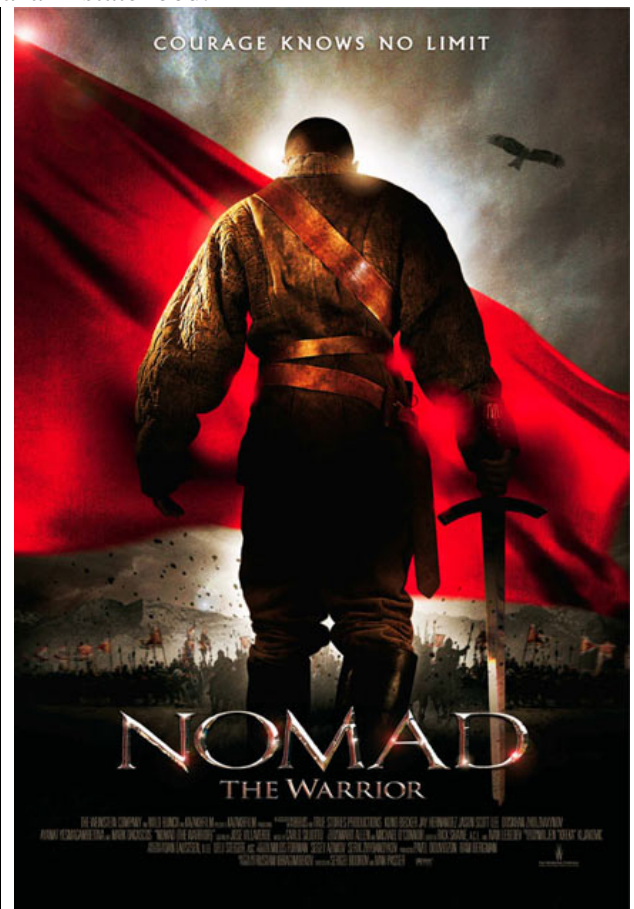
### **Showdown in Theaters Near You Jan. 26**

*Nomad*, an epic movie about the struggle of Kazakhs for their survival as a nation opens in theaters in the United States on January 26.

Kazakhstan's official entry for Best Foreign Language Film for the 79th Academy Awards, *Nomad* is set in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Kazakhstan, a vast, pitiless region of austere and terrible beauty. It tells the story of a boy who is destined to one day unite the three warring tribes of the country who have survived and fought for centuries, against invaders, against their formidable enemies and amongst themselves. The plot is loosely based on the life story of the legendary ruler of the Kazakhs, Abylai Khan, who is believed to be the founder of Kazakh statehood.

The idea for such a major movie is said to come from Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev. In production since 2003, *Nomad* was done in partnership between Kazakhfilm, Kazakhstan's national film company, and Hollywood, including several directors, producers and actors from the United States. As such, it is the first major Kazakh-American film production.

The multi-million-dollar movie was directed by Los Angeles-based Sergei Bodrov, an acclaimed film director and screenwriter who most recently co-wrote and produced *Schizo*, a movie by Gulshad Omarova. Another director was Ivan Passer, and the Kazakh director for the movie was the talented Talgat Temenov. The screenplay for the movie was written by Academy Award winner Rustam Ibragimbekov ("Burnt by the Sun").



The poster for *Nomad* shows the movie's tagline: "Courage Knows No Limit."

The movie was produced by Milos Forman as executive producer, as well as Ram Bergman, Sergei Azimov and Pavel Douvidzon as producers.

In an August 2006 review, *Variety* magazine called *Nomad* a “Central Asia’s ambitious, first ever event movie” and a “brawny historical actioner” which “has noble looks and romps along nicely.”

Director Bodrov, in an interview with *Kazakhstan News Bulletin*, said, “*Nomad* is the biggest movie in terms of the scope and financing in the former Soviet Union. It tells a fascinating story of love and the struggle for survival set against Kazakhstan’s magnificent landscapes. The viewers will have another chance to learn about the history and culture of Kazakhstan and, to be honest, they will find it a lot different than in *Borat*.”

Some Western media have indeed sought to present *Nomad* as Kazakhstan’s response to *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*, a movie by a British comedian. The reality is that *Nomad* was conceived and was in production when few people even heard of *Borat*, and such assertions were a fruit of imagination of overly eager people looking for sensation.

Whatever it is, *Nomad* is coming to theaters in the U.S. ten days from now, and Americans themselves will have a chance to see, and enjoy, a piece of the real Kazakhstan.

*Nomad* is distributed in the U.S. by The Weinstein Co..

## **New Government in Kazakhstan Takes Shape**

A new Government was appointed in Kazakhstan on January 10 and 11. More than a dozen ministers retained their positions from the previous Government but there were a few notable changes.

### ***New Senate Speaker and Foreign Minister, Same Commitment to Multi-Dimensional Foreign Policy***

The long time Foreign Minister Kassym-Jomart Tokaev, 53, was elected Chairman (Speaker) of the Senate on January 11, after he was nominated in the Senate under the presidential quota earlier in the day.

Tokaev had served as Kazakhstan’s Foreign Minister since 1994, with a spell of two and a half years as the Prime Minister in 1999-2001. He replaced former Speaker Nurtai Abykaev, 59, who was appointed Kazakhstan’s Ambassador to Russia. Under Kazakhstan’s Constitution, the Speaker of the Senate is the second highest official in the country.

Tokaev was replaced as Foreign Minister by Dr. Marat M. Tazhin, 46, the long time Secretary of the Security Council, a position similar to a national security advisor in the United States.

Introducing Tazhin to the Foreign Ministry’s staff, President Nursultan Nazarbayev said Kazakhstan will continue its multi-dimensional foreign policy governed by the economic and political interests of the country.

The President said, “We will continue tackling issues and bridging the gap between civilizations, by which I mean religions. We will go ahead with the processes within the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia. We will make further efforts aimed at making the Shanghai Cooperation Organization stronger and we will certainly work within the CIS with our neighbors in the Central Asian region to strengthen the Eurasian Economic Community. It is in our country’s interests to bolster relations with them [neighbors] and to bring their economy to a new level. It is also a security issue.”

It is important to “firmly follow the path toward strengthening our partnership with Russia and the People’s Republic of China which are our major economic and political partners,” the President noted. It is also important to expand “our relations with the European Union which is our largest trading partner.” Last but not least, Kazakhstan will continue to “develop relations with the United States. Cooperation with that country has already reached the level of a strategic partnership,” President Nazarbayev explained.

The President heaped praise on Tokaev for foreign policy achievements and offered his support for Tazhin, saying: “He is a scholar, a Ph.D., and has been my advisor, including on foreign policy questions. Since the international community attaches great importance to my choice for foreign minister, I appointed the person I know well and believe in. Most importantly, I believe he will succeed in his new job and will bring his own contribution to further foreign policy successes of our country.”

Minister Tazhin speaks English, he has authored numerous books on sociology and political science, and is married with one daughter.

### ***First Civilian Defense Minister, New Heads of Education, Industry and Trade, and Emergency Situations***

Former Prime Minister Daniyal Akhmetov, 52, became Kazakhstan’s first civilian Defense Minister. Akhmetov resigned his post on January 8 after serving three and a half years as head of government. His resignation triggered the government reshuffle. Army General Mukhtar Altynbayev, Defense Minister for the last six years, was appointed Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff in another move bringing Kazakhstan’s management of its defense closer to international practices.

Aslan Musin, 52, former governor of the oil producing Atyrau region and until today Minister of Economy and Budget Planning assumed the position of Deputy Prime Minister – Minister of Economy and Budget Planning.

Zhanseit Tuimebayev, 48, Kazakhstan’s ambassador to Moscow for the past year who has a strong background in education became the country’s new Minister of Education and Science.

Galym Orazbakov, 42, former head of Kazakhstan Engineering, a government owned company overseeing the defense industry, became the new Minister of Industry and Trade.

Viktor Khrapunov, 58, former Akim (Governor) of the East Kazakhstan region, became the new Minister for Emergency Situations.

Other ministers, including ministers of agriculture, culture and information, interior (police), justice, energy and mineral resources, finance, labor and social protection, and tourism and sport retained their portfolios.

Former Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Vladimir Shkolnik became Deputy Chief of Staff to the President.

A complete list of the Government is available its own website [www.government.kz](http://www.government.kz).

## **South Kazakhstan Seeks Technological Development**

Since his appointment in the fall of 2006 Umirzak Shukeyev, Akim (Governor) of South Kazakhstan region has set out to modernize the region’s already powerful economy.

Shukeyev, former Akim of Astana and of the Kustanai Region as well as a deputy prime minister, has been credited with solid command of regional economic development in his previous positions.

One of his first steps in the new year was to charge scientists with a task of creating a modern technological park in the region. Speaking at a meeting with local scientists, Shukeyev said four other technological parks were been developed in Kazakhstan and their experience could prove valuable to Shymkent, the administrative center of South Kazakhstan.

“I analyzed their experience and in my view the most successful, correct and systematic experience is in Uralsk, in the Algorithm technological park,” Shukeyev said urging scientists to create a similar park in Shymkent.

He noted the region’s strong economic potential: “Our pharmaceutical industry is developing well, an oil refinery is operating well, and on this basis a petrochemical venture can be created. We could also develop new sorts of cotton, not by selection, but by genetic modeling.”

Shukeyev also drew attention of his audience to an advantage the region has in the special economic zone established earlier.

“We can establish our technological park on the territory of this special economic zone, and correspondingly there will be no taxes. I believe we can achieve in one year what Uralsk achieved in two years,” Shukeyev concluded.

## **Kazakhstan’s Oil Production Grows 6.8 Percent Last Year**

Kazakhstan increased oil production 6.8 percent in 2006 to 54.34 million metric tons, the national Statistics Agency announced on January 12.

Gas condensate production increased 0.4 percent to 10.664 million metric tons, the agency added.

Natural gas production grew 2.7 percent to 25.65 billion cubic meters. Kazakhstan produced 14.42 billion cubic meters in gas form, an increase of 2.8 percent, including 9.94 billion cubic meter of commercial gas, up 1.9 percent, and 11.23 billion cubic meters as associated gas, up 2.6 percent.

Gasoline production (including for aviation) fell 0.4% last year to 2.35 million metric tons, while heating oil production fell 6.1 percent to 3.334 million tons.

Production of kerosene, including jet engine fuel, rose 25.2 percent to 311,400 tons and gasoil production grew five percent to 3.89 million metric tons.

Coal production in Kazakhstan reached 96.32 million metric tons in 2006, up 11.2 percent from a year before.

Electricity production increased 5.5 percent last year to 71.67 billion kilowatts.

## **Kazakhstan Signs Up to Protect Wetlands**

Kazakhstan has strengthened protection for a large lake system important to migrating waterbirds by acceding to the Ramsar Convention, an international treaty for the protection of wetlands.

Kazakhstan’s first Ramsar site, the Tengiz and Korgalzhyn Lakes (50°25'N 069°15'E) in Akmola Oblast, is a shallow lake system with a mix of fresh, salty and brackish water bodies characteristic of northern Kazakhstan. The lakes are situated in a flat steppe landscape and grass oceans covering the land to the horizon.

“Korgalzhyn and Tengiz Lakes are particularly important areas for migratory birds,” said Valery Khrokov, president of Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan, ACBK, which has been working towards Kazakhstan’s accession to the Convention. “Accession to the Ramsar Convention will help us ensure that our efforts to conserve them fit into a global strategy for conserving wetland birds.”

Kazakhstan’s former Minister of Foreign Affairs Kassym-Zhomart Tokaev signed the instrument of accession last year which was received by UNESCO Director General on January 2, 2007. The Convention will enter into force for Kazakhstan on May 2, when the country will become the 154<sup>th</sup> party to the treaty.

The Tengiz-Korgalzhyn Lake System was first designated a wetland of international importance by the former Soviet Union in October 1976. As re-defined by Kazakhstan’s authorities, this protected site is now expanded.

It includes the nature reserve itself around the lakeshore area, roughly 259,000 hectares with about the same boundaries as the Soviet-era designation, plus a two kilometer buffer zone around it, for a total of 353,341 hectares.

The Tengiz-Korgalzhyn lakes have been a nature reserve since 1968, but the adjacent lake systems of the Tengiz lake basin have not been strictly protected and will be added as clusters to this nomination at a later stage.

An enormous number of migrating birds stop over in the region. On the mud islands of Lake Tengiz the northernmost colony of greater flamingo, *Phoenicopterus ruber*, reaches up to 14,000 breeding pairs.

The Korgalzhyn Lakes harbor about 10 percent of the world population of the Dalmatian Pelican, *Pelicanus crispus*, with over 500 breeding pairs nesting in the vast reed beds.

White headed ducks, *Oxyura leucocephala*, rest and breed at the fresh and brackish lakes. In the fall, they can be observed in numbers of up to 4,000 birds in the protected area, representing 30 to 40 percent of the world population of such birds.

“Conserving migratory birds relies heavily on the involvement and commitment of all of the countries in which these birds reside,” said Dave Pritchard, international treaties adviser at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. “Kazakhstan has a huge wealth of wetland habitats. That they have joined Ramsar is great news for bird conservation in the region,” Pritchard said.

The Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran in 1971, is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. Governments that are parties to the Convention designate wetlands for inclusion in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance.

A management plan for the Tengiz and Korgalzhyn Lakes is under development under a project of the Global Environment Facility and the UN Development Program office in the capital Astana. There is an associated nature museum and a visitor center at the lakes which attracts groups from Astana, but only scientific tourism and research is permitted. Tourism within the reserve itself, as distinct from that in the buffer zone, is not expected to increase.

## Quarter Million Students Seek Education in Kazakh Universities

Almost 770,000 students are attending the 176 universities and colleges in Kazakhstan during this school year, a sign of growing thirst for education in a country of 15 million.

Kazakhstan’s Statistics Agency said 73.8 percent of these students are getting their bachelor degrees, 25.2 percent are in for higher special education, while one percent are seeking their master’s degrees.

Just over half of Kazakh students are attending daily classes, while 49 percent are distant learners. Almost half of all students attend private institutions.

The lion’s share of the students, 640,000, or 83 percent, are paying for their tuition themselves, while the government picks up the tab for 17 percent through scholarships.

A total of 43,000 professors and lecturers are sharing their knowledge with the students.

## Kazakhs Present Their Best in Tucson

The growing Kazakh community in Tucson, Arizona, the sister city of Almaty since 1988, presented their best at Tucson Family Arts Festival on January 14.

The Kazakhs, mostly Bolashak students attending the University of Arizona but also others who have moved to Tucson for good, displayed Kazakh artifacts, traditional garbs and even sang Kazakhstan’s national anthem with music performed by the Old Pueblo British Brass Band, directed by Barbara Chinworth, the Chairperson of the Tucson-Almaty Sister Cities Committee. Activities at Kazakhstan’s stand included coloring Kazakhstan blue on the map, eating traditional shashlik and talking about Kazakhstan to a Kazakh ‘Borat’, complete with bushy mustache, unruly hair and the 1970s look.



Kazakh students sing the national anthem in Tucson.

Their participation was helped by Jerry Gary, an ever boisterous Chairman Emeritus of the Tucson-Almaty Sister Cities Committee. In a message to his colleagues and friends, Gary said: “Sometimes, I am prone to wonder if our committee is being effective in its pursuit of people to people diplomacy.

Sometimes I think that there aren't enough of us putting enough energy into bringing our sister city of Almaty into the view of the citizens of Tucson. But these thoughts of frailty and lack really shrink into the background after an event like the Family Arts Festival. I was so proud of our Kazakhstan's community. There have never been more accomplishments in our search for the ideal in People to People Diplomacy than those that occurred at the Family Arts Festival. Standing back and observing the line of activities, with people from Kazakhstan sharing their country's heritage and background with people from Tucson was a marvelous sight. Watching the children coloring Kazakhstan blue, people asking detailed and genuine questions about this beautiful Central Asian country, people eating shashlik, and seeing items handcrafted in Kazakhstan being sold to our citizens..... all this gave me a warm feeling on a very cold day. To all of those who made this dream come true, I sincerely say 'rakhmet'."

## Things to Watch:

- *Kazakhstan: Reaching for the Future*, a 9-minute video documentary prepared by the Embassy of Kazakhstan to the United States, tells the story of what Kazakhstan has become in the 15 years of its independence and of the importance of strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and the U.S. developed in these years. The video is available at Youtube [here](#). A limited number of copies are also available on DVD. Those who would like to receive a copy, please contact Roman Vassilenko.
- Kazakhstan will open a permanent embassy in Amman, Jordan, following a January 9 decree signed by President Nazarbayev. Late last year, four other permanent Kazakh embassies were opened by presidential decrees in Armenia, the Netherlands, Qatar, and Singapore as Kazakhstan expands its international presence.
- President Nursultan Nazarbayev is expected to pay an official visit to Berlin at the end of January. Germany assumed the rotating presidency of the European Union on the first of the year.

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