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Say it in Kazakh:

*At a newspaper kiosk
Where can I buy current
newspapers and
magazines? --- Zhana
gazetti (zhurnaldi)
qaidan satyp akuga
bolady?*

*Please give me this
newspaper. --- Magan
myna gazet berinizshi.*

*How much is this
magazine? --- Myna
zhurnal qansha turady?*

*Do you have foreign
language newspapers? --
- Suzder shetel tilindegi
gazetterdi alyp
turasyzdar ma?*

Kazakh Contribution to Normal Life in Iraq Grows

Kazakhstan first sent its 27-men contingent of military engineers to Iraq in 2003 to support the U.S.-led efforts to bring peace in that country. Kazakh contingents in Iraq, drawn from the KAZBAT peacekeeping battalion, are rotated every six months, with the most recent deployment taking place in August 2005.

KAZBAT engineers in Iraq have by now destroyed about four million pieces of deadly ordnance, saving the lives of countless Iraqi civilians and fellow coalition soldiers. Since March 2005, the engineers have also taken on a larger role as instructors for the new Iraqi army, and have already trained 65 Iraqi soldiers in explosives disposal.

On November 8, Kazakhstan's Defense Minister Army General Mukhtar Altynbayev met with some of the soldiers just back from Iraq, presenting them with medals and praising their work. Gen. Altynbayev said, "It is very important for us that the commanders of the coalition and of the U.S. Central Command have recognized the professionalism and readiness of KAZBAT soldiers."

Their contribution has been recognized on many occasions by President George W. Bush, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, as well as by many members of Congress and the news media.

The Kazakh tour in Iraq has not gone without casualties. Early in 2005, one officer died and four enlisted personnel were wounded while disarming what appeared to be booby-trapped unexploded ordnance.

American Mom Brightens Day for Kazakh Soldiers in Iraq

Frankie Mayo, of Newark, Delaware, was one of thousands of soldiers' moms whose lives changed in 2003 with the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unlike many others, she decided to not just pray for her son's safe return from Iraq, but to help him and others serving there. What she and her friends started as a small group providing some air conditioning for GIs has now grown to a major operation involving more than US\$1.7 million worth of gifts and supplies shipped to Iraq to help both American and coalition soldiers.

Earlier this year Mrs. Mayo, President and Founder of [Operation Air Conditioner](#), a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, decided



European-built Venus probe blasts off early Wednesday November 9 from Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. It will need five months to reach that planet.

to send a consignment of goodies to Kazakh soldiers serving in Iraq near the city of El Kut. The gifts arrived earlier this fall and were greeted with gratitude and excitement.

Lt. Col. Marat Dusupov, commander of the Kazakh contingent, said: “We would like to thank Mrs. Mayo for her care. It made us feel really special.” The gifts included Under Armour Heat Gear T-shirts, gerber tools and personal care packs.

Mrs. Mayo explained that she is doing these good deeds for the same reasons that biblical Samaritans did: “I do these things because they are the right thing to do, not for press. Besides, I have found that good deeds are best done without expecting anything in return. I’m just a soldier’s mother who started this in 2003 for my son who was serving in Iraq.”

Lt. Col. Philip Reel of the U.S. Army and Major General Alimzhan Yerniyazov, Kazakhstan’ senior national representative in the Coalition Center at Tampa, Florida, were two individuals who supported Mrs. Mayo’s program helping deliver her gifts first to Iraq, and then to soldiers.

Mrs. Mayo launched her campaign in 2003 with Operation Air Conditioner, which eventually sent 9,400 window air conditioners to U.S. troops in Iraq. The total value of gifts sent by Operation AC to Iraq now stands at US\$1,767,675 with postage and delivery costing almost US\$400,000.

CEC Leaves No Stone Unturned In Search for Increased Transparency

The Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan is making great efforts toward greater transparency and the commission’s accessibility to candidates, observers and the news media.

Onalsyn Zhumabekov, the CEC Chairman, and his fellow commissioners have been meeting almost daily with representatives of the candidates, leaders of the OSCE and other observer missions, as well as with visiting foreign dignitaries, including U.S. Representatives Alcee Hastings (D-FL), Darrell Issa (R-CA) and Loretta Sanchez (D-CA). While discussions with visitors have been general in nature, conversations with OSCE observers, including the head of the mission Ambassador Audrey Glover, have been more specific allowing parties to address issues relevant to the campaign.

This week the CEC took further steps toward greater transparency. On November 9, it launched a revamped version of its website, at www.election.kz. The tri-lingual website, in Kazakh, Russian and English, offers complete information on election legislation and regulation, provides tutorials for voters with special focus on the new e-voting system, and extensive information for observers and the press.

Of particular importance is a clear and easy to follow tutorial on the e-voting system, called *Sailau* (Election), which was first introduced during the 2004 Parliamentary election. At that time, the system, introduced in about 10 percent of polling stations, drew some criticism from observers and voters alike for lack of verification procedures. Now, the system has been modified to provide the voter with an official paper trail for their vote. On December 4th voters will have a free choice of voting with either *Sailau* or the traditional paper ballot. This time, the e-system will be available at 1,447 polling stations, or 15.07 percent of the total. It will be able to serve approximately 31 percent of the voters, if they so choose.

Earlier this fall, the CEC invited experts from the OSCE and other organizations to assess the revamped *Sailau* and provide their recommendations. The Committee on Public Oversight of Elections, comprised of a number of well known statesmen, is also assessing the system and is planning to announce its conclusions soon.

On November 10, the CEC presented *Sailau* to international observers and representatives of political parties in Astana. Zhumabekov said it provides for “efficiency and reliability in collecting, processing, accumulating, storing, searching and transmitting information relating to elections.” He stressed the CEC had taken into account OSCE recommendations on gradual introduction of the e-voting system, and noted the choice available to voters between the system and the traditional paper ballot.

Also on November 10, the CEC announced it had accredited 281 foreign observers from more than 30 countries. That number includes 44 long term observers from the OSCE, 104 observers from the Commonwealth of Independent States, 96 observers directly from foreign nations, including 29 from

Turkey, and 14 observers from the Washington-based International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES). Hundreds more observers are expected on December 4th, Election Day.

New Media Center Ready to Help Journalists Cover Election

An international media center has opened in Kazakhstan, with offices in Astana and Almaty, to help journalists cover the December 4th presidential election. Hundreds of foreign reporters are expected in Kazakhstan on Election Day, in addition to more than 1,500 foreign observers (see story above).

The media center will provide high speed Internet access, telephone, fax, and video-conferencing capabilities. The media center will become the focal point for domestic political analysis and discussion of the election as it unfolds.

Talgat Dairbekov, a member of the organizing committee for the international media center, said: “We will distribute daily analytical bulletins, provide facts on all candidates and assist foreign journalists and observers. We will also be arranging meetings with renowned experts, analysts and NGOs who will have something to say to the public.” The media center is already monitoring the election campaign unfolding across the country. The center will also stage briefings and press conferences.

Parliament Approves 2006 Budget, Continued GDP Growth Seen

Kazakhstan’s Parliament approved the 2006 budget on November 9, sending the legislation to President Nursultan Nazarbayev for signature. The budget forecasts economic growth of 8.3 percent in 2006, compared to an estimated 8.8 percent growth rate this year. The original estimate for 2005 was 8 percent, but that was revised upward.

The budget envisions a deficit of 113.8 billion tenge (US\$855 million), or 1.4 percent of the gross domestic product, the same as in 2005. Revenues are projected to grow to 1.5 trillion tenge (US\$11.2 billion), and amount to 18.5 percent of GDP, while expenditures are expected to total 1.6 trillion tenge (US\$12 billion), equal to 19.9 percent of GDP. The 2006 gross domestic product is projected to be 8 trillion tenge (US\$61 billion).

The budget contains increased expenditures for education, healthcare, social security, agriculture, security, and transportation. At the same time, expenditures for the institutions of developments such as Kazakhstan’s Development Bank were slashed because these institutions have already established themselves and are working successfully.

Compared to seven years ago, Kazakhstan’s economy has grown by 75 percent. President Nazarbayev has 15 days to approve the budget.

Things to Watch:

- Venus Express, Europe’s first mission to Earth’s sister planet, blasted off the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on November 9. It should take 163 days, or roughly five months, for the US\$260 million vehicle to reach Venus. It is expected to begin its experiments in early June.
- The Majilis approved a bill for jury trials on its second reading on November 10. The measure needs to be reviewed by the Senate before it goes to President Nazarbayev for signature.
- At a recent competition in Calgary, Alberta, eight speed skaters from Kazakhstan qualified to compete in the next winter Olympics in February 2006 in Turin, Italy.

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