



# Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests

**Jim Nichol**

Specialist in Russian and Eurasian Affairs

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## Summary

Uzbekistan is a potential Central Asian regional power by virtue of its relatively large population, energy and other resources, and location in the heart of the region. However, it has failed to make progress in economic and political reforms, and many observers criticize its human rights record. This report discusses U.S. policy and assistance and basic facts and biographical information are provided. Related products include CRS Report RL33458, *Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol.

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## U.S. Relations

According to the Administration, recent improvements in Uzbekistan's legal framework and its "increased willingness ... to engage in discussions on sensitive issues such as human rights and the rule of law may allow an expanded role for U.S. government assistance in the future."<sup>1</sup> U.S. relations with Uzbekistan were set back in 2005 after the United States joined others in the international community to criticize an Uzbek government crackdown in the town of Andijon (see below). The criticism contributed to Uzbekistan's closure of over a dozen U.S.-based or U.S.-supported non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the termination of U.S. basing rights at Karshi-Khanabad (see below), a fall-off in official and diplomatic contacts, and the strengthening of U.S. Congressional restrictions on aid to the Uzbek government (see below). Relations recently have appeared to improve, according to some observers.

Cumulative U.S. assistance budgeted for Uzbekistan in FY1992-FY2007 was \$845.5 million (FREEDOM Support Act and agency budgets). Budgeted assistance was \$9.5 million in FY2008 and an estimated \$8.56 million in FY2009, and the Administration has requested \$10.84 million for FY2010 (FREEDOM Support Act and other Function 150 foreign aid, excluding Defense and Energy Department funds). The main priorities of U.S. assistance requested for FY2010 are planned to be civil society development, support for health and education, and equipment and training to combat weapons of mass destruction. This assistance is permitted under provisions that otherwise limit U.S. aid to Uzbekistan (see below). In the civil society area, legal assistance will be provided to NGOs and to foster citizen participation in local government. U.S. and other donor aid will modernize the healthcare system, improve primary healthcare, and help strengthen infectious disease surveillance systems and services to vulnerable populations. Education assistance will support work with children with disabilities.<sup>2</sup>

Since FY2003, Congress has prohibited FREEDOM Support Act assistance to the central government of Uzbekistan unless the Secretary of State determines and reports that Uzbekistan is making substantial progress in meeting commitments to respect human rights, establish a multiparty system, and ensure free and fair

### Uzbekistan Basic Facts

**Area and Population:** Land area is 174,486 sq. mi., slightly larger than California. The population is 27.61 million (World Factbook, mid-2009 est.). Administrative subdivisions include the Karakalpak Republic.

**Ethnicity:** 80% are Uzbek, 5.5% Russian, 5% Tajik, 3% Kazakh, 2.5% Karakalpak, 1.5% Tatar, and others (World Factbook, 1996 est.). More than 1.2 million Uzbeks reside in Afghanistan, one million in Tajikistan, and a half-million in Kyrgyzstan.

**Gross Domestic Product:** \$71.7 billion; per capita GDP is about \$2,600 (World Factbook, 2008 est., purchasing power parity).

**Political Leaders:** President: Islam Karimov; Prime Minister: Shavkat Mirziyoyev; Speaker of the Legislative Chamber: Dilorom Toshmuhammadova; Speaker of the Senate: Ilgizar Sobirov; Foreign Minister: Vladimir Norov; Defense Minister: Ruslan Mirzayev.

**Biography:** Karimov, born in 1938, worked in Uzbek state planning and finance for much of his early career. In 1989, he became First Secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party. In 1990, the Uzbek Supreme Soviet elected him to the newly created post of President, and he also became a member of the Soviet Communist Party Politburo. In December 1991, he was popularly elected President of Uzbekistan, winning 86% of the vote against opposition Erk Party candidate Mohammed Solikh. In 1995, Karimov orchestrated a popular referendum to extend his presidency until 2000, won re-election, and in 2002 orchestrated another to extend his term until 2007. He was re-elected in December 2007.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of State. *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, FY2010*, May 12, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, FY2010*.

elections, freedom of expression, and the independence of the media. Congress received a determination of progress in FY2003. In FY2004 and thereafter, however, aid to Uzbekistan has been withheld because of lack of progress on democratic reforms. In FY2008, Congress added a provision blocking Uzbek government officials from entering the United States if they are deemed to have been responsible for events in Andijon or to have violated other human rights. Among other assistance, International Military Education and Training (IMET) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF) programs are conditioned on respect for human rights so also have been curtailed. Some aid to Uzbekistan that is subject to restrictions has been reprogrammed or allocated using notwithstanding authority.

**Figure I. Map of Uzbekistan**



Source: CRS

## **Contributions to Counter-Terrorism**

An agreement on the U.S. use of the Khanabad airbase, near the town of Karshi (termed the K2 base) for Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan was signed in October 2001, and a joint statement pledged the two sides to consult in the event of a threat to Uzbekistan’s security and territorial integrity. In March 2002, the two sides signed a “Strategic Partnership” accord that reiterated this nonspecific security guarantee and Uzbekistan pledged to “intensify democratic transformation.” In addition to security assurances and increased military and other aid, U.S. forces in Afghanistan killed many terrorists belonging to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU; dedicated to the forceful establishment of Islamic rule in Uzbekistan). Following U.S. criticism of Uzbek government actions in Andijon, the government demanded at the end of July 2005 that the United States vacate K2 within six months. On November 21, 2005, the United

States officially ceased operations at K2. The Uzbek government has permitted Germany to maintain a small airbase at Termez with about 163 troops.<sup>3</sup>

Among possible signs of improving U.S.-Uzbek relations, in early 2008 Uzbekistan reportedly permitted U.S. military personnel under NATO command, on a case-by-case basis, to transit through an airbase near the town of Termez that it has permitted Germany to operate.<sup>4</sup> President Karimov attended the NATO Summit in Bucharest, Romania, in early April 2008 and stated that Uzbekistan was ready to discuss the transit of non-lethal goods and equipment by NATO through Uzbekistan to Afghanistan. This issue was part of the agenda during then-Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher's May 30-June 3, 2008, visit to Uzbekistan. After the Commander of U.S. Central Command, Gen. David Petraeus, visited Uzbekistan in January 2009, the country reportedly began facilitating the transit of U.S. non-lethal supplies to Afghanistan. A first rail shipment of U.S. non-lethal supplies departed from Latvia and entered Afghanistan in late March 2009 after transiting Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. President Karimov announced in May 2009 that the United States and NATO had been permitted to use the Navoi airport (located between Samarkand and Bukhara in east-central Uzbekistan) to receive non-lethal supplies, which could then be transported by air, rail, and ground to Afghanistan. Undersecretary of State William Burns visited Uzbekistan in early July 2009, and in mid-August 2009, Gen. Petraeus visited and signed an agreement on military cooperation. President Karimov praised the visit by the "very prestigious delegation" led by Burns as a "positive" move in boosting relations and hailed the visit by Gen. Petraeus as a sign that "relations between our states are developing further. In the fact that we are meeting with you again I see a big element of the fact that both sides are interested in boosting and developing relations."<sup>5</sup>

## Foreign Policy and Defense

Home to more than half of the population of Central Asia, Uzbekistan seeks to play a leading role in regional affairs. From the late 1990s until mid-2005, Karimov's priority was to seek closer ties with the United States, the European Union, and NATO while maintaining working relations with Russia and China. However, after the mid-2005 events in Andijon (see below), he shifted to closer ties with the latter two states. In 2001, Uzbekistan joined the SCO and in 2003 insisted on hosting its Regional Anti-Terrorism Center. Uzbekistan has ongoing tensions with other Central Asian states over its mining of borders, water-sharing, border delineation, and other issues. In July 2008, the head of the Tajik Supreme Court asserted that Uzbek security forces had bombed the Supreme Court building the previous summer as part of efforts to topple the government. In 2002, the Turkmen government accused Uzbek officials of conspiring to overthrow it. The Kyrgyz premier rejected claims by Karimov in 2005 that Kyrgyzstan had provided training facilities and other support for the Andijon militants. Karimov again accused Kyrgyzstan in late May 2009 of harboring terrorists that had attacked across the border (see below).

The Uzbek military is the most advanced among those of the Central Asian states. The armed forces consist of about 50,000 ground force troops and 17,000 air force troops. There are also up

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<sup>3</sup> International Institute of Strategic Studies. *The Military Balance*, February 1, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> "U.S. Military Returns to Ex-Soviet Uzbekistan," *Agence France Presse*, March 6, 2008; "Only Germany Can Use Uzbek Bases Now," *United Press International*, December 13, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Open Source Center. *Central Eurasia: Daily Report* (hereafter *CEDR*), August 18, 2009, Doc. No CEP950264; July 14, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950075.

to 19,000 internal security (police) troops and 1,000 national guard troops.<sup>6</sup> Uzbekistan's military doctrine proclaims that it makes no territorial claims on other states and adheres to nuclear non-proliferation. Military cooperation between Russia and Uzbekistan is ensured through a 1992 Friendship Treaty, a 1994 military treaty, a 1999 accord on combating terrorism and Islamic extremism, and a November 2005 Treaty of Alliance. The latter accord calls for mutual consultations in case of a security threat to either party. After withdrawing in 1999, Uzbekistan rejoined the Collective Security Treaty Organization in December 2006 (CSTO; members now include Russia, Belarus, Armenia, and the Central Asian states except Turkmenistan). Uzbekistan has appeared wary of Russian intentions regarding the CSTO, including by insisting that it will not participate in rapid reaction forces established in June 2009 unless they pledge to not become involved in disputes within the Commonwealth of Independent States. Following a Kyrgyzstan-Russia agreement in early August 2009 to enhance Russia's military presence in Kyrgyzstan—which was widely expected to include the creation of an airbase near the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border—the Uzbek Foreign Ministry warned that “the implementation of such projects ... where the borders of three Central Asian republics directly converge may give impetus to the strengthening of militarization processes and initiate all kinds of nationalistic confrontations,” as well as serve as a lightning rod for militant attacks.<sup>7</sup>

On February 16, 1999, six bomb blasts in Tashkent's governmental area by various reports killed 16-28 and wounded 100-351. Karimov termed the bombing an assassination attempt. He alleged that exiled Erk Party leader Mohammad Solikh led the plot, assisted by Afghanistan's Taliban and IMU co-leader Tahir Yuldashev. Solikh denied any role in the bombings. In November 2000, Yuldashev and Namanganliy received death sentences and Solikh 15.5 years in prison. Another defendant, Najmiddin Jalolov (see below), received 18 years (all *in absentia*). Other security threats included the invasion of neighboring Kyrgyzstan in July-August 1999 by several hundred IMU and other guerrillas. They were rumored to be aiming to create an Islamic state in south Kyrgyzstan as a springboard for a jihad in Uzbekistan. By mid-October 1999, they had been forced out of Kyrgyzstan with Uzbek aid. The next August, dozens of IMU and other guerrillas again invaded Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, but were expelled by late October. In September 2000, the State Department designated the IMU as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, and stressed that the “United States supports the right of Uzbekistan to defend [itself against] the violent actions of the IMU.”

A series of bombings and armed attacks took place in Uzbekistan in late March-early April 2004, reportedly killing 47 individuals. President Karimov asserted that the attacks were aimed to “cause panic among our people, [and] to make them lose their trust” in the government. The then-Combined Forces Commander for Afghanistan, Lt. Gen. David Barno, visited Uzbekistan in April 2004 and stressed that “we stand with Uzbekistan in facing down this terrorist menace.” The obscure Islamic Jihad Union of Uzbekistan (IJU; reportedly a breakaway faction of the IMU) claimed responsibility. Suspected terrorists testified at a trial in mid-2004 that Jalolov was the leader of IJU, that they were trained by Arabs and others at camps in Kazakhstan and Pakistan, and that the IJU was linked to Hizb ut-Tahrir, the Taliban, Uighur extremists, and Al Qaeda. During this trial, explosions occurred on July 30, 2004, at the U.S. and Israeli embassies and the Uzbek Prosecutor-General's Office in Tashkent. The IMU and IJU claimed responsibility.

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<sup>6</sup> International Institute of Strategic Studies. *The Military Balance*, February 1, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> *CEDR*, August 3, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950224.

On May 12, 2005, an armed group stormed a prison in Andijon where those on trial were held and released hundreds of inmates. There is a great deal of controversy about whether this group contained foreign-trained terrorists or was composed mainly of the friends and families of 23 businessmen who were on trial on charges of belonging to an Islamic terrorist group. Many freed inmates then joined others in storming government buildings the next day. Karimov fled to the city to direct operations and reportedly had restored order by late on May 13. According to testimony at the first major trial in late 2005 of alleged Andijon terrorists, the governments of the United States and Kyrgyzstan had helped finance and support the terrorists' attempt to establish an Islamic caliphate, and international media, local human rights groups, and NGOs had conspired in this attempt. The U.S. and Kyrgyz governments and several media organizations denied such involvement. The United States and others have called for an international investigation, which Karimov has rejected.

On May 25-26, 2009, a police checkpoint was attacked on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border, attacks took place in the border town of Khanabad, and four bombings occurred in Andijon in the commercial district, including at least one by suicide bombers. Several deaths and injuries were alleged, although reporting was suppressed. Uzbek officials blamed the IMU, although the IJU allegedly claimed responsibility. President Karimov fled to Andijon on May 31. In late August 2009, shooting took place in Tashkent that resulted in the deaths of three alleged IMU members and the apprehension of other group members. The Uzbek government alleged that the group had been involved in the 1999 explosions and in recent assassinations in Tashkent.

## **Political and Economic Developments**

In January 2002, Karimov orchestrated a referendum on a new constitution that created a bicameral legislature. A constitutional provision extended the presidential term to seven years. The legislature (termed the Oliy Majlis or Supreme Assembly) consists of a 120-member, directly-elected lower chamber, the Legislative Chamber, and a 100-member upper chamber, the Senate. The Senate is composed of 16 members appointed by the president, with the rest selected by local legislatures. The Legislative Chamber has formal responsibility for drafting laws. Constitutional amendments approved in April 2003 established that—after the presidential election at the end of 2007—the prime minister would exercise greater power. In January 2005, Karimov explained that he aimed to create three powerful branches of government, to correct a situation where “everything now depends on me.”

Only government-controlled parties operate legally: the Popular Democratic Party (PDP), founded by Karimov; the Adolat (Justice) Social Democratic Party; the Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP), consisting of government-connected businessmen; and the Milliy Tiklanish (National Revival) Party, consisting of state-supported intellectuals. Opposition parties such as Birdamlik, Birlik, Erk, Free Farmers, and the Sunshine Coalition are illegal and their leaders are in exile or in prison. The former Fidokorlar (Self-Sacrifice) National Democracy Party, created by Karimov as a youth party, merged with the National Revival Party in June 2008, and the enlarged party joined the “Democratic Bloc” of Legislative Chamber factions (including Adolat and the Liberal Democratic Party) in August 2008. A constitutional law on parties and democratization came into effect in 2008 that permits “opposition” party deputies in the Legislative Chamber to offer alternative bills and take part in debates. The law also calls for the president to “consult” with Legislative Chamber factions before nominating a candidate for prime minister.

In December 2008, President Karimov signed legislation that eliminated the nomination of candidates for legislative and presidential elections by independent initiative groups, leaving only parties as eligible to nominate candidates. The law also expanded the size of the Legislative Chamber from 120 to 150. Fifteen of the members of the Chamber are to be elected by delegates to a conference of the Environmental Movement of Uzbekistan (EMU), an NGO. Founded in August 2008, the EMU proclaims that it is not like green parties in other countries, so that it can focus on environmental issues rather than grasping for political power.

A limited observer mission from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) concluded that Legislative Chamber elections held on December 26, 2004, “fell significantly short of ... international standards for democratic elections.” The lack of open information about the race contributed to low public interest and in less than a 50% turnout in half the districts, triggering required run-offs on January 9, 2005. Two weeks later, local legislatures, overseen by members of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), selected Senators. The president’s sixteen appointees to the Senate included deputy prime ministers, the chairman of the Supreme Court, and the foreign minister, making the Senate an amalgam of the three branches of government. In the Legislative Chamber, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) won the most seats (41) and has the largest faction in 2009 (39 members), but the ten committee chairmanships are evenly divided among the four factions, except that the LDP received one more and a “nonparty independent,” Akmal Saidov (a former member of the PDP), received a chairmanship. The next election of the Legislative Chamber is scheduled for December 2009.

The Uzbek CEC in mid-November 2007 approved four candidates to run in the prospective December 23, 2007, presidential election. Incumbent President Karimov was nominated by the LDP. The party which Karimov once headed, the PDP, nominated its current head, Asliddin Rustamov. The Adolat Social Democratic Party nominated its head, Dilorom Toshmuhammadova. A citizen’s initiative committee nominated Akmal Saidov. The CEC disqualified the candidates nominated by the Milliy Taklanish and Fidokorlar parties at their conventions (the latter party had sponsored Karimov during his 2000 election), saying they had not gathered enough signatures. Although the Uzbek constitution bars a president from more than two terms, the CEC argued that since the most recent constitution was approved in 1992, Karimov’s “first term” following his election in January 2000, and that he was eligible to run for a “second term” in December 2007.

According to the report of a small election observation mission sponsored by the OSCE’s Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the Uzbek CEC and local electoral commissions controlled public appearances and spending by the candidates. There were no campaign debates and media coverage was minimal, according to ODIHR. Each presidential candidate used similar language to laud economic development and democratization under the incumbent president. State-owned media urged the electorate to vote for Karimov. According to the CEC, Karimov received 88% of 14.8 million votes with a 90.6% Turnout. Each of the remaining three candidates received about 3% of the vote. The OHIDR election mission issued a press statement assessing the election as “generally fail[ing] to meet many OSCE commitments for democratic elections.” Besides the problems noted above, others included lax rules regarding early voting, frequent voting by one member of a household for all members, and an observed low turnout. In his inaugural address in January 2008, Karimov thanked the citizenry “who gave

me a massive vote of confidence by freely expressing their will [in an] election which was held in full compliance with ... universally recognized democratic standards.”<sup>8</sup>

The State Department’s *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008* appeared to argue that Uzbekistan continued to have a poor human rights record, although it stated that there was progress in a few areas. Police regularly detained citizens to extort bribes, to prevent public demonstrations, and to forestall contact with foreign diplomats. Police routinely beat and otherwise mistreated detainees to obtain confessions or incriminating information. Torture and abuse were common in prisons and pretrial facilities. Human rights activists and journalists who criticized the government were subject to harassment, arbitrary arrest, forced psychiatric treatment, and physical attack. In July 2008, a police investigator reportedly poured boiling water on human rights activist Akzam Turgunov while he was in detention in an attempt to elicit a confession. International human rights organizations alleged that there were about one to two dozen political prisoners. The Interior Ministry created a new human rights department that took action in some police brutality cases and eight mid-level police officers participated in a course at the International Law Enforcement Academy in Hungary that included human rights training. A human rights ombudsman, attached to the legislature, registered more than 9,000 complaints and handled hundreds of cases, a majority of which dealt with abuse of power by police and local officials and various labor and social welfare issues.<sup>9</sup>

The Uzbek government tightly controlled the mass media and suppressed criticism, according to the State Department. The government permitted a few private local newspapers and television stations to sometimes report stories critical of local government welfare policies. In June 2008, state television denounced local RFE/RL reporters as traitors. Print and broadcast journalists were subjected to government arrest, harassment, and violence. The government gave orders about the types of stories permitted for publication and practiced active censorship. It used charges of libel, slander, and defamation to punish journalists and others who criticized the president or government. The Uzbek government sought to control NGO activity, although for the first time since 2005, it registered two U.S.-based NGOs, including the National Democratic Institute (NDI).<sup>10</sup>

Authorities continued to arrest persons arbitrarily on charges of extremism or association with banned religious groups, although the number of such cases appeared to decline. There were no reports of arrests or harassment of Muslim believers based on the wearing of beards or veils or the frequency of mosque attendance. The government allowed a small number of unofficial, independent mosques to operate. It harassed several religious minority groups and imprisoned some of their members. Some Protestant churches were unsuccessful in their attempts to register, in particular Jehovah’s Witnesses. Since 2001, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has recommended that the Secretary of State designate Uzbekistan a “country of particular concern” (CPC), where severe religious and other human rights violations could lead to U.S. sanctions. In November 2006, the Secretary of State designated Uzbekistan a CPC. In its most recent report in 2009, USCIRF recommended that the United States impose several sanctions on Uzbekistan, some of which already had been legislated by Congress.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> CEDR, January 16, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950404.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008*, February 25, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008*.

<sup>11</sup> USCIRF. *Annual Report 2009*, May 2009; *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008*.

On human trafficking, the State Department downgraded Uzbekistan in 2006 to “Tier 3” (designating a source country for human trafficking that did not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and was not making significant efforts to do so). In June 2008, Uzbekistan was found to have made some modest progress in addressing human trafficking problems, and was upgraded to the “Tier 2 Watch List.” In April 2008, anti-trafficking legislation was signed that strengthened victim protections, required the government to provide victims with assistance, and criminalized severe forms of human trafficking, including trafficking into forced labor. In September 2008, the government amended the Criminal Code to strengthen penalties against convicted traffickers. The Ministry of Justice reported that during the first nine months of 2008 that there were 339 convictions of traffickers and that most victims were men trafficked for labor. In late 2008, President Karimov decreed that a national rehabilitation center be opened to assist trafficking victims. In June 2009, the State Department reported that Uzbekistan would remain on its “Tier 2 Watch List” because the country had not made progress in ending forced child labor.<sup>12</sup>

After economic dislocations associated with the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Uzbek economy ceased to decline and began to turn around in 1996. GDP increased an estimated 9% in 2008 and consumer price inflation was officially stated to be 14%, although *The World Factbook* reports that independent observers estimated inflation to be 38%. In 2003, Uzbekistan announced that it would permit full currency convertibility, but vitiated the reform by reducing money in circulation, closing borders, and placing punitive tariffs on imports. These restrictions helped fuel organized crime, corruption, and consumer shortages. Uzbekistan is the world’s fifth-largest cotton producer and second-largest exporter. About one-fourth of the country’s economic activity is based on agriculture (which employs 44% of the workforce). The largest portion of foreign currency earnings are based on cotton exports, followed by exports of gold and natural gas. The government closely controls export earning sectors. One quarter or more of the population remains below the poverty level, and a large portion of the working age population has migrated abroad for work. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development announced in 2004 that it would limit lending in Uzbekistan, citing the government’s poor democratization and human rights record. Other international financial institutions have maintained some engagement. Some commercial firms have boycotted purchases of Uzbek cotton and finished goods on the grounds that forced child labor is used to pick the cotton.

In response to the global economic downturn in 2008, the Uzbek government launched an anti-crisis program to increase budgetary expenditures on infrastructure modernization, extend credit to export industries, restructure bank debts, boost investment in small-sized businesses, and augment public-sector wages and social welfare. Transfers from the Fund for Reconstruction and Development, a pool of export and portfolio earnings launched in 2006, is being used for some of these expenditures, although foreign investment also is anticipated. The Economist Intelligence Unit estimates that a fall-off in migrant worker remittances and exports in 2009 will contribute to a slowdown in the GDP growth rate to 2.5% for the year.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of State. *Trafficking in Persons Report*, June 2006, June 2007, June 2008, and June 2009; *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008*.

<sup>13</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit. *Country Report: Uzbekistan*, September 2009; President Islam Karimov, *The World Economic Crisis: The View from Uzbekistan, [the] Nexus of Central Asia*, American-Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce, 2009.

Russia is the largest importer of Uzbek gas, about 247.2 billion cubic feet in 2008. Some gas also is provided to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and will be provided to China with the projected completion of the Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline at the end of 2009. Uzbekistan repeatedly has halted its gas exports to Tajikistan as well as Turkmen supplies that transit Uzbekistan to Tajikistan—including during the worst winter months—due to wrangling over Tajikistan's reported \$17.4 million gas debt. Uzbekistan supplies some petroleum products and electricity to Afghanistan.

## **Author Contact Information**

Jim Nichol  
Specialist in Russian and Eurasian Affairs  
jnichol@crs.loc.gov, 7-2289