

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS:
“CRISIS IN KYRGYZSTAN: FUEL, CONTRACTORS AND REVOLUTION
ALONG THE AFGHAN SUPPLY CHAIN”**

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Room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building

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Dear Mr. Chairman, dear Ranking Member Flake, dear members of the subcommittee, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to you all for inviting me to testify before your committee on the situation in Kyrgyzstan, and particularly the consequences of the recent change of government for U.S.-Kyrgyz relations. As Kyrgyzstan's ambassador to the United States from 1997-2005, this topic has consumed much of my life's work. Indeed, one of my major accomplishments as ambassador was to represent my country in the process surrounding the opening of Ganci Air Force Base—what is now known as Manas Transit Center.

Why the Present Situation in Kyrgyzstan is not a Tulip Revolution

When the small Central Asian nation of Kyrgyzstan experienced its second upheaval in five years, I was on the other side of the world teaching my government students in Utah. Still, I followed the events with a great sense of anxiety. In some ways, the developments of April 6-7 resemble the events of March 2005 during the so-called Tulip Revolution – government office buildings were stormed by angry mobs, looting occurred in the capital city of Bishkek - but in a very tragic way, the events were different. This time, as was promised by the deposed President Bakiyev, his people used live ammunition against protestors and my family and friends were caught up in the tragedy that ensued. And soon I felt great pain from it. Among those who fell, struck by two bullets to the head fired by security forces, was my nephew, Rustan Shambetov, 35, who worked as a conductor and was then expecting his third child. One of my wife's cousins, Mirlanbek Turdaliev, 29, who was raised as orphan in Jalal-Abad, was also killed, as was Joldoshbek Kudaybergenov, 36, from the information agency “Zamandash,” who was working with me and my colleagues at Utah Valley University on an academic project.

The 2010 upheaval has cost 84 lives so far. That number may not seem large, but Kyrgyzstan is a small country that prides itself on its extended family networks, so the loss has been broadly felt. This loss has filled the Kyrgyz with anger and hope. They want accountability for a government which was hopelessly undermined by corruption

and nepotism and which authorized the use of lethal force against citizens who protested against it. But they also want a new government which will break free from the sorry path trod by its predecessors: restoring democratic freedoms, assuring free access to the market, and ending the system of corruption and patronage that characterizes Central Asia in the eyes of many.

Former President Bakiyev fled the country after attempts to find refuge among his kin in the Jalal-Abad region of southern Kyrgyzstan, and he challenged the power of the interim Government by refusing to resign. Crisis was averted through joint efforts of Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, and the United States. I speak for many of my countrymen in saying thank you to President Obama and his team for their assistance with this problem, but I will have to hasten to add that much more help is necessary if a tragedy is to be averted in my country.

The faces of the new authorities are familiar to us from events of five years ago. This causes confusion and raises many questions in the minds of the Kyrgyz population as well as the U.S. Administration.

What are the differences between this new upheaval and the so-called Tulip Revolution? How will the new government handle its domestic policy as well as the international agenda? It is very important to take a careful look at the root causes of the so-called Tulip Revolution in order to understand the situation more clearly.

According to conventional wisdom, the explanation for the events of 2005 was simple: the corruption of the President's family, its interference in governmental affairs, such as rigging Parliamentary elections, and so forth. But there was another reason – Akayev, who was originally considered a reformer but was embattled with problems of corruption and backsliding from his pro-reform course, attempted to improve his own and the nation's reputation by having Kyrgyzstan undergo a transition of power – the first of its kind in Central Asia – in a legitimate way.

In August 2001, when I accompanied a U.S. congressional group to Kyrgyzstan, President Akayev announced to the delegation that he would obey the tenets of the Kyrgyz constitution and not run for office in 2005. For the West, this was a natural move, but it had never been tried in Central Asia. By making this announcement, Akayev created a dangerous precedent for the next rulers of the nation as well as for the entire region. In Kyrgyzstan, it triggered processes which ultimately would lead to the upheaval of 2005.

During the recent Kurultay (Peoples' Assembly), deposed President Bakiyev described how in 2002, in a meeting of the Kyrgyz elite, he had pursued his goal to become the next head of state, representing the interests of his constituency in the South of Kyrgyzstan. In response to complaints by the Southern constituency that Northerners (Akayev for instance) had held power in Kyrgyzstan for too long and that it was time to give Southerners a chance to rule, an agreement for the transition of government was forged by both sides. Two years before those events, in 2000, when we met with Almaz Atambayev, a Northerner and now among the leaders of the new government, he

reiterated in my presence that the Northerners would obey such a rule. Therefore, during those years the United States were quick to state and reiterate on a number of occasions that they support a democratic process in general, not a certain personalities.

Following the ancient tradition of rule by a family/clan and constituency, despite the agreement between the elites, President Bakiyev capitalized on the opportunity to install a government dominated by his clan (totally ignorant of political processes) and caused a regression in all areas of development of Kyrgyzstan despite his verbal pro-reform statements. Bakiyev was never pro-West, pro-reform, he was rather pro-his-own-kin, where the interests of his family, followed by tribal and regional ones, were in the forefront of his agenda. It was not a surprise that Bakiyev gave the orders to shoot people. His rise to power in 2005 was associated with acts of civil disobedience and protest, but also by acts of criminality—such as the looting the Jalal-Abad branch of the National Bank of Kyrgyzstan in February. A significant amount of Government money passed into Bakiyev's hands; he and his followers disrupted the functioning of the Jalal-Abad airport when they put loads from trucks on a runaway. It was therefore not remotely surprising to me that when the upheaval took place, he fled to hide among his kin in the area around Jalal-Abad. But these facts are vital to understand the failure of the so-called Tulip Revolution of 2005. Much of that revolution was led by principled individuals who believed in reform, but in the succeeding years they were gradually driven from power as the circle surrounding Bakiyev became smaller and smaller and ever more reduced to his own clan.

Akayev's efforts to manage the first transition were a terrible challenge for him. These were years filled with growing instability, and the lame-duck incumbent desperately witnessed even his close associates switching sides in attempts to find new bosses to whom they tried to endear themselves in order to remain in positions of power. December 2004 marked the apex of this trend, when nearly all the members of President Akayev's cabinet, fearing for their future, decided to run for Parliamentary seats. Upon the insistence of the U.S. Ambassador in Bishkek, the head of state was forced to reiterate on every occasion U.S. dignitaries visited Kyrgyzstan, that he was not going to run for the presidency in October 2005. This proved to be a suicidal act, in light of local traditions and customs, that further undermined his authority; he lost the respect and support of his own constituency.

By March 2005, when some of Akayev's family members and close associates were desperately attempting to find ways to extend their influence and power, the president had already lost both. It then behooved the international community to seal his fate by finding reasons why he fell out of grace with the country's citizens as well as the West. Despite the fact that all the reasons were legitimate ones, such an approach worked in the best traditions of the Soviet, totalitarian past, and satisfied many both inside and, most probably, outside the country. Akayev became a scapegoat for all past wrongdoings, and almost all the revolutionaries and the rest of the society suddenly found themselves represented as an enlightened society which would now start to do things correctly from scratch. The collective memory of the nation did not absorb the important lessons from the transition when a part of the nation's elite had to adapt to life outside of power.

But the problems my country faces cannot simply be laid at the feet of Kurmanbek Bakiyev and Askar Akayev. In 2005, many of the nation's political leaders understood the need for reform and had a clear vision of the specific steps that were needed. But they failed in the resolve to act on that vision. Today it is much clearer who among our political class is committed to serious reform and who is connected to the corrupt ways of the prior regimes. The country is therefore unlikely to make the same mistakes that occurred in 2005-06.

For the Kyrgyz people, it is a time to evaluate their recent past in a very thorough and objective way. We have to identify a proper place for each President in our history with both their contribution to the development of nation and their shortcomings. Secondly, we need to understand what separate us and joins us to the rest of Central Asia and the CIS. We are a traditional, conservative society, and yet the passion for freedom burns very deeply within us—unlike many of our neighbors. And notwithstanding our instinctive conservatism, we do have a strong consensus for political and economic reforms. Our people really believe in democracy as a concept—they are ready to fight and die for it—and we have a shared commitment to the market economy as a replacement for the command economy of the Soviet era and the nomadic agrarian economy that our ancestors practiced. Thirdly, Kyrgyzstan has to fight for its position among the community of nations and disprove those who say our two revolutions show we're a failed state. We're a very poor country, and we have to recognize that our struggles in the post-Soviet era haven't been entirely successful. But while some of our neighbors may mock us for our poverty and our rebelliousness, we can respond with a question—who among the people of our region, save Kyrgyzstan, has shown that democracy means something? In what other country are the people prepared to take a stand when a leader behaves arrogantly and subverts the rights of the people? Yes, the Kyrgyz people may be unruly. But that is an insult that British aristocrats hurled at the American colonists of the 1770s, too.

President Askar Akayev taught me that it is vitally important to nurture balanced and multi-vectored approaches for Kyrgyzstan. We are a small country and we cannot afford to have enemies. Moreover, our country naturally needs to count the great powers, especially the United States, Russian Federation and China, as its friends. Akayev's recent comments about the United States' involvement to the current events, I suppose, are driven more by his previous unpleasant memories than by the facts. But it is important for President Akayev to put aside his bitterness and allow love and concern for his country to drive his remarks. He has wisdom and advice to offer, and he can and should contribute to the healing process.

The United States also has some lessons to learn from the recent experiences. One is that America's efforts to nurture "an Island of Democracy" during first 10 years of nation's independence were not in vain. A passion for democracy has taken hold in our country. And yet, this drive for democracy has not had precisely the consequences that our American friends envisioned.

In the international arena, many theories abound which talk about responsible and predictable policies peculiar to democratic regimes. Perhaps it is time to witness how

those theories are now relevant on Central Asian soil as well. We see so many new faces anxious about the worsening of their daily lives among the crowds in the streets and among those who sacrificed their lives in the hope for reform. The people are anxious about their new leaders. Specifically, they are anxious about whether they will be betrayed in an orgy of corruption and cynicism as took hold after 2005.

A Clean Slate for Kyrgyzstan

The revolution has brought forward new faces on the international stage, but the faces are not new to the Kyrgyz. Roza Otunbayeva and Omurbek Tekebaev are the first names mentioned in the new interim government. Otunbayeva, in addition to being Minister of Foreign Affairs and Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Britain, was also my predecessor as Kyrgyz ambassador in Washington. Therefore, she may well have been tapped because of her extensive experience and skills in statehood and diplomacy. Her re-appointment as a head of the government interim also demonstrates deep roots of democratic traditions existing among the nomadic Kyrgyz and affirms again that a woman could be a leader of a conservative and Muslim society, continuing traditions, established during reign of a legendary Kurmanjan Datka, Queen of the southern Kyrgyz at the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th century. Tekebayev, the head of Kyrgyzstan's oldest party "Ata Meken," began his career as a physicist. Both were deeply involved in the Tulip Revolution of 2005. Both quickly had a falling out with President Kurmanbek Bakiyev over corruption and nepotism issues. Both have a reputation for integrity that is not so common in Kyrgyzstan. That reputation is perhaps the greatest asset of the new government.

Two years ago I met Tekebyaev in the Utah, when he, together with his fellow party members Bolot Sherniyazov, Erkin Alymbekov and Ravshan Jeenbekov, came seeking advice and assistance. I can say with confidence that he is neither pro-western, nor pro-Russian—he is a very pro-Kyrgyz. Tekebayev still sometimes quotes Lenin, and during the meetings in Washington, D.C., and Utah, his American counterparts were quite surprised by that, but it is a way that he and many of us were raised. At the same time, because of his real dedication to the democratic ideals and his party cause, Tekebayev managed to gather support among so many people over the whole of Kyrgyzstan, and to demonstrate the very qualities, which, unfortunately, were lacking in some of the Kyrgyz graduates from the western universities. Many of them are well educated and well spoken. They know what was right and they breathed the free air of Western democracies. But faced with a rapacious and autocratic regime, they made a pact with it.

Is America truly our friend? If so, then the Obama Administration must demonstrate that Kyrgyzstan means more than simply the Manas Transit Center. It needs to show appreciation for our struggle in the face of bullets and scorn for democracy. America should demonstrate its commitment to democracy and the values of an open society with more than just words. Tekebayev has announced the text of a new constitution.

Otunbayeva spoke for many of her countrymen, and for me, when she said that the Kyrgyz were "tired of" the system of authoritarian presidents, which has demonstrated its ability to breed corruption and incompetence. Kyrgyzstan now seems headed towards a new system in which a checks-and-balances system will be introduced to

assure more accountability from those who hold power. America's support in this bold new venture will be essential. America should also remember that Kyrgyz civil society—which may ask a lot of pesky and intrusive questions about base procurement contracts—is still the natural ally of democratic government, and it continues to view America and Europe as models worth emulation.

While military affairs have gotten more attention, American support of education in Kyrgyzstan has had a far more positive impact on our country than the Transit Center. American taxpayers helped found the American University in Central Asia (AUCA), which is now among the leading and most prestigious centers of higher education in the Central Asian region, attracting students from far away. Many prominent people from the United States helped to do that. I have to name here, first Vice President Al Gore, who laid the ground for the school by agreeing to work on the project of joint Kyrgyz-U.S. department as a part of the National Kyrgyz State University, when President Akayev made such proposal to him during his visit to Bishkek in December 1993. Among other Americans who contributed to the creation of this school are such individuals as George Soros, Chairman of the Open Society Institute in New York; Robert Livingston, former Chairman of the U.S. House Appropriations Committee, whose tireless efforts helped the university secure its endowment. As ambassador, I watched as Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, have trekked to this university and given it their support. It showed me how Americans unite in appreciating the power and importance of higher education, and the promise it holds of a better future for both our countries. When American officials make their trip to Kyrgyzstan in the future, I want to offer them some practical advice: go to the university and be seen there. That institution is visible, lasting evidence that America's interests in Kyrgyzstan don't begin and end with the base at Manas. Kyrgyz citizens need to be reminded of that.

The United States also strengthened the country's primary and secondary schools, and they enabled many hundreds of Kyrgyz to pursue their studies in the United States. One of the important projects is related to the creation of a national testing system, which evaluates high school graduates objectively and gives the talented ones a chance to enter prestigious universities in Bishkek with tuition waivers. This project experienced a lot of trouble under the Bakiyev regime, because it was aimed at reducing a corruption and red tape in the universities. More than anything else, these efforts have formed the basis for warm feelings between our countries. America can show it cares about our country by continuing this generous support for education that is shaping our country's future.

Secretary Clinton and President Obama may have been somewhat slow to react to the developments in Kyrgyzstan, but their first steps after the revolution show that they have paid careful attention to what transpired, and they recognize some of the missteps taken by the United States in past years. In particular, they are to be lauded for avoiding the temptation to view all these developments as a Russian–American conflict by proxy. Instead, they have worked jointly with the Russians and with the Kazakhs to diffuse the situation by helping to secure Kurmanbek Bakiyev's resignation. This is a promising first step. But assistance from both the United States and Russia will be vital if

Kyrgyzstan is to turn the corner. This is an opportunity to support a model democracy in Central Asia which stood up for America in her time of need, and which promises a lasting friendship. Such a valuable opportunity must not be squandered.

In the past there were many examples of how the United States and Russian Federation worked together and provided benefits to Kyrgyzstan. I will name here just two of them. One was related to the support from the United States to a project on monitoring earthquakes in the mountains of Central Asia and beyond with the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences. Another project was related with the joint U.S.–Russian space program. On January 22nd, 1998, I was invited to visit Cape Canaveral for the launch of the Space Shuttle *Endeavor*, Mission STC-89, which carried out to the orbit an international crew with our countryman, Salijan Sharipov, aboard as a team member. During my speech before the audience there at the moment before launch, I said that we need more projects of cooperation between the United States and the Russian Federation, which benefit other nations in Central Asia. The symbolism of that was very great: a citizen of Russia, born in Kyrgyzstan, an ethnic Uzbek, flying aboard the U.S. Space Shuttle *Endeavor*, Salijan Sharipov had become the embodiment of the new spirit of unity, cooperation and friendship between different nations, which happened due to mutual understanding and willingness to work together between Washington, D.C., and Moscow.

The Airbase “Manas” and Its Place in Bilateral Kyrgyz–U.S. Relations

For American commentators, discussion of Kyrgyzstan circles around whether the United States will be able to keep a base to support its military operations in Afghanistan. The Kyrgyz understand America’s concern about its young men and women sent into harm’s way, and we share America’s goal of a stable and peaceful Afghanistan. Ms. Otunbayeva has announced that the base arrangements will be “rolled over” for a further year in July. At the same time, some members of a new interim Government, such as Azimbek Beknazarov, do not agree with her and are stating the opposite.

In order to understand the current situation with the base and its peculiarities, it would be good again to look at the history of the airbase’s appearance on Kyrgyz soil.

Airbase at the beginning named “Ganci” after New York Fire Department Chief Peter J. Ganci, Jr., who was killed in the 9/11 attack, appeared on Kyrgyz soil in December 2001 as a result of an agreement signed between the Government of Kyrgyzstan and the United States, which was represented by the Ambassador of the United States to Bishkek, H.E. John O’Keefe. Its major aim was and still continues to be to support U.S. military operations in the war in Afghanistan, and, as a result of that, to maintain security for the Kyrgyz Republic against external threats that originate in that nation. Much of the debate I have seen misses this essential point, namely, the Manas Transit Center and its critical supply function serves the national security interests of Kyrgyzstan every bit as much as it serves American national security interests.

Therefore, from the beginning of the airbase's operation, the issue of payment was never our primary concern. The Kyrgyz government was focused on the threat to its own soil and population originating from Afghanistan. Starting from 1999—the year of the first incursion of the Al Qaeda affiliated Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan onto Kyrgyz soil in their attempts to reach the territory of neighboring Uzbekistan—and till 9/11, Kyrgyzstan had military engagements with units of the IMU and paid dearly: more than 50 Kyrgyz soldiers and civilians died in the IMU assaults.

In a speech he gave in Washington at CSIS, President Akayev explained why Kyrgyzstan had made the base arrangements available at Manas. “Kyrgyzstan will make its own contribution in the fight with this great evil [terrorism],” he said, because it is our fight “for the triumph of democracy and the right to enjoy its fruits, to live in peace and prosperity.”

After the initial success of the U.S. military operations in Afghanistan, the IMU was decimated, Al Qaeda and the Taliban were driven to the far-away border zone between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the threat once so acute to the Kyrgyz seemed to fade away. Moreover, the Bush Administration switched its focus to Iraq in 2003, pursuing a war effort which was difficult for my countrymen to understand. At this time contracting operations at the airbase came under the scrutiny of our very lively civil society and independent media. They asked persistent questions and focused attention on the contracts. The economic conditions in Kyrgyzstan were then becoming weak. For more than five years the country had been experiencing economic hardships due to the economic blockade and a rising wave of protectionism in Central Asia starting from 1998. The civil society organizations quickly came to focus on the fuel contracts and the role played by companies controlled by President Akayev's son and son-in-law in the process. They portrayed this as corruption—a foreign power was involved in corrupt contracts with our president's family. The disclosures were extremely embarrassing and damaging to the government.

These disclosures helped fuel the Tulip Revolution in 2005. But the backlash against the base that these disclosures triggered probably peaked in February 2009, when the Kyrgyz Parliament voted 79:1 to close Ganci Air Force Base. This vote was, however, orchestrated by former President Bakiyev, who was then engaged in an effort to simultaneously shake down both the U.S. military and the Russian Federation. Observing this process, it was apparent to everyone that no concern for our national security drove the behavior of Bakiyev and his friends; no respect for the lives we lost fighting the IMU. Instead Bakiyev's conduct and that of his closest lieutenants seems to have been driven by pure greed.

The U.S. forces deployed at the base have tried to build bridges to the local population through numerous gestures: by helping to improve and repair social, cultural, educational and other types of institutions in the areas around Bishkek. As the BBC in March 2009 wrote: "The Manas air base outreach society" created by Jim Carney, representative of the National Guard of Montana in Kyrgyzstan and programme co-ordinator, have collected money donated by military personnel... and sponsored 129 heart surgeries for children in Kyrgyzstan as well as small remodelling projects in

orphanages and schools.” Another example of such generous and heartfelt assistance from the U.S. military to the Kyrgyz people have become a not so well-known story, described on March 28, 2010, by the *Washington Post* about Lyudmila Sukhanova, who was brought to the Manas airbase seven years ago almost dead because of mishandling by local Kyrgyz doctors. She was revived through the heroic and sustained efforts of doctors at the airbase and then at the Walter Reed hospital in Maryland. She still lives in Walter Reed, and, because of her inability to sustain herself without special treatment which could be provided in the United States only, she can’t go back to Kyrgyzstan. The U.S. taxpayers are paying millions of dollars annually in order to sustain her health. I met with her during the first year of her treatment at Walter Reed.

As these hearings demonstrate, the problems with the airbase persist, and again, the same issues are raised about complicated relationships between the local rulers and those who are responsible for logistical support. I am sure that my other colleagues will make suggestions about how to improve the situation in that area.

Connecting the Kyrgyz and the U.S. People

Now I am in my fifth year of teaching at Utah Valley University (UVU), and I am strongly convinced of the necessity for the Kyrgyz people to develop their ties with the United States and its people. One of my goals, when in 2005 I decided to go to Utah, using a kind invitation from than UVU, was to preserve the potential the Kyrgyz Republic created during my Administration and, if possible, to expand it. Here, I would like to share some knowledge about experience acquired during that time in building new ties between this educational institution and my country as one of potential areas of further bilateral cooperation.

Kyrgyzstan, since independence, has developed several quite diverse ties with such mountainous states of the Rockies, like Colorado, Montana, Utah and Wyoming that share with Kyrgyzstan the common feature related to their natural conditions and a challenging, mountainous way of life. Cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and Montana has focused on building ties between military, Wyoming concentrated more efforts on strengthening cultural ties and helping Kyrgyz handicrafts to find niches in the U.S. market, and Utah was developing ties between educational institutions.

The invitation from UVU gave us a chance to connect all of those efforts regionally and capitalize on that potential. Also, because of the support from so many of my friends and colleagues at UVU, starting with our old friend, Dr. Rusty Butler, Vice-President for International Affairs and Diplomacy; his wife Danielle Butler, the Honorary Consul of Kyrgyzstan; Kat Brown, the Chief of the Department of History and Political Science; and Alex Stecker, my senior colleague and my teacher at the department; and many others, a number of ideas that we didn’t accomplish during my tenure as the Ambassador were materialized at UVU—and even went beyond our expectations.

The idea with expansion of the agenda of sustainable mountain development, which now the United Nations promotes as one of its priorities because of the Kyrgyz initiative to celebrate the International Year of Mountains in 2002, found a strong support in a number of states of the Rocky Mountains. Now together with our colleagues at UVU we are getting closer to a creation of a regional network of all interested in that area of activities institutions and individuals. Then, it will be linked to the global electronic Mountain Forum, with special emphasis on cooperating with mountainous nations in Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan in particular. UVU and the Kyrgyz partners hosted the International Conference, "Women of the Mountains," in 2007, and this fall UVU plans to organize a second one, which would help to sustain all those above-mentioned plans. This initiative, in part, coincides with a new vision of the Obama Administration about emphasizing the promotion of sustainable development globally as its major foreign policy priority.

Efforts of UVU in advancing those goals were praised by the Secretary General of the United Nations in his presentation on sustainable mountain development before the General Assembly of the United Nations on August 3rd, 2009.

Utah Valley University also helped to publish a manuscript of the 11th century, *Kutadgu Bilig*, which means, "Wisdom of Royal Glory" and is famous among Turkic-speaking people, project which we tried to accomplish long ago but without success. It is considered to be a Magna Carta by them. It was written by famous philosopher Yusuf Balasagun, who lived at the territory of modern Kyrgyzstan almost one century before that treasure trove of western political thought emerged. Series of the conferences, dedicated to the content of the book and lessons about the rule of law and good governance in Central Asia, helped the students and faculty of UVU and John's Hopkins University in Washington, D.C. to gain a greater understanding about the roots of the good governance among the nations of Central Asia. This event was noticed in Kyrgyzstan, when a special presentation of the published book took place at the Kyrgyz-Turkish (Manas) University as a part of the International Conference, dedicated to that topic.

UVU works closely with independent information agency Zanandash in Kyrgyzstan on promoting critical thinking among the people in that nation as well as in Central Asia by disseminating in particular translations into Russian of the articles from Western media. Students and faculty of UVU contribute to this project, which exist during two years already. As I mentioned before Joldoshbek Kudaybergenov, who was a part of the team at the agency was killed during attack of the White House on April 7th, 2010. He was very determined man, hungry for knowledge and education and in parallel with working at the agency Zamandash was enrolled as a student of the Diplomatic academy.

Little by little, we are already creating around Utah Valley University a hub of Central Asian activities. In addition to a growing number of students and faculty of UVU interested in exchanges with Central Asian counterparts, a whole group of Utah legislators, led by the Utah State Senator John Valentine, are building their own ties with the members of the Parliaments of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. After the visits to Bishkek and Dushanbe in 2007 and 2008, they are now planning a trip to Ashgabat.

Change of regime in Kyrgyzstan now creates a new momentum in strengthening cooperation between that country and Utah and other states of the Rockies. Therefore, as it is evident from this development that we are not only making recommendations about what to do for the Obama Administration in relation to Kyrgyzstan, but we are already creating a constituency and new resources to that end and as a result will be glad to contribute to its efforts both in Central Asia and in Kyrgyzstan in particular.

We need to develop such relationships between Kyrgyzstan and the United States. We need to work on joint ideas of promoting a better life based on such types of mutually beneficial initiatives.