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SOVIET INTERNAL: VIOLENCE IN KIRGHIZIA

SUMMARY

1. AT LEAST 116 DEAD IN KIRGHIZIAN CLASHES. SITUATION REPORTED TO BE STABILISING. BUT TENSIONS BETWEEN KIRGHIZ AND UZBEKS LIKELY TO REMAIN.

DETAIL

2. LATEST SOVIET PRESS REPORTS FROM KIRGHIZIA GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE SITUATION IS STABILISING AFTER A WEEK OF VIOLENCE, IN WHICH AT LEAST 116 DIED AND NEARLY 500 WERE INJURED. ENTERPRISES ARE RETURNING TO WORK IN OSH, THE ORIGINAL SCENE OF THE DISTURBANCES. AREAS OF KIRGHIZIA AND NEIGHBOURING UZBEKISTAN ARE UNDER A STATE OF EMERGENCY, INCLUDING THE KIRGHIZIAN CAPITAL FRUNZE WHERE SEVERAL THOUSAND DEMONSTRATORS HAD TRIED TO STORM THE COMMUNIST PARTY HEADQUARTERS. SOVIET INTERIOR MINISTER BAKATIN ANNOUNCED ON 7 JUNE THAT 3,000 TROOPS AND MILITIA HAD BEEN SENT TO MAINTAIN ORDER IN OSH. AN IZVESTIYA REPORT THAT CHERMUKHA (TEAR) GAS HAD BEEN USED IN THE ATTEMPT TO CONTROL THE OSH RIOTS. SOME 15,000 UZBEKS WERE REPORTED TO HAVE GATHERED ON THE BORDER BETWEEN THE REPUBLICS AIMING TO GET TO OSH BUT PREVENTED BY ARMY UNITS FROM DOING SO.

3. DEMONSTRATORS SET A 10 JUNE DEADLINE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO MEET A SERIES OF DEMANDS - INCLUDING RESIGNATION OF THE KIRGHIZ COMMUNIST PARTY FIRST SECRETARY AND ALL THE REPUBLIC PARTY BURO. THIS HAS APPARENTLY PASSED WITHOUT EVENT. 11 JUNE WAS DECLARED A DAY OF MOURNING IN KIRGHIZIA. FLAGS WERE FLOWN AT HALF MAST AND ALL ENTERTAINMENTS CANCELLED.

4. A TASS REPORT OF 11 JUNE NOTES THAT REGIONS OF NEIGHBOURING TADZHIKISTAN ARE NOW SUFFERING ACUTE SHORTAGES OF FUEL AND OTHER ITEMS BECAUSE RIOTS ARE CUTTING OFF ROAD LINKS THOROUGH KIRGHIZIA TO TADZHIKISTAN.

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COMMENT

5. THESE ARE THE MOST SERIOUS RIOTS IN CENTRAL ASIA SINCE THOSE OF LAST YEAR IN NEIGHBOURING FERGANA WHEN UZBEKS ATTACKED THE MESHKHETIAN TURKISH MINORITY. IN SOME WAYS THESE LATEST RIOTS ARE MORE SERIOUS. THEY INVOLVED A DISPUTE BETWEEN 2 UNION REPUBLICS. MOSCOW MUST BE EXTREMELY CONCERNED AT THE PROSPECT THAT THE KIRGHIZ AND UZBEKISTAN BORDER WOULD COME TO RESEMBLE THAT BETWEEN ARMENIA AND AZERBAIDJAN. THE USSR MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR BAKATIN SPOKE LAST WEEK OF HIS FEAR THAT THESE RIOTS COULD DEVELOP INTO A MAJOR INTER-REPUBLICAN CONFLICT. AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE THERE ARE NO TERRITORIAL CLAIMS. THE RIOTING APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN THE RESULT OF LAND AND HOUSING SHORTAGES BROUGHT ON BY POPULATION PRESSURE AND ECONOMIC DECLINE. THE SOVIET PRESS HAVE NOT BEEN HINTING (AS IT DID IN THE FEBRUARY RIOTS IN UZBEKISTAN AND TADZHIKISTAN) THAT RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM HAS BEEN PLAYING A ROLE.

6. AT PRESENT THE BORDER BETWEEN THE 2 REPUBLICS IS CLOSED AND A STATE OF EMERGENCY HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED IN REGIONS ON EITHER SIDE. SOVIET PRESS REPORTS SUGGESTED THAT REGULAR TROOPS AS WELL AS THOSE OF THE MVD (INTERIOR MINISTRY) HAVE BEEN USED TO QUELL THE DISTURBANCES. THIS PRESENCE COULD BE REQUIRED FOR SOME TIME. EXPERIENCE SUGGESTS THAT INTERCOMMUNAL VIOLENCE OF THIS KIND LEAVES LASTING RESENTMENT. THE KIRGHIZ, LIKE OTHER SMALLER CENTRAL ASIA NATIONALITIES HAVE TRADITIONALLY FEARED AND MISTRUSTED THE NUMERICALLY DOMINANT UZBEKS. THERE ARE LARGE NUMBERS (SOME HALF MILLION OR 12% OF THE POPULATION AT THE 1979 CENSUS) OF UZBEKS LIVING IN KIRGHIZIA.

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