



## ROUNDTABLE WITH ROZA OTUNBAYEVA

APRIL 16, 2010  
11:00 A.M.

**MODERATOR:**

**Martha Brill Olcott,**  
Senior Associate, Russia and Eurasia Program,  
Carnegie Endowment

**SPEAKER:**

**Roza Isakovna Otunbayeva,**  
Provisional Leader,  
Interim Government of Kyrgyzstan

Transcript by Federal News Service  
Washington, D.C.

MARTHA BRILL OLCOTT: It's my pleasure to introduce to you Roza Isakovna Otunbayeva, the interim head of the government of the Kyrgyz Republic, who will give a few opening remarks and then we'll take questions. And we will take – and this is on the record. Okay. We are ready, Roza. (Inaudible.) (Chuckles).

[0:00:36:0]

ROZA ISAKOVNA OTUNBAYEVA: We have finished another difficult day. As you know, yesterday night or early morning today, Bakiyev Kurmanbek has resigned. He signed the letter about his resignation. And we are still working in Jalalabad Oblast to capture his brother, Zhanysh Bakiyev, who was in charge of killing of (inaudible).

And this is probably one of the high priority in Kyrgyzstan because Olgot (sp) has 85 people dead, 1500 people turned for medical assistance, hundreds injured – and people are very, very angry that Bakiyev was allowed to leave the country and I had to deal today with large crowds of people who are demanding explanation from the government why we let him leave the country.

But overall, towns back home have avoided civil war because Bakiyev yesterday – the day before he was in Jalalabad conducting Kurultai, and yesterday he came to Osh, which is the southern capital of Kyrgyzstan. And he is at – he wants to declare that the – (inaudible) – still in force and he's in the southern capital and that was his sort of moment of glory. But people are in Osh to gather for their Kurultai, and they didn't let him speak.

[0:03:01:3]

In other words, Bakiyev was traveling into the south and everywhere he tried to show up that so many people supported him. But it was everywhere that – (inaudible) – he has started to recruit Uzbek people to make such a living shield who protect him.

And so it was quite a dangerous situation that the whole day – I think, you know, we've been close to another catastrophe. But now he has left – has left, I believe it was yesterday – (inaudible) – letter of resignation. Today we have a (speak ?) back from our people, from the people – the young patriots, from citizens of Bishkek, from – relatives of those victims that – those unjust – to (make him leave ?).

We have captured Mr. – we have captured Mr. Kaliyev, who was the former minister of defense. And very much Zhanysh Bakiyev is wanted. If he will be captured and brought to justice, it will be really a matter of – (inaudible) – with a very high temperature as we promised the people that we'll set up an international committee which will investigate events of 7<sup>th</sup> April.

I have spoken to Mr. – (inaudible) – deputy secretary general of the United Nations – (inaudible). (Inaudible) – chair of the commission and on the case of such reports. Reports will certainly bring Kurmanbek Bakiyev any day, any year to justice.

MS. OLCOTT: Thanks. I know that there are people who are eager to ask questions. I think what we will do is take two questions and then give you an opportunity to answer. And then we're going to start with Washington. And John O'Keefe has the first question.

[0:05:41:3]

Q: This is John O'Keefe, executive director of Open World Leadership Center. Ambassador Otunbayeva, the last round in 2005 when the opposition took over, they were going to establish a parliamentary democracy to limit the powers of the presidency. I realize it's early in forming what the next constitution will be, but are you thinking along those lines this time?

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Yes, certainly. Interim governments came for half a year. And we've got on our shoulders very, very big obligations. And we want to introduce a draft of constitution based on the political agreement of three major political parties. We are already agreed on a parliamentary republic system and now we have a working group which is drafting the constitution.

We dissolved the Central Electoral Commission and start building up new one – and by the way, building – this will be a 13 people; half of them will be under aegis of the United Nations. And half of them will be representatives of political parties.

[0:07:23:5]

And so we are working to correct – (inaudible) – their courts – elections courts. As you know, we have still – (inaudible) – parties and also, then, they are weak, but we want very much now to introduce block coalitions of the parties going to the elections. And I hope that will give us the opportunity to join efforts of a number –

(Audio break.)

(Off-side conversation.)

MS. : So she said they're working on a new constitution?

MS. OLCOTT: Yeah, they are.

(Cross talk.)

MS. OLCOTT: There's already a working group.

(Cross talk.)

MS. OLCOTT: – has a parliamentary democracy. And the election commission is going to be established in cooperation with the U.N., where half the –

(Cross talk.)

MS. OLCOTT: Hello? Hello?

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Yes – (inaudible). Yes, Martha.

MS. OLCOTT: Oh, great. Okay, you're back. We're going to move to Brussels. Could you talk a little louder because it's hard for some of the people here to hear? Okay? I know –

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Okay. Okay.

[0:10:41:4]

MS. OLCOTT: I know it's hard. (Chuckles.) We're going to turn to Brussels now for the next question.

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Mm-hmm.

MR. : Yes, we have one question from the floor. Michael Emerson from the Center for European Policy Studies. Michael?

Q: Madame Roza, many of us who have met you are very glad to see you in your courageous new initiative. We last met in Abkhazia (ph) several years ago. My question follows on from the first one which was about parliamentary or presidential democracy.

Kyrgyzstan, of course, in the early post-Soviet period, had a remarkably progressive record on matters of civil society, civil liberties, amongst all the Central Asian states. This all went sharply into reverse under Bakiyev as you very well know to your cost. What are your intentions for the future regime in this regard?

[0:11:52:8]

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: We hope that we'll return back to the democratic path for everything was under leadership of Bakiyev distorted and deformed dramatically. And lists of Freedom House, Transparency International, Human Rights Watch – all of them, they are evidence of what was wrongly done in my country.

Now, we are working – we are preparing plan of return to democracy. Meanwhile, we are working very hard. We just opened recently all the radio stations, TV, newspapers which have been closed over these years as politically wrong doing stuff. And at the same time, we've sort of finished or stopped all sorts of political things – censorship, our info portals didn't work because pressure from the White House [NOTE: Kyrgyz presidential headquarters] was huge.

[0:13:21:7]

Another thing is people been declared as non grata and some of them – especially human rights specialists – they didn't have permission to come Kyrgyzstan to visit us. That's what – (inaudible). And certainly, we should continue to work on good governance and the most toughest rule of law.

MS. OLCOTT: Moscow for one question and then back to Washington.

MR. : Please introduce yourself.

Q: Thank you. BBC in Moscow. I must ask again as Washington and Brussels again and again about the parliamentary system. Would you please describe what will be the balance between the branches and what will the role of president look like and parliament and so on?

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: I don't hear well your question. Sorry about it. Would you repeat again?

MS. OLCOTT: I can repeat it from here. It was a question from BBC-Moscow about what is likely to be the balance of power in the new parliamentary republic and the role of the president?

[0:14:44:4]

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: The team which is now as interim government, we are leading parties: Social Democrats, Ata-Menken Party, Party Ashumkar (sp). Most of us, we are members of those teams. And as I said earlier, we want to build parliamentary republic and with this regard, our new constitution is drafted, work will be done. Of course, it's right after the fixing of this Bakiyev problem but still a working group who works very hard these days – no doubt about this.

But regarding balance between Russia and the United States in our foreign policy, I would say that –

MR. : Excuse me, no, no, no. The question was about the balance between the branches of government.

MS. : Better ask that – (chuckles). More interesting.

MS. OLCOTT: Let her – Roza – continue with your answer. It's fine, honestly.

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Martha, same thing – I don't hear.

MS. OLCOTT: Sorry for the interdiction. You were talking about the balance in Kyrgyz foreign policy. Why don't you continue what you were saying and then we'll take another question?

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: This is the question about the balance of foreign countries in the foreign policy of Kyrgyzstan? Is this the question?

MR. COLLINS: Yes, Roza, go ahead.

MS. OLCOTT: Yes, go ahead.

[0:16:36:2]

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Yeah, yeah. I want to assure you that we would make a right balance in the sake of national interest of my country. And we would certainly underline and stress our

geographical situation of common cultural and language tradition. And economically we are very much tied with Russia.

And I must stress that for this 7<sup>th</sup> of April, the Russian press was show us that there is truth – there is right information which will come from the Russian screens – TV screens – if everything in my authoritarian country was closed. We got the lesson that, yes, sometimes you might call there is a lack of democracy in our part of the world, but we offer hands to each other when we need each other's support.

At the same time, we didn't get such a support or any condemnation regarding very outrageous cases towards – to human rights defenders or journalists, killed journalists, when we need, on time. And this way, I think we would value the strong sides of both countries and to try to learn from both countries and would view such relations which would be really in the sake of my nation.

MS. OLCOTT: Eric Rudenshiold.

[0:19:09:5]

Q: Hi, Roza. This is Eric Rudenshiold from USAID. I would like to congratulate again, but with reference to the constitution, as we hear many different possibilities of what's going to take place, I mean, are you looking at having a referendum in a few months and then elections afterwards? I mean, there's a – the timing of how that could take place is obviously going to be quite rushed because your period in office, you have said, is going to only be about six months.

Certainly other international examples – Bosnia back in the '90s sort of said six months is a very rushed period of time to try to create a new government. And the people who are drafting the constitution or are on the committees, is there any potential perception at least of a conflict of interest for those who may be drafting who may eventually take power? The last thing is sort of – is there any other practical assistance we can provide you?

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: You are now representative of the IFIs or what – ?

Q: No, I'm with USAID these days.

[0:20:24:0]

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: USAID. I know that Mr. Tekebayev, who is my deputy for constitution reform, he was very close with international partners now. You are right. Time is very short – half a year. And some people, they are not happy that it will be, let's say, one or two drafts only introduced. I think everyone wants to be involved in drafting constitution.

But everything – all what we have done now was done because of our political agreement, political consensus, that our country will be parliament and most probably for sure we'll introduce that sort of constitution, so based on the parliamentary republic system.

And I think we need assistance, anyway. If you'll send your e-mail, I would ask my people in the staff of Mr. Tekebayev to be in touch with you because time is short, our resources are not big and some contradictions and some problems will arise alongside.

MS. OLCOTT: Okay, Susan?

Q: Michele.

MS. OLCOTT: Michele, I'm sorry. (Chuckles.)

Q: Michele Kelemen with National Public Radio. Ms. Otunbayeva, I'm struck that during the Tulip Revolution, the accusation was that the son of Akayev was skimming off of this fuel contract at the Manas Air Base and now the same accusation is being made against Bakiyev's son. Has the U.S. learned any lessons about how it should operate in your country? Did you hear any promises of more transparency? And what do you hope to do to make sure that same situation doesn't happen again?

[0:22:32:6]

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Mr. Richard Blake, assistant to the secretary – state secretary for Asia – Central Asia and South Asia – just visited Kyrgyzstan and especially mentioned this issue. And he said that we'd be absolutely open, it was difficult to work with the previous government, but we are happy to provide you with the whole accountability of this project. So we will wait for that.

MS. OLCOTT: We're going to go to Brussels. Brussels? Okay. Brussels –

(Off-side conversation.)

MR. : We have another question. Yeah, we have another question from the member of the press. Mr. Guy Goris (sp). Guy?

[0:23:33:2]

Q: Okay. Ms. Otunbayeva, my question is your – the fact that Mr. Bakiyev left the country, was brokered by the OSCE, which is now headed by Kazakhstan. Would you have expected more support or brokerage from the SCO, which is headed or which is led by a Kyrgyz citizen and how do you see these two regional mechanisms work together or not? And what are your expectations for the future?

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Oh, I am very sorry. I don't hear well. Martha, would you repeat this for me? Yeah?

MS. OLCOTT: Right. The question was the – Bakiyev's exit was brokered by the OSCE. Would you have expected the SCO to have played a larger role, especially since it's headed by a Kyrgyz? And what are the roles that you expect that regional organizations will play in the future?

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: You are talking about the OSCE and you are talking about what – CIS or – ?

MS. OLCOTT: No, it's –

(Cross talk.)

MS. OLCOTT: SHOS. (In Russian.)

[0:24:59:7]

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Oh, SHOS. Yes, yes, yes. I would certainly pay attention to SHOS and to work with SHOS. SHOS is our regional organization and I will certainly communicate and work through SHOS, with all Central Asian countries together with China. So I mean, SHOS will be so far so important for us.

MS. OLCOTT: Moscow.

MR. : Moscow, from the Wall Street Journal.

Q: Yes. Richard Boudreaux from the Wall Street Journal. I'd like to ask you if Kyrgyzstan still wants to host a U.S.-financed anti-terror training center in the southern part of the country.

MS. OLCOTT: (In Russian.) Did you hear? He said, does Kyrgyzstan still want to host a U.S.-funded anti-terror training center in Batken?

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: No, no. I've heard the question.

MS. OLCOTT: Okay – (chuckles) – sorry. (Chuckles.)

[0:26:26:8]

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: But what I want to tell you, I am really not aware about this project. We just – there is no week, yet, of our interim government, and still our high priority remain the same questions: security, bringing our country to normalcy, people go – our children go to school, people go back to work. And this matter of Bakiyev – (inaudible) – was high agenda.

I'm very sorry, but I didn't have any minutes to get in touch and to read and to learn from our foreign minister because even the main agreements between two governments about Manas – it was given just Saturday from your embassy and I'd never seen these agreements.

And I think, let us stabilize this situation because still, security's not quite – it reacts very much emotionally on our decisions, like departure of Mr. Bakiyev. And we didn't capture any such very important allies of Bakiyev to bring to justice. Otherwise, all relatives, brothers, fathers of this those dead – there's a lot of not old people, and all of them – they think that really something happened, something wrong happened.

MS. OLCOTT: Okay, from D.C.

Q: This is Andrew Quinn from Reuters. Ms. Otunbayeva, I'm wondering if you can tell us your thinking about your own political future. Do you think that when and if there's an election in Kyrgyzstan that you will stand to run for president or is it – are you going to take yourself out of the running now?

[0:28:50:4]

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Yesterday, when I took decision to permit Bakiyev to leave the country, I took my sort of such – I took all the responsibility to sign such a decision. Then I thought that – then I agree really to a decision just to go down – picking down as kamikaze, because it is decision unpopular. People are very angry – so many people dead. Frustration – public frustration is huge.

So I mean, I'm still as machine (ph) for public motion, but in the future, for going to elections, I want to be a conciliator between two, three parties, going to elections together. We don't have big, strong parties. But these three parties which are leading forces of our interim government, if we go not together then we'll lose the whole deal. So I would still work for conciliation of all these political parties and forces.

Regarding presidency, I don't know. My country is again, officially, the parliamentary republic, I do believe. Then president will be elected by president [NOTE: should be by parliament] or it will be popular vote for president. We didn't decide yet. I don't know so far myself.

MS. OLCOTT: Ambassador Collins?

Q: Roza. (In Russian.) It's Jim Collins from Carnegie.

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Yes, Jim. How are you? (Laughter.)

MR. COLLINS: I'm fine. I have a question in sort of two parts, but it's related. Many in Washington are concerned about a split between the north and the south in Kyrgyzstan and I wonder if you could comment on the degree to which that is in fact a question.

And the second question I have for you is a more general one: What should we understand as your priorities and the priorities of your colleagues over the next six to eight months, understanding that writing the constitution is probably at the top of the list? But, you also have to govern, so what is most important to achieve for you in the next three or four months?

[0:31:52:3]

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Jim, as opposition, we came on such a very high motion that social impoverishment was drastic from the Bakiyev's government upgraded tariffs and not only for electricity but for hot water, for warmth, for water for the agricultural needs, for pastures, taxes for real estate – everything. People started to ask, should we pay for the air and how much?

And if, as – really, Jim, as new government – interim government – certainly, we want to build a base and to try to implement everything for new – such a constructing of this government because 18 years of presidential governance compromised itself. It didn't work, so we think that

check and balance will work much better in parliamentary country. And as people in Kyrgyzstan we joke, presidents or their wives should be a widow of – she should not have anyone as relatives and so on because every time we had a family ruling.

[0:33:37:0]

As regard to south and north, so far it is – we are going quite easy on this issue. Although Bakiyev was from the south and he went to the south to try to mobilize old people telling that he was not allowed to work in the northern part and he speculated a lot on this very low instinct of people. But nation is united. I don't see any serious signs for such a split. And especially now he was totally denied not only by Jalalabad, his capital city, but by Osh – Osh is much more important than Jalalabad.

MS. OLCOTT: Thank you.

MR. COLLINS: Thank you, Roza.

MS. OLCOTT: Thank you. Brussels now. Brussels?

MR. : Yes, we are here. We have a question. Would you like, Ambassador Morrell (sp), to ask your question?

[0:34:56:5]

Q: Roza. (In Russian.) I'm glad to hear you again. We were together Monday in your office and I wanted to tell you that I brought back all the key items reported to the member states yesterday and we are preparing the assistant program for our meetings next week. My question is about the border closure. When you think it will be possible to reopen the borders if only because of the economic impact on the situation of the country?

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: The last two sentences please – only two last sentences. What is your question?

MS. OLCOTT: The last two sentences were when do you think the borders will reopen because of the economic impact to the country?

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Oh, yes, I have spoken yesterday with Kazakh side – with the chairman of the OSCE, foreign minister of Kazakhstan – and for opening the border between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. It's absolutely vital; it's critical. We've got a lot of problem now on the border. Literally, economical life has stopped. And today, we must sort out this issue, and I hope this will be done because people on the high levels, they promised to do that.

MS. OLCOTT: We'll turn to Moscow now.

MR. : Thank you. We have a question over here, please.

Q: Roza Isakovna, Zdravstvuite (In Russian.) I am Rostina Olga (ph), the Institute of Knowledge and Anthropology, Iran (ph). My question is connected with the problem of

federalization and the necessity to cooperate with different forces in the region of Kyrgyzstan. Will the riots of regions, on the basis of principles of federalism and authority of local self-governments, be extended according to the new constitution? What do you think about returning in Kyrgyzstan the two-chamber system of parliament? Thank you.

[0:37:35:5]

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Two-chamber system of parliament. Yes, there are some proposals but we need not to only base on party lists parliament, but territorial representation also, but we'll probably follow seriously party list. That's my opinion – personal opinion. Regarding – I'm very sorry; what you said earlier?

Q: About federalization and about rights of the regions' leaders and clan leaders.

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: I think yes, now –

Q: And cooperative with them.

[0:38:29:1]

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Now, in every oblast, we have seven oblasts in Kyrgyzstan, and in every oblast governors being elected popularly by the people. By constitution, governors are appointed by president, but election of governors, this will be probably part of our new constitution. Federalization? No, I don't think that we – the country's united – the country needs administrative senatorial – such a – reform, but this is not high-priority today.

MS. OLCOTT: I'm going to take one more round of questions and then say thank you. So, one more round; two questions from Washington, then one last question from Brussels and one last question from Moscow.

Q: Thank you. This is Indira Lakshmanan. I'm from Bloomberg News. I just wanted to clarify something. A member of your government had said yesterday that there would be an extension for one year of the Manas Air Base for the U.S.

[0:39:48:1]

And I just want to clarify, when you were speaking earlier, that no decision had been made on the other base, that the Manas base, the decision has definitely been made to extend that for one year? Can you just clarify that?

MS. OLCOTT: Slyshno? (in Russian)

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Manas base, I understand – Manas Transit –

MS. OLCOTT: Facility.

Q: The airbase.

MS. OLCOTT: Manas Transit Center –

(Cross talk.)

MS. OLCOTT: Facility. We got disconnected.

MS. : Moscow and Brussels, we've been disconnected. We will try to bring her back on if everyone can hold on for one second, and then we will try to get through the last round of questions and let everyone enjoy their Fridays.

(Pause, cross talk.)

MS. : I think we have her back. Are we back? If everyone could be quiet for a moment.

MS. OLCOTT: Roza?

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Yes, yes.

MS. OLCOTT: Okay, the question was, has there been a definite decision to extend the Manas lease for one more year, or is this –

[0:41:12:6]

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: I think it is extended already. The deadline was 14 of April, and if we do not have any problems, then – and we should – (inaudible, background noise) – will achieve everything is hoped further, and so far, this is not our high priority here. We will keep our commitments and keep going.

MS. OLCOTT: Okay, thank you. One last question from Washington and then we'll go for a last question from Brussels and a last question from Moscow.

Q: Alexander Gregoriyev (sp), Voice of America, Russian Service. Yesterday was a lot of information of mobs attacks of Russian minorities' businesses, you know, such things. Does your government really control the situation in the republic right now? What's your vision of the situation right now?

MS. OLCOTT: Security situation.

Q: In the security situation right now?

[0:42:22:0]

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Well, we control now the security situation. Our armies in force, police in force, security forces – everyone is working. Nation was divided sometimes, but they're coming back, and we'll recover much quicker than in 2005. There's enterprises which the crush (ph) destroyed. All of them will get compensation, and my deputies and the whole government works on that.

MS. OLCOTT: Thank you again. I move to Brussels for one last question.

MR. : Yes, we have a question about China.

[0:43:12:8]

Q: Thank you. My name is Wong Yi-Way (ph) from the Chinese Mission to the European Union. Since China is your neighbor, we are also of course concerned at your situation. We hope you resume stability and obtain peace and a harmonious people as soon as possible. My question is, how do you identify the Chinese position in your foreign policy of your new government? Thank you.

MS. OLCOTT: Did you hear the question?

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Martha, would you repeat?

MS. OLCOTT: Yes. He asked what is going to be the policy to China in your new government?

[0:43:50:7]

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: China is a very friendly and linked – big our neighbor. We have 1,000-kilometer border with China; we have a very intensive trade with China; quite intensive labor force working in my country; and intense traffic of our traders to China. I don't see any problem in the future, in our future. We'll have huge potential, a lot of current projects, and let us develop these projects. We have a lot of cultural common interests also, and I think we are doing well, now. Martha, I should leave you. I must go.

MS. OLCOTT: Okay. We apologize to Moscow. Thank you, Roza. Thank you. We're all so grateful for you giving us this time so late at night, and we all wish you strength and good health to get through the difficult times that you have coming – all that work that you have before you. Thank you so much from all of us.

MS. OTUNBAYEVA: Thank you very much. Thank you. Bye-bye. Thank you.

MS. OLCOTT: Bye-bye.

MR.. COLLINS: Let me thank Brussels and Moscow too for their participation. And Carnegie is experimenting with this and I think we believe this was a successful moment.

MS. OLCOTT: And we apologize to Moscow for losing the last question.

(END)