
KYRGYZSTAN: PRESIDENT TRASH-TALKS OPPOSITION FOLLOWING COUP ARRESTS

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In the wake of fresh arrests in Kyrgyzstan of would-be coup plotters, President Almazbek Atambayev indulged in another surreal tirade on May 15 against opposition politicians and nongovernmental groups.

The remarks came three days after the arrest of several prominent government critics – former Agriculture Minister Bekbolot Talgarbekov, ex-Finance Minister Marat Sultanov, one-time presidential candidate Torobay Kolubayev – on charges of plotting to seize power. Evidence provided by the authorities for the supposed coup scheme dreamed up by Talgarbekov, Sultanov and Kolubayev consists so far of a recorded conversation that left many skeptical. In a separate case, inveterate troublemaker and businessman Nurlan Motuyev is in hot water over his repeated and downright bizarre praise for the Islamic State group.

But Atambayev is in no mood to wait for due process and quoted eccentrically at an event at his presidential residence from a well-known poem, Quartet by early 19th century Russian writer Ivan Krylov, to deride the jailed foursome. The brief satirical poem tells the story of a group of animals – a monkey, a donkey, a goat and a bear – who try in vain to form a musical ensemble, much to the mockery of a nightingale.

You, my friends, no matter what your positions, will never be musicians, Atambayev noted gleefully, quoting the nightingale.

The caustic irreverence sounds an odd note against what the government has sought to cast as the mounting specter of potentially violent sedition. Another three opposition figures from an unrelated faction were arrested in March on the basis of similar accusations of plotting the violent overthrow of power.

The irony of the fact that Atambayev himself came to power in a violent uprising that unfolded on the morning after his arrest in April 2010 will be lost on few.

In phone intercepts provided by the authorities, Talgarbekov, Sultanov and Kolubayev appear to be discussing methods of achieving the downfall of the government. Talgarbekov did not help his cause in openly pledging to summon some 20,000 people to a rally at a central square in Bishkek on May 17.

Meanwhile, Motuyev, who is also part of the so-called Peoples Parliament that has called for Atambayevs ouster, has seemingly been arrested for declaring his admiration for the Islamic State group at a May 12 meeting of the group.

Atambayev left no room for doubt that the troublemakers were getting what they deserved:

All of you have probably seen and heard the recordings of the conversations of the leaders of this so-called People's Parliament. You have heard them boast in conversations that on May 17 there will be a change of power. That hundreds of fighters have been brought in for this aim. That they have weapons. They talk about how they are going to kill unneeded people or shoot them in the kneecaps. They openly boast that they are backed by the generals of foreign intelligence services and rejoice that they have received money from their foreign patrons, he told an audience of mothers, officials and journalists at his Ala-Archa residence during an events to mark Mothers Day.

The purported plotters may have been hoist by their own petard. Talgarbekov claimed in a bizarre interview with news portal Zanoza.kg that his group had sympathizers in the upper ranks of the Russian army.

While the reliability of the charges against the quartet may be in some dispute, there can be little doubts any of them could ever exactly pose as champions of democracy or clean government.

Motuyev, for instance, famously expropriated the countrys largest coal deposit following the countrys 2005 revolution. Most recently he made waves with an expletive-rich campaign to be appointed the head government ombudsman in 2013, prompting one news website to produce a compilation of his greatest hits, titled Nurlan Motuyev Uncensored.

And at the May 12 meeting of the People's Parliament, Motuyev reportedly called for shariah law to be enforced in Kyrgyzstan and mused approvingly that Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-

Baghdadi would long ago have "ripped the heads off" the foreigner investors running the country's economically vital Kumtor gold mine.

Motuyevs turn to his own idiosyncratic interpretation of the Muslim faith appears to have occurred while he was completing a prior stint in jail. After his release, he formed the Union of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan in 2008 and then ran for president the following year.

By directing such sustained animus at ostensibly marginal and discredited opposition figures, Atambayev has evinced his profound sensitivity to the potential for any rinky-dink agitator to whip up a mob. To the worry of civil society groups, the president reserved some bile for rights activists too.

Atambayev shows every sign of wanting to nurture his contempt for jailed ethnic Uzbek rights advocate Azimjan Askarov, who was jailed in 2010 for his alleged role in the killing of police officers during inter-communal unrest that year.

Multiple international bodies have staunchly condemned Askarovs jailing, which they say was the result of a profoundly unjust trial. Referring by name to two Kyrgyz activists – Aziza Abdyrasulova and Tolekan Ismailova – that have also called for Askarovs release trial, Atambayev remarked that they had diligently earned their foreign grants.

The putdown was immediately the subject of an indignant riposte published on Facebook by Abdyrasulovas daughter.

Edil Baisalov, who served as chief of staff to Atambayevs predecessor Roza Otunbayeva, neatly summed up the absurdity of the whole speech on Twitter.

Really, only Atambayev could manage to insult two mothers, Aziza and Tolekan, on Mothers Day!

Kaynak/Source: