

EURASIA DIGEST

Monthly Compilation of News from Russia, Central Asia & Europe

Vol 2 | Issue 12 | December 2022



- **Russia-US Intelligence Chiefs Met in Ankara**
- **Russia Unveiled Nuclear Icebreaker For Arctic**
- **Russia Postponed Nuclear Arms Reduction Talks With US**
- **Russia and Kazakhstan Reaffirmed Ties**
- **European Commission Vice-President Visited Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan**
- **Tajikistan And China Agreed to Strengthen Military Cooperation**
- **Tokayev Re-Elected President of Kazakhstan**
- **CSTO Summit in Yerevan**
- **EU Defence Ministers Met in Brussels**
- **Germany Offered Patriot Systems to Poland**
- **UK Considered Reducing Foreign Students to Curb Migration**
- **NATO Foreign Ministers Met in Bucharest**

Russia-US Intelligence Chiefs Met in Ankara

The heads of Russian and US intelligence [held](#) a meeting in Ankara on 15 November, the first high-level face-to-face talks between the two countries since Moscow launched its 'special military operation' in Ukraine. While both the Turkish authorities and the Kremlin refused to comment, a spokesperson for the White House's National Security Council (NSC) confirmed the meeting, stressing that the CIA chief was "not conducting negotiations of any kind", but rather conveying a message on the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons by Russia, and the risks of escalation to strategic stability.

Russia Unveiled Nuclear Icebreaker For Arctic

President Vladimir Putin, on 23 November, oversaw the [launch](#) of a new nuclear-powered icebreaker amidst Russia's attempts at developing the Arctic. Addressing a ceremony for the launch of the Yakutia icebreaker, Putin said such vessels were of "strategic" importance for Russia as part of its efforts "to consolidate the country's status as a great Arctic power". The Yakutia, which can break ice up to 2.8 meters thick, is expected to join the fleet in late 2024.

Russia Postponed Nuclear Arms Reduction Talks With US

Russia on 28 November 2022 [postponed](#) the proposed nuclear disarmament discussions with the US under the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) that were scheduled to be held in Egypt. Moscow

announced that the talks, which had been suspended since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, would be postponed without offering any formal reason. The START treaty, which was last renewed in 2011, caps the number of strategic nuclear warheads that the United States and Russia can deploy.

Russia and Kazakhstan Reaffirmed Ties

Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev [met](#) with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin on 28 November, with the two partners reaffirming historic ties following public disagreements over Ukraine. The visit to Moscow was the Kazakh leader's first foreign trip since being sworn-in for a second term, with Tokayev stating his choice to visit Moscow was symbolic. He also called for the strengthening economic ties, saying this was "especially timely now, when international trade is in crisis".

European Commission Vice-President Visited Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan

On 17-19 November 2022, the European Commission Vice-President met with the foreign ministers of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In Kazakhstan, Joseph Borrell met President Tokayev while in Uzbekistan he chaired the 18th European Union-Central Asia Ministerial meeting. The focus of these meetings was on strengthening bilateral and regional cooperation.

Tajikistan And China Agreed to Strengthen Military Cooperation

China and Tajikistan on 21 November 2022 [agreed](#) to further strengthen their military

cooperation. Dushanbe committed to conducting joint anti-terrorism drills with Chinese forces once every two years. The new agreement states that the purpose of the exercises would be to enhance coordination capacity and improve the practical and tactical skills of anti-terrorism units.

Tokayev Re-Elected President of Kazakhstan

On 22 November 2022, Kassym- Jomart Tokayev was [re-elected](#) as President of Kazakhstan with a vote share of 81.31 per cent. The voter turnout was approximately 69.4 per cent.

CSTO Summit in Yerevan

On 23 November 2022, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation held its [annual](#) summit in Yerevan, Armenia. The key documents signed included cooperation between regional groupings, medical support, and communication and crisis response systems. At the culmination of the summit, [Belarus](#) took over the rotating presidency while Kazakhstan's [former](#) Prime Minister Imangali Tasmagambetov was appointed the new Secretary General for a period of three years.

EU Defence Ministers Met in Brussels

The [European defence ministers](#) meeting took place in Brussels on 15 November to assess the bloc's defence capabilities. The European Defence Agency's (EDA) Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) report revealed the fact that defence planning is mostly done in isolation and "collaboration remains the exception rather than the rule." There is also a trend to rely on suppliers outside the EU, especially

the US, which has been exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine crisis. EU defence officials voiced concerns that isolated spending might lead to an increased fragmentation.

Germany Offered Patriot Systems to Poland

In the aftermath of [Poland](#) being hit by a stray missile killing two people, Germany offered Eurofighters and the Patriot air defence systems to Poland. Ukraine's request for the Patriot systems was, however, denied by [German](#) officials who claimed that this system is a part of NATO's air defence and can only be deployed in NATO countries.

UK Considered Reducing Foreign Students to Curb Migration

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is considering putting a limit on foreign students taking "low quality" degrees and increasing the load of migrants in the name of dependents. [Migration](#) appears to be a significant issue for this government amidst some members of the cabinet not being on the same page.

NATO Foreign Ministers Met in Bucharest

On 29-30 November 2022, NATO foreign ministers [met](#) in Bucharest for the last ministerial meeting of the year. The ministers decided to double down on their commitment to Ukraine. Other major areas of discussions included the challenges posed by China and the importance of maintaining NATO's technological edge. They also discussed the efforts needed to counter the grave threat. Finland and Sweden participated in all the meetings.