

Daughter of Uzbek Leader Tweets to Deny Health Reports

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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ALMATY — The daughter of Uzbek President Islam Karimov tweeted a denial against reports on opposition websites that the 75-year-old leader of the strategically important Central Asian state was in poor health.

Karimov's elder daughter Gulnara, responding to a question on Twitter on whether her father was ill, replied Tuesday that it would be "more than crazy to say so."

RIA-Novosti had already published an official denial of a weekend report that Karimov, who has ruled Uzbekistan with a tight grip since independence in 1991, had suffered a heart attack.

The country of 30 million is a transit point for supplying U.S.-led military operations in neighboring Afghanistan, and there is concern that a planned drawdown of Western forces could lead to wider instability in the region.

Reliable information from Uzbekistan is hard to come by as some news organizations were barred from reporting inside the country after a bloody crackdown on protests in the eastern city of Andizhan in 2005.

Asked about speculation that Karimov might have suffered a heart attack or other major health problems, a senior U.S. official on Monday said: "There was not, as far as we know, any basis to that story."

The opposition People's Movement of Uzbekistan (PMU), whose exiled leader Muhammad Salih is based in Norway, reported Friday that Karimov had suffered a heart attack three days earlier, citing information from its Tashkent correspondent.

In a dispatch Tuesday, the PMU stood by its reporting.

The reports followed celebrations in Uzbekistan of Navruz, a holiday marking the vernal equinox, during which state television showed Karimov attending official festivities and dancing.

Gulnara Karimova, who styles herself as an international socialite, singer and fashion and jewelry designer, said on her official Twitter feed that her father had danced at the Navruz show "for at least 20 minutes straight."

Similar opposition reports regarding Karimov's health have in the past proved inaccurate. Karimov has not, however, been seen in public since the festivities.

The press department at Uzbekistan's Foreign Ministry hung up when called for comment on Karimov's health.

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