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Kyrgyzstan's Security Tightrope: Balancing its Relations With Moscow and Washington

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Summary

In September 2003, Bishkek and Moscow finally concluded a long delayed agreement on behalf of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) for the establishment of a Russian managed air base and the stationing of Russian air force personnel and combat aircraft in Kyrgyzstan. These assets will be part of a joint (Russian/Kyrgyz) air element that will be a component of CSTO's rapid reaction force and support its antiterrorist role. For Moscow, the move is designed to add needed capability and credibility to the reaction force, reestablish Russia's regional presence and influence, and counter balance that of the US and NATO. Bishkek is also hosting US and alliance forces in the war on terrorism, which means that for the first time US and Russian air forces will be stationed in the same country and only 30 kilometers apart. For Kyrgyzstan, its security and economic situations dictate that they accept any and all assistance, as long as the conditions are reasonable. The security assistance provided by Moscow and Washington is not wholly redundant, as there are significant differences in what they are now and in the future willing to provide. At this stage, Bishkek sees a need to maintain close security ties with both parties and is busy balancing the needs and demands of each.

Introduction

In late November and early December 2002 the Russian Air Force (*Voyenno-Vozdushnyye Sily*—VVS) deployed Frontal Aviation and Military Transport Aviation aircraft to Kant airbase in Kyrgyzstan. The purpose of the trial deployment was ostensibly not to create a Russian base in Kyrgyzstan, but to develop a joint Russian-Kyrgyz operational military airbase to support the multinational Collective Rapid Deployment Forces (CRDF) that is established under the Collective Security Treaty (CST).^{[\[2\]](#)} One battalion from each member state in the Central Asian Zone (Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) are committed to the CRDF.^{[\[3\]](#)} In the following analysis we will examine the nature of the deployment and assess its military and geopolitical significance. First, it is essential to understand the main elements of the background to Kyrgyzstan's security challenges.

The Batken Factor and Kyrgyzstan's Experience with Militant Islam

The incursions by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in the Batken Oblast of Kyrgyzstan in August 1999 exposed fundamental weaknesses in the Kyrgyz armed forces. Coordinated activities by the groups of armed insurgents confirmed that the state security bodies were unable to cope adequately with the tactics of guerrilla war. The event that brought world attention to this crisis was when the insurgents took 13 hostages, including 4 Japanese geologists and the Commander of the Kyrgyz Interior Troops General Anarbek Shamkeyev, which made the government response to the crisis more complicated owing to the hostages.^[4] Despite the official claims made by the MoD, neither Kyrgyz security nor military units conducted successful combat engagements with the insurgents. This lack of success underscored a number of critical Kyrgyz military shortfalls that hampered their ability to effectively find, fix, and engage the hostile groups. Given the size and nature of the terrain, small, lightly armed insurgents groups can move along sparsely traveled trails and easily conceal themselves in the rough terrain. They are easiest to spot in such rugged terrain when they are on the move. But even this advantage is compromised by the insurgents' use of darkness to further mask the movement of troops, guns, drugs and other contraband. Around the clock intelligence and reconnaissance are critical in finding the insurgents and then mobility is essential to move the firepower and/or troops in to fix and engage the hostile force. The Kyrgyz military did not demonstrate in these early efforts that they had the necessary intelligence or reconnaissance assets and even at the small unit level they lacked the night vision instruments, which seriously undermined their ability to operate effectively against the insurgents. It was soon clear that the Kyrgyz armed forces were incapable of meeting the threat and repelling the armed insurgent groups without foreign assistance. Russia offered military aid through the provision of weapons and the other parties to the Tashkent Treaty and Uzbekistan followed suit, providing machine guns, grenade launchers and other military equipment.^[5]

Underscoring the shortfalls outlined above, reporting on the events of August 1999 indicated that Kyrgyz artillery bombarded encampments that had been abandoned an hour or two earlier. Uzbek airpower was equally unsuccessful, since it bombed areas of the countryside again abandoned by the enemy. Reporting further indicates that the militants had success moving at night and conducting night attacks on Kyrgyz troops that were searching for them.^[6] One thing this underscores is the Kyrgyz military's problems even defending itself at night, ergo how effective can one expect them to be in conducting offensive maneuver or even ambush type operations when situational awareness (to include seeing the battle space), tight command and control and effective coordination were apparently lacking.

The Kyrgyz aviation assets employed during these engagements included five L-39 planes and small numbers of Mi-8 helicopters. The Czech designed and manufactured L-39 is a combat-training jet that can be modified to carry weapons or even intelligence collection packages. This small, relatively simple airframe can support combat missions in a low-intensity combat environment, if the air defense threat remains limited. The L-39's flight characteristics, maneuverability at low speeds and versatility suggest that it should be able to operate effectively in the rugged terrain and against ground targets. Moreover, even the poorly trained Kyrgyz pilots should be able to employ this aircraft, but how effectively will depend on a number of factors. Even the L-39, however, is traveling too fast to do its own target acquisition and

identification effectively. To be successful, combat air operations in this type of environment are dependent on good, timely targeting data, well trained pilots with ground attack experience, and some form of forward air control to provide final guidance to the target, which were not available.

More than 50 percent of Kyrgyzstan is at an elevation of 9,500 feet or higher. Although adequate hard-surface roads exist in the valleys, roads into the foothills and mountains are predominantly narrow, in poor repair, frequently dirt, subject to the weather, and often little more than trails. There is no reliable overland connection between the country's north and south. In this environment, ground troops move slowly and often find themselves dismounted, operating as light infantry. In such rugged and expansive terrain operating against an elusive enemy, the helicopter can play an extremely important role, providing much needed mobility and fire support to the ground forces. The helicopter also potentially is a better fire support weapon than the fixed-wing aircraft in such rugged terrain because of its slower speed, stability, and hovering capabilities. But these advantages make it vulnerable to the soldiers on the ground, with small arms or even more at risk if they have an SA-7 or better shoulder fired air defense weapon. In reality, the helicopter was not all that effective, as reports from Kyrgyz servicemen suggested that their use of Mi-8 helicopters in Batken involved fitting unguided missiles to the sides and using a machine gunner with a spotlight.^[7] Flying around with a spotlight to support target acquisition and identification at night underscores the bounds of their targeting data as well as their limited ability to conduct night operations.

By 7 October 1999 as Kyrgyz troops continued a sweep of the mountains in the Batken Oblast and in Zardaly, air reconnaissance was carried out in the area of Khadzhi-Achkan - thought to be the location of the main base for more than 800 Islamic militants. During the campaign, both aviation and ground forces repeatedly failed to pinpoint the camps.^[8] Additionally, poor training and weaponry hampered the ground forces with most firearms dating from 1974 and many showing rust. New sniper rifles distributed during the campaign were without scopes. Communications were also inadequate owing to the high proportion of P-127 radios - each weighing 25 Kilograms (Kg) - that failed to work.^[9] The use of these old, unreliable, short range, manpad radios is one reason why they were reportedly not able to effectively coordinate operations among ground and air elements, distribute or receive updated intelligence, etc.

Kyrgyzstan's difficulties in responding to the crisis in the Batken Oblast stemmed from the poor condition of its armed forces and its economic weakness. Operational coordination was poor between the various power ministries. Initially, the militants were able to capitalize upon the weakness of the Kyrgyz border guard service, enabling them to flow, almost unopposed, across the border without any effective means of stopping them. During the crisis itself, the chief responsibility for the campaign fell on MoD units, which were poorly trained to cope with such forces and using conscripts whose military background was steeped in rehearsing for the Soviet Union's large-scale conflict rather than low-intensity conflict that was necessary to confront today's threat. As the insurgency spread into Uzbekistan the response of the Uzbek military in November 1999 differed significantly from that of its weaker neighbor; they conducted a series of well coordinated operations, employing special units of the Council for National Security, the MVD, the MoD and support from the border guards. A key to Uzbek success was its speed of deployment and coordination between the various power ministries. Many of the militants killed

in Uzbekistan had fought in the Batken campaign between August-October 1999 and were reportedly trained in Chechnya.^[10]

While the Batken campaign was clearly intended to destabilize the Kyrgyz government its roots were tied to the burgeoning illegal narcotics trade within Central Asia [although the principal markets were elsewhere]. In early October 1999 Askarbek Mameyev, Chairman of the Kyrgyz Security Council, stated that Islamic militants in Batken controlled 70 percent of the drugs smuggled through the country. This route through Batken had been used since 1998 to move drugs from Tajikistan and in this sense Mameyev was not surprised by the incursions. Indeed, by 9 October 1999 President Askar Akayev was openly linking the incursions with the 'drug mafias'.^[11] During the incursions of the following year, General Bolot Djanuzakov, Secretary of the Kyrgyz Security Council, defined the expansion of drug routes through Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as a principal cause behind the growing militant activity.^[12]

Soviet Legacy

The national armies that developed in the post-Soviet states were based not only on the physical legacy of the Soviet Armed Forces, such as the military assets and structures that existed in each country at independence, but in a broader context on the Soviet military model. All of the new Ministries of Defense began their national military force development from a common experience within the Soviet military system, using as a base its doctrine, tactics, operational and administrative procedures, and, in general, how the Soviet Ministry had been organized and functioned.

During the Soviet period, individual republics did not have military forces tailored to meet their specific security needs. Rather, Soviet military forces were structured and stationed across the empire to address Moscow's broader strategic and security concerns. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, each of these new states inherited most of the Soviet military assets that were stationed in their Republics. As a result, most of these states had some of the requisite physical structures that define an army, but the legislation, institutional procedures, trained mid- and upper-management military and civilian personnel, etc. that are needed were not and, in some cases, still are not in-place. While all of these states faced essentially the same challenges, different personalities and circumstances meant that each approached their security planning and military development from different perspectives.

The challenges facing each of these newly independent states were many and there definitely was not a shortage of problems for the military. Like the other Central Asian MoDs, the Kyrgyz faced the following:

- A shortage of experienced, qualified, non-Russian officers;
- A lack of higher ranking officers with experience in military planning and administration at the Ministry-level;
- A career in the military had lost its luster and junior officers were hard to attract and keep;
- A lack of mid- and upper-level civilians experienced in defense planning and administration;

- The bureaucratic infrastructure did not exist to support the development and effective operation of a Ministry of Defense (most, if not all, of the structure, institutions, legislation, etc. had to be put in-place);
- Economic and political stability issues took priority, leaving few resources and little time to dedicate to military development;
- The legacy culture of the Soviet Armed Forces did not provide the national civilian or professional military leadership with an understanding of how Defense Ministries are organized and function in a quasi-parliamentary democracy (budgets, acquisition, reform, etc.);
- Internal and external security concerns that required the application of military and paramilitary forces and challenged the Armed Forces' during its development process;
- There was a significant change in the nature of the security environment, requiring a new security strategy and very different military capabilities that they were not prepared to confront.

Of all of the former Soviet republics, Kyrgyzstan was the most reluctant and the least able or prepared to establish a national military. However, within the first year of independence, the combination of internal unrest and instability among its neighbors forced the government to establish its own armed force and look to hold on to its ties with Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to support its security needs. And yet, despite growing security concerns, a combination of political and financial constraints precluded any priority being given to the military.

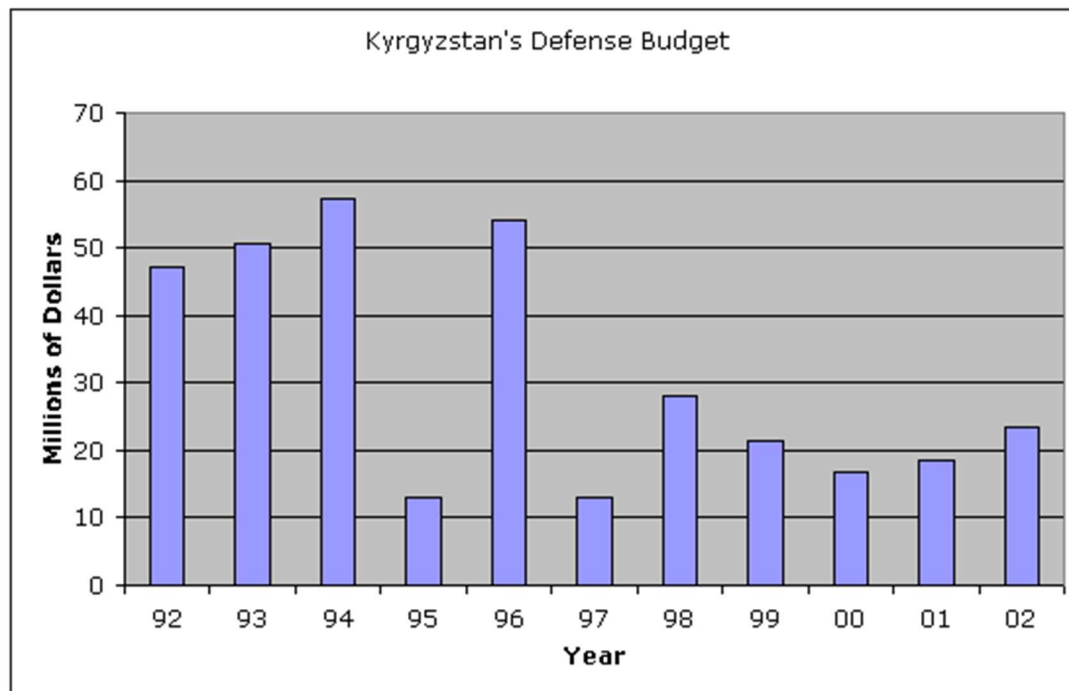
Politically, the conservative military's backing of an early coup attempt against President Akayev made him distrust it. Despite the President's wariness, Kyrgyzstan's location and the character of its neighbors and its security concerns made it impossible to long ignore the need for a national army. Moreover, the longstanding conflict environment in the Ferghana Valley continued to escalate, fuelled in part by the economic downturn, smoldering ethnic friction, and the increased movement of militants and contraband (drugs, weapons, etc.) through the Valley.^[13]

Finally in 1992, Akayev began to incrementally form the country's military, but with a watchfully eye toward ensuring effective executive oversight. As with the other Central Asian states, the republic's officer corps and the bureaucracy of the Ministry of Defense initially were populated predominately by Slavs. There were few Kyrgyz mid- and senior-level officers in the Soviet Army, which made it very difficult to quickly develop a Kyrgyz professional cadre. This remains an acute problem, as accession and retention of Kyrgyz junior officers remains below targeted goals and training options and promotion are limited. Funding and quality of life issues are also affecting the enlisted troops as well, with desertions [extremely] high and personnel readiness very low.

Few Soviet military units were stationed in the Republic because the Tien Shan Mountains stood between Soviet Kyrgyzstan and China. As a backwater of the Soviet Union, the legacy force inherited by Kyrgyzstan was heavy, outfitted with older generation equipment, poorly structured and ill-equipped for the country's new security challenges. The readiness of most of this force and associated equipment was poor to fair under the Soviets and has continued to deteriorate

since independence, as the government's limited funding base was focused on higher priority concerns.

In 1992, the Kyrgyz army was comprised of one division based in Bishkek, an independent mountain warfare brigade based in Osh and three aviation-training regiments. The aviation element collapsed shortly afterwards. They also inherited the flight-training base at Kant and a world-class mountain warfare training facility. The newly established Kyrgyz Ministry of Defense (MoD) was committed to maintaining the legacy force structure, more because that was what they understood than because that was what they needed. However, throughout most of the 1990s a manpower problem existed due to the stated aim of 'drafting' 20,000 conscripts annually, which Bishkek could never achieve in practice.



Source: Military Balance 92-93 through 02-03

Financing its armed forces proved problematic throughout the period.^[14] Although there are concerns about the correctness and consistency of the budget reporting over the years^[15], the graphic does serve to show the scale of the cut the defense budget took in the mid-1990s as the economic pressure on the government grew and how the impact of these economic constraints continue to affect the budget. Despite these constraints and ongoing domestic turbulence, the Kyrgyz MoD identified the possible threat posed by Islamic militants by 1993 and had in fact begun to include lessons into its military training to counter such threats during the second-half of the 1990s. Indeed it planned accordingly the creation of an integrated system of national security — one capable of autonomous decision making in the defense and security areas. Nonetheless, this proved forlorn as attempts to achieve greater efficiency foundered upon a lack of financial resources. Thus by 1998, plans for the reform of the armed forces were completely disconnected from any genuine financial foundation and failed accordingly.^[16]

Threat Becomes More Acute

Both the 1999 and 2000 militant incursions in Kyrgyzstan proved very costly. According to Esen Topoyev, Kyrgyz Minister of Defense, around 5,000 Kyrgyz troops were deployed to the Batken district in 1999 to combat an estimated 800-1000 IMU militants. Topoyev claimed that 100 terrorists were killed, at a cost of \$50,000 each to the Kyrgyz State. As a consequence of both campaigns (1999/2000), 55 Kyrgyz servicemen were killed in action, but the IMU threat remained menacing.^[17]

Clearly the political and economic costs of the Batken campaigns were great in as much they served to highlight the fragile nature of Kyrgyzstan's security, whilst recognizing that Kyrgyzstan was unable to meet its own security needs on a unilateral basis. In military terms, its weakness was even more pronounced and as a result Bishkek was forced to appeal to its neighbors and Russia for military assistance. The government then embarked upon a multilayered foreign policy approach aimed at promoting greater regional security cooperation.

Kyrgyzstan's Search for International Security Assistance

CIS Collective Rapid Deployment Forces (CRDF)

Kyrgyzstan demonstrated great enthusiasm at an early stage for the idea of forming rapid reaction forces within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty (CST). Such plans appeared to boost the commitment of its neighbors to provide military assistance to the Kyrgyz armed forces in the event of crisis or conflict. Since its inception in May 2001, the CRDF, with its headquarters in Bishkek,^[18] was tasked with providing a security mechanism for collective defense against regional terrorism within Central Asia, capable of deployment across the borders of its members and placed under the operational command of a Russian General Officer, then Major-General Sergei Chernomordin.^[19]

It soon became clear that Moscow placed great emphasis on the potential for the CRDF to enhance regional security, and it appeared, in the aftermath of the deployment of US forces in Central Asia in the autumn of 2001, that the group would supply a lifeline to rekindle Russia's security role within the region.^[20] In March 2001, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* was openly describing the CST as a counterweight to the growing US and NATO presence and influence.^[21] One factor weakening the CST is that this collective security structure does not include Uzbekistan, which is the target of the region's principal terrorist organization.^[22] Its role as a geopolitical tool has developed with some difficulty, not least the strain it has come under since the deployment of Western military forces in the region.

Although the group is untested in conflict, its military exercises reveal much concerning how it could be used in a crisis. For example, *South Antiterror 2002* was a series of operational-tactical exercises that took place in Kyrgyzstan in April 2002. In addition to the national components of the CRDF, the regional Antiterrorist Center based in Bishkek was also involved in the exercises, as were heavy ground equipment, combat aircraft and air defense systems.^[23] The tactics used in the conduct of the exercises implied a heavy handed and perhaps inefficient way of combating

terrorists and suggested that there was little new in the potential of the CRDF. Tashkent made known its view that the training exercises were an irrelevance.^[24]

High profile command and staff exercises were held in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan between 13-16 June 2002, *Southern Shield of the Commonwealth 2002*, which rehearsed combating terrorist incursions within the region. Participation included ground forces, Special Forces and aviation. A battalion from the 201st Motor Rifle Division based in Tajikistan represented Russia, Kazakhstan contributed an airborne assault company and the Kyrgyz supplied a mountain infantry battalion, its 'Scorpion' Special Forces and Mi-8 helicopters.^[25] Despite these exercises and public statements regarding its capacity to cope with terrorist groups, there remained doubts concerning the CRDF's effectiveness.^[26]

In 2002 ahead of those exercises, the Kyrgyz and Tajik defense ministers met to discuss the prospect of a repetition of the militant incursions, and concluded that both states were well prepared to cope with such threats.^[27] However, given the nature of previous incursions, notably their link with drug trafficking and timed to coincide with the harvest of opiates in Afghanistan, it is hard to imagine either that the problem has dissipated or that security structures in Kyrgyzstan have markedly improved their ability to repel armed groups. Bishkek's complex search for security assistance necessitated further deepening its relations with Moscow.

Russia

Bilateral relations between Russia and Kyrgyzstan have been strong during the past decade. Kyrgyzstan has proven itself to be the most reliable partner within the CIS, reluctant to declare its independence after the disintegration of the USSR and hopeful that its support for the creation of a CIS unified command would avoid the necessity of forming its own armed forces. On 10 June 1992, the two states signed an agreement on 'friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance' and in the following decade more than 40 bilateral agreements were signed signaling close links. President Akayev, whilst addressing the Kyrgyz parliament in June 2000, referred to Russia as his country's key strategic ally, past, present and future.^[28] On 7 July 2000, Akayev and Putin signed a 'Declaration of Eternal Friendship', and intimated that defense and military-technical cooperation in addition to further integration within the CIS security structures would remain key bilateral priorities.^[29]

In the course of 2002, bilateral trade increased by 49 per cent,^[30] which was considered by both Akayev and Putin as a promising trend. They indicated that further economic cooperation would take place in agriculture, electric power engineering, water management and defense.^[31]

Before the Batken incursions in 1999, military-technical cooperation between Russia and Kyrgyzstan was making evident progress, as discussions were taking place on the repair and modernization of Kyrgyz weapons at Russian facilities. The implications of the Batken crisis stimulated further cooperation, with the modernization of air defense systems that constituted the Kyrgyz contribution to the CIS joint air defense system. Moscow also supplied modern border control technology to help strengthen Kyrgyz border security. In addition, in September 1999, a department was created within CIS headquarters to specifically facilitate further military-technical cooperation and analyze the lessons of the Batken conflict.^[32]

According to Colonel Igor Kurbatov, Chief of the Kyrgyz MoD Air Defense Directorate, Moscow has been examining the possibility of supplying the S-300 air defense system to Kyrgyzstan. This would enhance the security of Bishkek from aerial attack and would be consistent with the commitment of Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to ensuring the security of Central Asian airspace through the CIS-wide air defense network.^[33]

Of course, there have been points of contention in bilateral relations, including Russian use of military facilities in Kyrgyzstan and Kyrgyz debts owed to Russia. Russia maintains two military facilities in Kyrgyzstan; a long-range communication center at Chaldovar and an anti-submarine test facility on the Issyk-Kul Lake, the latter was set up in the mid-1960s. After the signing of the 1993 bilateral treaty on military cooperation, Russia did not pay for its use of the facilities in Kyrgyzstan, giving in exchange free education to Kyrgyz servicemen. However, according to Topoyev, by the late 1990s Bishkek began considering demanding rent, apparently aspiring to \$5 million per annum. The issue of Bishkek's debt of around \$160 million to Moscow also surfaces intermittently, usually at some embarrassment to Bishkek.^[34] One possible settlement to the dispute over the military facilities in Kyrgyzstan could entail Russia supplying military hardware and equipment in exchange.^[35]

Despite numerous reports in the Russian press that Kyrgyzstan had effectively made an about face in its relations with Russia owing to its decision to allow US forces to deploy to Manas airbase, Bishkek has been keen to play down its significance and heal any breach in its relations with Moscow. In fact, Askar Aimatov, Kyrgyz Foreign Minister, has publicly refuted the validity of such criticism, saying that 'we never turned away from Russia and we are not going to do that'. Russia remains, in his view, the main strategic partner of Kyrgyzstan.^[36] Bishkek, far from seeking to distance itself from Moscow, actively seeks a deeper partnership.

These issues were central to the meeting in Bishkek between Akayev and Putin that was timed to coincide with the VVS deployment to Kant in early December 2002. Significantly, the Kyrgyz debt to Russia was restructured and Akayev, reputedly skilled in his diplomacy with Moscow, could not contain his thankfulness to his Russian guests. Moreover, Akayev responding to the confirmation that Russia considers his country a 'reliable partner' urged Russia to become 'the major strategic pillar for Central Asia'.^[37] Putin expressed his gratitude for Russian being made the state language of Kyrgyzstan and promised to improve the position of Kyrgyz citizens going to Russia in search of employment. In an atmosphere of some warmth, the subject of recent domestic political instability in Kyrgyzstan was eschewed, though Putin made clear his interpretation of the relative importance of the CIS and bilateral relations with members states: 'The CIS is a viable structure, but let us not overestimate its importance. We are concentrating on bilateral cooperation'.^[38] Continued bilateral cooperation between Moscow and Bishkek will denote the preferred mechanism for achieving future security agreements whilst promoting regional security structures both within and outside the CIS.

Factors that encourage continued Russian military support to Kyrgyzstan are as follows:

- Close geographical proximity;
- Kyrgyz continued dependence on Russian military equipment and operational techniques;

- Kyrgyz dependence upon Russian Federation for training, spare parts, major equipment maintenance or overhaul;
- Common language;
- Established security agreements;
- Well known market and continued source of economic assistance and energy resources;
- Russia remains a key regional actor and Kyrgyzstan's principal counterbalance to China.

China

The complex nature of Kyrgyz geopolitics is especially evident in its relations with China. Drawn closer together through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and shared security concerns regarding the threat of terrorism, both states have recently quickened the pace of bilateral cooperation. In the Tien Shan mountain range straddling Kyrgyzstan and China, joint military exercises were conducted in October 2002.^[39] Multilateral SCO antiterrorist exercises were held in China and Kazakhstan, August 2003 and such exercises are likely to become more frequent as the SCO seeks to enhance its regional security credentials.^[40] China has security concerns about its Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, populated by a Muslim Turkic people, some of whom espouse violent means to achieving independence. These Security problems presented by separatist movements, such as the East Turkistan Islamic Movement^[41] in China and Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan, supply common interests in relations between Bishkek and Beijing.

Diplomatic agreements have been plentiful, since the rapid establishment of ties in 1992, though perhaps none more so than the 'Good Neighbor, Friendship and Cooperation Pact' which presidents Jiang and Akayev signed in June 2001. This has become a guiding document in the development of closer bilateral ties. It is hardly surprising that the two states recently signed an agreement on cooperation 'against terrorism, separatism and extremism', promising to support each other in this field and confirming China's commitment and interest in supporting security within Central Asia.^[42] In response to the Kyrgyz Republic's call for military assistance to confront increased terrorist threats the Chinese provided small amounts of direct military assistance, transferring stocks of small arms, ammunition, and other equipment.

Antiterrorist exercises conducted between Kyrgyz and Chinese forces are unique in Central Asia. With their shared concerns it was no surprise to Beijing to learn of the deployment of the Russian air force to Kant, which according to senior sources in the Kyrgyz government only took place after extensive consultations with China. On the whole, it appears that Beijing fully agreed with the Kyrgyz decision to open its base in this way.^[43]

USA & NATO

Nature of economic and political support

Although the United States recognized the independence and established diplomatic relations with each of the Republics not long after the collapse of the Soviet state, few Americans inside or outside of government really knew where this remote region was or had any concept of what interests Washington may have there. There were few evident connections one could make

except for the general desire to see these newly independent states succeed, confirming the death of the Soviet State.^[44] The US Congress established the framework for future relations through the passage of the Freedom Support Act in October 1992. US policy goals were initially very basic and included fostering peace, stability, democratization, free-market economies, free trade, de-nuclearization, adherence to human rights standards, and the integration of these states into the international community. Other than the nuclear concerns, there wasn't anything in the way of specific 'national interests' for either the public or the government to readily embrace.^[45] Energy resources would soon emerge as a commercial and national interest, but once again Kyrgyzstan was not among the chosen.

The US government's first level concern was with Kazakhstan and its nuclear disarmament, with President Nazarbayev signing a cooperative threat reduction (CTR) agreement to dismantle and destroy the country's nuclear weapons in December 1993.^[46] The Kazakh government would later commit itself to nuclear non-proliferation. Among the business community, the exploitation of energy resources in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan got first priority and US policy would soon follow. Although there were few economic attractions to the Kyrgyz Republic, US policy makers were drawn early into relations and the provision of economic assistance by the government's apparent commitment to democratization and a market economy, a perception that soon began to erode.^[47]

As the Table below indicates, Kyrgyzstan was the second highest recipient of US economic assistance during the 1990s, with most of the assistance granted in the form of humanitarian and reform aid, with very little of the monies directly targeted for security assistance programs.

**Cumulative US Assistance to the Central Asian States as of September 2000
(In Millions of US Dollars)**

Country	1992-2000 Cumulative Obligations
Kazakhstan	684.22
Kyrgyzstan	484.23
Tajikistan	287.30
Turkmenistan	181.65
Uzbekistan	218.32
Total	1,885.72
Sources: USAID and US State Department^[48]	

Nature and Level of military support

Security assistance and engagement with the Central Asian states before 9/11 was a mixed bag, with a few high points but also with a number of disappointments on both sides. With the collapse of the Soviet State, the US European Command (EUCOM) assumed responsibility for developing the military assistance and engagement programs for all of the Newly Independent States - in concert with the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) - and managing the execution of these programs. When prioritized against all other EUCOM-managed engagement programs, assistance to most of the Central Asian states, especially Kyrgyzstan, rated very low on the priority list and consequently received only nominal funding. Professional training for the

officer corps dominated the first couple years of the program, but a lack of English Language speakers restricted Kyrgyz participation. This problem was recognized and a language-lab was established in Bishkek.

NATO PfP

In January 1994, NATO adopted the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program as a means to expand military engagement with the emerging states, coordinate the efforts of all member nations, and share the economic burden. PfP's stated objectives are to promote democratic control of the military, facilitate military cooperation and exchanges, support transparency, increase the readiness and capabilities of partner nations to cope with crises, generate cooperative relations with NATO, and develop forces that could operate with the Alliance or its members.^[49] Despite economic and domestic social problems, Kyrgyzstan was among the first Central Asian states to join PfP and the Kyrgyz military has been an enthusiastic, if not a highly visible participant. According to many, the inclusion of these states in PfP formalized their relations with the Alliance, provided a mechanism for regional security cooperation, and a basis for combined action, if needed.^[50]

In December 1995, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan formed a multinational peacekeeping battalion, CENTRASBAT or Central Asian Peacekeeping Battalion. The concept and structure of CENTRASBAT was based on the BALTBAT (Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion) model. It would be one of seven regional multi-national units organized under PfP. The member states hoped that this unit, like BALTBAT, would serve as a vehicle to attract broader NATO military assistance and cooperation. For a number of reasons, the Central Asian states were not successful in fostering this type of military cooperation with any of NATO's European members and their principal advocate and bilateral source of Western military assistance remained the US. The Americans tried to use CENTRASBAT as a vehicle to develop regional cooperation and encourage the states to support one another in times of crisis, with only nominal success as regional issues and rivalries continue to dominate relations.

Through the assistance of its CENTRASBAT partners, Kyrgyzstan participated in a number of major PfP exercises, to include: the Cooperative Nugget exercises in 1995, 1997 and 2000. This exercise series emphasizes peacekeeping scenarios and focuses on the planning and execution of peacekeeping activities for the staffs and the employment of peacekeeping tactics for the troop units. They also participated in past Cooperative Osprey exercises that are similarly focused on improving the interoperability of the attending nations and training for peace support operations.^[51]

CENTCOM assumes responsibility

In 1999, the US Congress reaffirmed Washington's commitment to continued military engagement with Central Asia, with the passage of the Silk Road Strategy Act. This legislation was much better targeted to the needs of these states, as it explicitly provided for assistance to counteract drug trafficking, weapons proliferation, and transnational criminal activity, as well as regional terrorism.

US EUCOM transferred responsibility for US military engagement activities, planning, and operations in Central Asia to US Central Command (CENTCOM) in 1999. At the time, CENTCOM indicated that its strategy for the region was focused on PfP, the Marshall Center (the defense educational coordinator for PfP), and IMET (International Military Education and Training) programs to foster 'apolitical professional militaries that are capable of responding to regional peacekeeping and humanitarian needs.'^[52] This strategy essentially was the same as that inherited from EUCOM. Improving the professional standards of the officer corps remained a central focus, with little attention paid to improving the readiness or combat capability of the Kyrgyz armed forces for non-peacekeeping missions. The CENTCOM commander made one key decision that added a much needed real-world focus to the training provided, as he gave operational lead for the engagement program for the Central Asian states to his Special Operations Commander. In 1999, Army Special Forces (SF) teams began training Kyrgyz soldiers, as well as Uzbek, Kazakh and Tajik. The training focused on those small-unit skills that are needed to combat insurgents or terrorists.^[53] These SF teams conducted approximately one-month in-country training sessions four times per year in each country, working directly with the security and military formations that were responsible for anti-terrorist operations.^[54]

Four significant problems appear to have plagued the relationship between the US and Central Asia, especially Kyrgyzstan. First, the military assistance provided by the US and its NATO allies never lived up to the expectations of the local militaries. Moreover, all too often, especially during the formative years of this relationship, the local US Embassy staffs reinforced these high expectations and later budgetary realities fell far short of the promised mark.

Second, military relations were limited in scope, both bilateral and through PfP. Although they were welcomed into PfP from the start and soon took part in exercises, 'it is apparent that NATO gave Central Asian security a low priority. Not only did the scale of the CENTRASBAT exercises tend to be small, but the relative level of resources devoted overall to bolstering regional military effectiveness was minimal.'^[55] Around NATO Headquarters the common argument against additional support for the states of Central Asia was that: they were too far removed from Europe; we have little knowledge of the individual countries and few, if any, strategic interests at stake; the region remains too unstable and fraught with uncertainty; and none of the states adhere to democratic norms and more often than not they remain autocratic police states.

Third, the type of military assistance – generally – provided did not meet the growing needs of these states, especially for a Kyrgyzstan that was facing a serious terrorist threat. The initial focus on peacekeeping and interoperability was fine, but, as the perceived terrorist threat grew, the local militaries and their public began to question 'what the real significance of the CENTRASBAT exercises is for strengthening security.' A clear exception was the low-profile tactical training provided by the Special Operations units, discussed above.^[56] It is also interesting to note that the first significant transfer of US military equipment to states in the region did not occur until 2000.

Fourth, the failure of the US and NATO to effectively work with Russia in building compatible regional strategies based on their often common or complementary interests and similar relations with the Central Asian states. The West tended to view that ties to new states were zero-sum:

Central Asia would become pro-Western only to the extent that it could be disentangled from its dependency on Russia.^[57]

US strategy during the 1990s seems to be best characterized as an effort to undermine the ability of any outside power to establish hegemony in region, while not getting the US entangled in a region that was not considered of ‘critical strategic importance.’^[58]

Post 11 September 2001

The events of 11 September 2001 and the start of the US campaign against terrorism dramatically changed the US attitude toward Central Asia, which is reflected in its proactive efforts to enhance its military relations with these states, establishing a presence in several. In Washington’s perception, the terrorist attack and the ensuing campaign have ‘swept away much of the uncertainty about Central Asia’s importance to the international system and its relationship with the major powers, especially the United States’.^[59] In the war on terrorism, several of the regional nations became ‘frontline states’ in the US-led struggle against the Taliban and the Al Qaeda terrorist organization. Washington’s redesignation of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in September 2002 and tying it to Al Qaeda was an important political move.^[60]

Clearly, Kyrgyzstan’s security relationship with the US and the West has changed greatly post-9/11. Bishkek signed a one-year access (lease) agreement for Manas International Airport — just outside of the capital — in December 2001.^[61] The lease agreement reportedly does not restrict the nature of the operations staged from the base (humanitarian, combat support, or combat) and access has been extended to a number of allied air forces (including the British, Canadian, French, Danish, German, Spanish, and South Korean).

The population of military personnel from the US and its allies grew to about 2,000 by summer 2002, with temporary facilities constructed to house the personnel and service the aircraft. The US has carved out a 37-acre military support base as an adjunct part of Manas International Airport. This former Soviet bomber base has the longest runway in region and can support the deployment of all types of US and NATO aircraft, to include the US Air Force’s heavy, wide-body aircraft — C-5s and C-17s airlifters, and KC-135 tankers, as well as an array of tactical combat aircraft. This facility is a strategic logistics, refueling, and operational hub for air forces supporting operations over Afghanistan and the movement of troops and cargo into Afghanistan. Manas is clearly the best operational base that US forces have direct access to in the region.^[62] The nature and scale of the ongoing upgrade program at Manas suggests that the US hopes to retain long-term access to this facility and has obtained the right to renew the lease agreement.

Payment for use of the airfield reportedly includes: an economic compensation package totaling an estimated \$40 million a year, upgrading of the airfield to meet NATO standards, increased military assistance — training and joint exercises.^[63] Bishkek apparently is hoping that the US military presence will provide a number of benefits, including: stimulation to a stagnant economy, assistance that will help the country rebuild its small military and improve its combat capability, and help improve the security/stability situation both within the country and on its immediate borders. Whether or not US forces are stationed permanently at Manas, the upgrading

of the base by the US Air Force is an investment in the future in terms of availability of the base for future contingencies.

Central Asian states, which had received a relatively small share of US security assistance funds during the 1990s, saw this type of support increase dramatically, beginning with emergency supplemental appropriations to facilitate their participation in Operation Enduring Freedom. Moreover, this support has for Kyrgyzstan translated into dramatic across the board increases in US assistance programs.

Total US Assistance to the Central Asian States, 2001-2002 (\$,000)

Country	2001 (Actual)	2002 (Budgeted)
Kazakhstan	74,920	90,000
Kyrgyzstan	41,600	95,000
Tajikistan	72,090	141,000
Turkmenistan	12,880	18,100
Uzbekistan	58,680	219,800
Source: US State Department, 01 data http://www.state.gov/p/eur/ace/; 02 data http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rt/cacen/c6984.htm		

The US government significantly increased the security-related assistance as a result of Bishkek's cooperation in the war against terrorism and their hosting of US military presence. As the graphic above indicates, total US Assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic more than doubled from 2001 to 2002 and the 2001 assistance total was much greater than the previous year. The security and law enforcement component of the fiscal year (FY) 2002 assistance budget for the Kyrgyz Republic was \$37.4 million, which is nearly 10 times what it had been in the 1990s. This increased funding targeted improvements for the border guards, security services and the armed forces.^[64] Key elements of the security related assistance includes \$600,000 in IMET funding that will support the training of Kyrgyz security personnel in US schools or by US training teams dispatched to Bishkek. It also includes \$2 million budgeted for Foreign Military Financing (FMF), with about \$9 million in additional funds requested for counterterrorism training and equipment. If approved by Congress, this supplemental request would bring FMF funding up to \$11 million for 2002. Additional FMF to help Kyrgyzstan's interoperability with US and coalition forces to secure its borders and counter-terrorism was also being sought. Anticipate that these funding levels will rise again for 2003 and 2004 and likely hold fairly stable as long as Central Asia continues to have a high profile role in US security policy.^[65]

US International Military Education and Training in Central Asia (\$, 000)

Country	2001 (Actual)	2002> (Estimate)	2003 (Requested)
Kazakhstan	583	800	1,000

Kyrgyzstan	380	600	1,100
Tajikistan	---	250	350
Turkmenistan	258	450	450
Uzbekistan	494	1,000	1,200

US Foreign Military Financing in Central Asia (\$, 000)

Country	2001 (Actual)	2002 (Estimate)	2003 (Requested)
Kazakhstan	1,896	2,750	3,000
Kyrgyzstan	1,846	2,000	4,000
Tajikistan	---	700	---
Turkmenistan	699	---	700
Uzbekistan	2,445	207	8,750

Source: US State Department figures, <http://www.state.gov/m/rm/rls/iab/2003/7809.htm>

Future of the relationship

Although the long-term future of US strategy toward the region and Kyrgyzstan in particular remains uncertain, there are those that argue that, as a result of its large regional military presence, the US has displaced the other major players in Central Asia and assumed the mantle of security manager for the region.^[66] Although it is clear that the region has assumed a much more important position in the US's security strategy, it may be too early to come to such a dramatic conclusion, especially given the varied signals presented by US military and political leaders. CENTCOM has frequently noted that US military presence is only temporary and there is no intention to establish permanent bases in the region.^[67] And yet, both President Bush and Secretary of State Powell have pledged that 'the United States will not abandon the people of Afghanistan'.^[68] Given the critical importance of the bases in Central Asia to the support of allied troops stationed in Afghanistan, such a statement clearly infers the need to retain a long-term military presence in Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan.

The possible nature of this relationship potentially took a sharp turn in March 2002. In a bilateral US-Uzbek declaration, the US declared that 'it would regard with grave concern any external threat to the security and territorial integrity of the Republic of Uzbekistan'.^[69] Although this declaration does not specifically address Kyrgyzstan, it does suggest a growing US commitment to the security and stability of the region. This perception was reinforced by Secretary of State Colin Powell's statement to the US House of Representatives, International Relations Committee in February 2002, during which he indicated that the United States 'will have a continuing interest and presence in Central Asia of a kind we could not have dreamed of before'.^[70] Two months earlier, US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, A. Elizabeth Jones, had tied the US link to this region even tighter, stating that 'Our country is now linked with this region in ways we could never have imagined before September 11. Our policy in Central Asia must include a commitment to deeper, more sustained, and better-coordinated engagement on the full range of issues upon which we agree and disagree.'^[71]

The nature of US military presence in the region and each of the states will adjust in accordance with changes in the antiterrorist campaign and the situation in Afghanistan. This may well also bring changes in the security relationship between the US and these states. Regardless of what happens, it is clear that the arrival of US military forces in the region has had a profound affect on the security environment and the roles of both Russia and China.

There appear to be several pluses and minuses associated with the US military presence and increased military assistance and engagement, to include:

Pluses

- The US military is much better prepared to provide necessary military assistance;
- The US military has established and proven tactics and equipment for conducting counterinsurgent operations;
- The US/West European presence could well lead to enhanced military cooperation and assistance from other NATO countries;
- Anticipate that expanded US military engagement programs will also lead to increased economic assistance packages.

Minuses

- US military training generally focuses on officers and NCOs and it generally requires a working knowledge of English;
- US training establishments and programs are not prepared to support the technical training of local enlisted troops, especially on non-US systems;
- Russia is currently training the trainers and the technical service personnel and the Kyrgyz can not afford to jeopardize this arrangement;
- Long-term US military assistance is usually tied to commitment to political and economic reform, pushes for further democratization, human rights, and free market economies;
- Could negatively affect Kyrgyzstan's efforts to improve its security cooperation and assistance programs with key regional states, to include Russia, China and Iran;
 - Russia is the key provider of technical assistance, spare parts and munitions for the current generations of combat systems.
 - Regional powers are important trade partners, especially Russia, and there is concern about the implications for future trade and economic assistance.
- Without a regional presence, US forces are stationed too far from the region to respond quickly to any crisis.

Deployment at Kant Airbase in December 2002

In April 2002, a meeting of the CST Security Council Secretaries first discussed the possibility of deploying Russian air power to Kyrgyzstan in support of the CRDF. The heads of the CST member countries agreed in October 2002 to approve a charter and agreement on the legal basis of the collective security treaty organization, signaling a serious attempt to transform the regional body into an international security organization. In due course, a decision on the CRDF was

taken during a meeting of CST Defense Ministers held in Moscow on 20 November. Although the initial deployment was temporary in nature, plans were proposed to form a permanent base at Kant in 2003, which will be considered fully by the CST Security Council Secretaries during their meeting in April 2003. Kant airbase was officially opened, after many delays, on 23 October 2003. Thus, the timescale from its first consideration to full implementation took more than one year.^[72]

In late June 2002, when Esen Topoyev announced that Kant would be made available for the CRDF, *Kommersant* in Moscow reported that it signaled the intention of the Kyrgyz government to re-enter the fold, reorienting its security needs toward Moscow as a prelude to asking the western forces to leave Manas.^[73] Of course, it did no such thing, but demonstrated that Bishkek looks for multiple security partners, including the West, to support its own fragile security.

Air Force Components

On 30 November 2002, components of the VVS began arriving at Kant airfield in Kyrgyzstan. Initially two Su-25 fighters and two IL-76 cargo planes arrived at the military airfield.^[74] Further air movements soon followed the high profile deployment that took place ahead of a meeting between Presidents Putin and Akayev in Bishkek. Between 30 November and 4 December 2002, three Su-27 fighters from Lipetsk,^[75] two Su-25 attack planes from Dushanbe and two IL-76 military cargo planes constituted the total Russian deployment at Kant.^[76]

Kant Airfield

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian air force rapidly withdrew from its bases in Central Asia, leaving very little of value in Kyrgyzstan. Since the US deployment at Manas airbase in 2001 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, the choice of location for the CRDF airbase was limited to Bishkek, Dzhahal Abad, Isfar, Kant, Kyzyl-Kiya, Naryn, Osh, Przhevalsk and Tokmak.^[77] The airfield at Kant was a former Soviet training base that was used to train foreign pilots. Throughout the 1990s, it stood as a stark reminder of the soviet era and fell into a poor state of repair. Nevertheless, since 2001 the Kyrgyz government has given priority to renovating the airfield,^[78] which included renovation of the air traffic control building, construction of a new administrative building and putting the airstrip and main antenna in working order.^[79] This airfield is ideally situated 20 km east of Bishkek, set in a rural setting away from densely populated areas.

The November deployment of a small number of Russian aircraft to Kant, months ahead of the scheduled permanent deployment, was to evaluate the status and operational standards of the airfield. Lieutenant-General Alexander Zelin, Deputy Commander of the VVS, led a group of 70 air force experts to inspect the airbase infrastructure and barracks areas.^[80] They reported to Moscow on the exact condition of the airfield and, given the airfields current shortcomings, there can be little doubt that Moscow will have to invest further money into upgrading its condition, if it is to house a permanent or even long-term Russian presence.

Kant was one of the deployment airfields offered to the US in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001. An Air Force Survey Team inspected Kant along with the other proposed sites,

preferring Manas. Regarding Kant, the Survey Team reportedly found that this airfield, which had been originally designed to support training operations and use by light training aircraft, was in poor condition and did not meet the US military's specific operational needs or safety standards.^[81] For example, the runway slabs there are only 18 cm thick limiting the operational capabilities of the base; whilst it is ideal for the deployment of light fighters and transport planes of the kind envisaged by the Russian and Kyrgyz militaries – this runway could not support heavy, outsized strategic airlift or tanker aircraft like the C-5 or the KC-10/135.^[82] It is currently able to support planes weighing a maximum of 200 tonnes.^[83] Even beyond the runway further work is needed to bring this airfield up to operational standard, especially improvements in the navigation equipment necessary to aid the landing of Russian aircraft and the facilities to house its troops and equipment.

Sergei Ivanov, Russian Defense Minister, during his visit to Bishkek in early December 2002, dismissed as 'absolute rubbish' reports that the cost of renovating Kant could reach \$300 million. Clearly, the exact figure and the cost to Russia will be the subject of bilateral negotiation. However, it is interesting to note that in the spring of 2002 the international coalition was considering expanding their use of Kyrgyz airfields in support of operations in Afghanistan. Western commanders considered using Tokmak airfield, 60 km east of Bishkek, but they rapidly dismissed it since it had fallen into disuse and disrepair following the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Muratbek Imanaliyev, Kyrgyz Foreign Minister, told parliament in April 2002 that Kant was also dismissed on the basis that its renovation would take a very long time at an estimated cost of \$300 million.^[84] Ivanov's reaction to the large cost figure [likely] reveals differences between Russian and Western standards in carrying out such work. Further modernization of the infrastructure and technical features of the base will be required, though Moscow will attempt, no doubt, to minimize costs.^[85]

The planned test deployment of the VVS assets to Kant was only partly successful, as the projected number of aircraft did not arrive, partly due to poor weather conditions. When the base is fully operational in 2003, plans are to station more than 20 Russian aircraft and 700 servicemen and civilian personnel there, for an unspecified time.^[86] It is estimated that the cost of maintaining the airbase at Kant will reach \$50 million per annum.^[87] Such commitment necessarily demands analysis of the cost-benefit relationship. The question must be asked can Moscow find no other way of enhancing the antiterrorist capabilities of its Central Asian allies other than committing itself to an experiment in the use of airpower?

Kyrgyz Air Force

The Kyrgyz Air Force is the smallest of the armed services, with 2,400 personnel and a small number of operational aircraft. They inherited a fairly large fleet of older fixed- and rotor-winged aircraft from the Soviet Air Force units and the flight training school that were located in the Republic at transition. Twelve years, generally poor maintenance practices, and limited access to critical spare parts calls into question the serviceability of many, if not most, of the airframes still in their inventory.^[88] Moreover, the electronic navigation, communications and weapons packages on board most of these aircraft are now obsolete and in need of modernization, if they are expected to perform just about any of the mission requirements routinely tasked to current

generation aircraft. The L-39 and the helicopters are the principal ground attack assets remaining in the force. The air force reports that it has a total of 52 combat aircraft and nine attack helicopters assigned to operational units, see the Table below for the organization of the service and current aircraft holdings of the various units. Given the age and original design of these airframes, they do not have the targeting systems, communication packages, or the capability to deliver the precision munitions that Russian pilots are using in Chechnya and clearly nothing equivalent to what the USAF is using in Afghanistan. Moreover, the Kyrgyz pilots do not have either the training opportunity or the combat experience necessary to refine their ground support techniques. They also do not have access to the timely intelligence and targeting information needed to effectively support these types of closely coordinated operations. Nor do they have the trained forward air controllers and equipment necessary to effectively control the final approach to target.

Reported structure and aircraft holdings of the Kyrgyz Air Force

Unit Type	Equipment
Fighter regiment (1)	4 L-39 and 48 MiG-21
Composite aviation regiment (1)	2 An-12 and 2 An-26
Helicopter regiment (1)	9 Mi-24 and 23 Mi-8
Aircraft in storage	2 Mi-23, 24 L-39 and 24 MiG-21
Source: <i>The Military Balance: 2002-2003</i>	

Implications of the Russian Air Force Deployment in Kyrgyzstan

Planned Structure of the CRDF Aviation Group

Following the test deployment to Kant, the Russian and Kyrgyz governments are expected to conclude an agreement in May 2003 on the permanent basing of a combined aviation group that will be used to support CRDF antiterrorist or counter-insurgent operations.^[89] Kyrgyz Defense Minister, Esen Topoyev, more clearly defined what he saw as the aviation group's dual mission when he stated that the aviation group will have two tasks: 'One is purely on the united air-defense system, which includes Su-27 aircraft, and the other is on supporting land forces. These are army aviation, or attack planes, as we call them, which are Su-25s, and they will be deployed here starting next year'.^[90] Unspoken, but hopefully included as third and fourth mission requirements of the Russian air force element will be: expanding the training level and operational experience of the Kyrgyz pilots and providing a base facility for repairing and/or upgrading the readiness and capabilities of the Kyrgyz air force's aircraft. These latter two missions are extremely important, if the Russians are indeed looking to improve the Kyrgyz military's combat capability.

Since the Kyrgyz air force is comparatively weak and its personnel poorly trained, the majority of the aviation group will consist of VVS fighters and transport planes. Current reporting indicates that the aviation group will include only Russian and Kyrgyz assets and be configured as outlined below.

CRDF Aviation Group^[91]

Russian Air Force

Type	Role	Quantity
Su-25	Attack	5
Su-27	Fighter	5
An-26	Transport	2
Il-76	Transport	2
L-39	Trainer	5
Mi-8	Support	2

Kyrgyz Air Force

Type	Role	Quantity
L-39	Trainer	4
Mi-8	Support	2
An-26	Transport	1
Source: Sokut, 'We Will Threaten Terrorists'.		

Major-General Vladimir Varfolomeyev, Russian Defense Attaché in Bishkek, expects the Su-27 (NATO designation Flanker) and Su-25 (Frogfoot) aircraft to be deployed to Kant from neighboring Dushanbe.^[92]

The Su-27 fighter, like the US F-15 and F-14, is designed for gaining air supremacy and supporting air operations. It is also capable of operating up to 1,600 km from its base, allowing it to operate from bases further from the target and crisis zone than the other deployed aircraft. Its operational use in the context of the CRDF would be to protect Bishkek from aerial attack, intercepting separate targets in Kyrgyz and Tajik airspace and escorting cargo or passenger planes.^[93] In Chechnya, the Su-27 is more frequently used to attack ground targets with special and precision munitions and would likely support a similar role with the CRDF.

Like the US A-10, the Su-25 was specifically designed as a ground attack aircraft, getting its first combat exposure in Soviet operations in Afghanistan. The lessons from this conflict, against a guerrilla force like the Mujahadin, resulted in many improvements in this aircraft that has played a principal role in both Chechnya I and II. Both the Soviet and Russian air forces have found that it is ideal for direct troop support because of its relatively low-speed (subsonic), armored underbelly, weapons mix and load, and day/night capabilities.^[94] It is highly maneuverable and able to attack when there is limited space over the target. The Su-25 appears to be well suited to attack targets in the rugged and mountainous parts of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, [particularly the Ferghana valley] where the insurgent bands generally operate.

An-26 transport aircraft is designed for moving airborne assault forces and Special Forces, as well as carrying conventional troops and delivering weapons and supplies to the theatre of operations. Il-76 and An-26 will carry out theatre and tactical transportation duties, with the Mi-8

handling most of the tactical transportation, medevac and search and rescue operations.^[95] Furthermore the Mi-8 can be used effectively to enhance the mobility of ground subunits in addition to supplying battlefield firepower. The Mi-8 can also be configured as an airborne communication relay station to boost the communication's range of the units in the field or in the critical role of orbiting outside the attack zone to provide final targeting instructions to the attacking aircraft.

The L-39 is used as a basic pilot training aircraft. It can, however, be re-equipped for use as a strike aircraft or light bomber, although it was not designed for combat missions and has only limited operational capabilities and nominal effectiveness in such a role.^[96] Like the Mi-8, the L-39 can also be used as a forward air control aircraft, providing targeting instruction to the attack aircraft.

If necessary, once the base is fully operational, further reinforcement could enhance Russian airpower, particularly using the Su-24M (Fencer) fighter-bomber, which has not yet been deployed to the base for political reasons.^[97] Clearly, these reinforcements [or others] can be either generated by changing operational needs or for political purposes, when a particular message is being conveyed.

Antiterrorist Capabilities of the Aviation Group

An assessment of the antiterrorist function of the aviation group must be based upon both what the respective governments believe its purpose to be, as well as a consideration of the operational and tactical use of Russian airpower particularly in Chechnya. First, the view of the Russian government could not be more clear: the aviation group is a lifeline for the CRDF, providing essential support for ground forces in combat operations against groups of international or regional terrorists operating within Central Asia. Politically it is intended to strengthen bilateral ties between Russia and Kyrgyzstan, promote stability through the Collective Security Treaty, demonstrate Russia's proactive military role in combating the region's terrorist threat, and reinvigorate Russia's security links with the Central Asian Republics. Sergei Ivanov made clear the military purpose of the aviation component in the CRDF, speaking ahead of a meeting between Putin and Akayev. In Ivanov's view 'In case of aggression against Kyrgyzstan or *any member of the Collective Security Treaty*,^[98] the air force unit will be employed for its direct purpose - to bomb and wipe out the enemy - this is what the air force unit is being set up for'.^[99] Indeed the security situation in Central Asia directly influences Russian security, thus the deployment meets Russia's own security needs as well.

Vladimir Putin shared this view, believing that by creating the aviation group it would add new capabilities to the CRDF, since its respective parts have been based in their respective territories and have thus been unable to rapidly deploy to a trouble spot during a crisis: the aviation group is intended to rectify that problem. Putin went on: 'Therefore the creation of an aviation group for the rapid-deployment forces of the Collective Security Treaty with a permanent base at a Kyrgyz airfield puts a completely different complexion on these rapid-deployment forces. This means that, first, these rapid-deployment forces have powerful aviation support and, secondly, this means - our pilots have already landed —that these rapid-deployment forces have been provided with the capacities of transport aviation and the possibility of fast delivery of forces and cargoes

to a specific region, including Bishkek, if needed'.^[100] Remarkable in as much as Putin implicitly admitted that until the deployment of Russian airpower the CRDF were far from mobile or able to respond at speed to an emergency situation.

Putin's statement, however upbeat about the prospects for the CRDF and further cooperation with Bishkek, betrayed recognition of the imperfection of the CRDF. More than one year after its creation Vladimir Rushailo, Secretary of the Russian Security Council removed all doubt. During a meeting with President Akayev, he confirmed the need to bolster the CST and strengthen security cooperation between the two states, yet he went further than Putin in stating that the deployment of the VVS to Kyrgyzstan marked the *creation* of the CRDF - a military body first set up in 2001.^[101] In reality of course, the CRDF remained a largely paper force even after its much publicized creation in 2001, as it still lacked a credible military capability. Given the geographical problems of deploying ground forces in the mountainous Central Asian region, especially in areas such as the Ferghana Valley, where the overland transport routes are underdeveloped, the CRDF lacked any teeth without the air assets necessary to move troops, supplies and firepower where needed quickly. Each of the Central Asian signatories to the CST CRDF (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan), with few viable security alternatives, were forced to publicly support the CRDF as both a deterrence and an effective antiterrorist force, much in the style of the 'Emperors New Clothes': no-one dared to point out the obvious failings of the security structure. It is inexplicable as to why Moscow refused to deploy an air component in support of the CRDF at an earlier stage, particularly as Rushailo has suggested that there is an important preventative dimension to the force.^[102]

Tactics

During the first Chechen campaign (1994-96), the VVS is generally recognized to have performed poorly. It inflicted a great deal of collateral damage (on both the civilian population and its own troops), largely due to the absence of reliable target identification, the heavy use of free fall and unguided munitions, and the very limited use of precision weapons. Precision-guided munitions were only utilized during 2.3% of sorties flown. Whilst Russia does not possess all-weather precision weapons, the weather also hampered operations, masking the target and restricting the effective employment of such munitions. Although the second Chechen campaign (1999-present) witnessed an improvement in Russia's use of airpower, problems persisted based on the underlying ailments of the VVS; most air operations were conducted in daylight and were again dependant on the weather, 'dumb bombs' were also the principal type of munitions used, and as the pockets of Chechen fighters reduced, so too did the combat effectiveness of airpower – as it was relegated more and more to the support role.^[103]

The Russian military has used airpower in both Chechen conflicts without achieving a convincing demonstration of its *utility* against terrorists. In reality, airpower has a limited and predominantly supporting role to play in antiterrorist operations. It has *utility* but it is most effective when used in concert with ground operations that concentrate enemy forces, provide clear target data/ID, and vector in the air, as demonstrated by the US Air Force in Afghanistan.^[104]

The tactics employed by the VVS did change in the second Chechen campaign, and this provides some insight into the type of aircraft and possible tactics in mind for the air group deployed in support of the CRDF. Helicopter aviation provided critical support, particularly Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters that were used to move troops around the battlefield, provide fire support to the operation, and ensure the flow of supplies to the troops in the field. Based on operations both in Afghanistan and Chechnya, the military soon learned that helicopter lift decreases and fuel consumption increases when operating in a mountainous environment, a fact that was all too often overlooked in the planning phase.^[105]

Aviation tactical groups (ATG) operating in the second Chechen campaign used Mi-8 (one or two) and Mi-24 (two to four) in support of company, battalion and regimental tactical groups. Within the ATGs, Mi-8s would direct Mi-24s to their targets. Mi-24s were also used in 'free hunt' operations, going after rebel formations and suppressing rebel positions. Su-25 and Mi-24 attack helicopters provided cover for the Mi-8 whilst the latter transported ground forces, or supplied stores, including food, water, fuel and ammunition, to the units operating in the mountains.^[106]

During the Second Chechen Campaign, problems relating to the condition of the VVS continued to affect operations. Amongst these was the poor intelligence preparation of the battlefield; shortcomings of reconnaissance in monitoring the build up of rebels and accurately reporting damage assessments of attacks on them, leading to the development of generally poor and/or outdated target lists. Pilots navigated visually and used nonsecure radios permitting Chechen rebels to monitor their frequencies. Such failings help to explain the accidental bombing of the Georgian town of Zelo-Omalu by a Su-25.^[107]

The Mi-24, used so frequently in the Chechen conflict, is notably absent from the planned deployment to Kant. Since the Chechen model has only limited application in the Central Asian region, one can only suggest that the aviation group would be primarily used for supporting ground forces, moving them to where they are urgently needed, as well as psychological operations (harassing the enemy). In the absence of the Mi-24, the supporting cover for the Mi-8s tactical transport missions would be from the Su-25. Russian experience with the Mi-24 helicopter and the Su-25 ground-attack aircraft in both Afghanistan and Chechnya indicates that the fixed-wing aircraft is nearly as efficient in the low intensity combat environment and is less vulnerable than the helicopter. Moreover, the Su-25 does not signal its approach like the heavy attack helicopter does and can effectively pass over enemy troops at 200 feet before they have an opportunity to react.^[108] The Su-25 can also operate with the subsonic Kyrgyz L-39s fixed-wing aircraft much better than can the Mi-24. The success of any air operations will depend upon good to excellent intelligence, which is not something that the Kyrgyz are reputed to possess. Topoyev has said that the two Kyrgyz Mi-8 helicopters would be used for search and rescue (and medevac) operations. The Kyrgyz aviation is also expected to perform reconnaissance, monitor the Central Asian region and carry out transport duties.^[109]

Future Concerns

Statements made by the Russian leadership betrayed two things most clearly. First, despite the official denials, the CRDF was not an effective antiterrorist body from its inception to the time of

the deployment of Russian airpower in support of the force. Secondly, the actual deployment of the aviation group in 2003 demonstrates that Moscow has qualitatively raised its expectations of the antiterrorist purpose of the CRDF and intends to make good its commitment to the security of the southern CIS region, which it views as an intrinsic part of its own security interests.

In fact, there is near unanimity in Moscow and Bishkek concerning the implications of the aviation support for the CRDF. President Akayev, after signing a new security cooperation agreement with President Putin in Bishkek on 5 December 2002, commented on the implications of Russian air support for the CRDF:

We believe this is exactly the specific realization of the aims of the collective rapid-deployment forces. This will also be a certain, powerful security umbrella for Kyrgyzstan. We are now happy that our military airport in Kant has revived and very modern Russian fighters are flying over it. [\[110\]](#)

Nevertheless, there remain open questions as to exactly what role Russian airpower will play and will it have an impact upon the regional terrorist groups. The military thinking that underpins the creation of the CRDF and its support by aviation seems linked to the conviction that conventional military power is an effective antiterrorist force. Russia's experience confronting the Chechen guerrillas has provided some experience in both the use and limits of airpower. Similarly, the Kyrgyz memory of the Batken campaigns highlight their own shortfalls and the need for improved combat capabilities, as noted earlier. But whilst airpower can be effectively utilized in destroying armed formations, such as the pockets of Chechen or Taliban guerrillas, it cannot be used to effectively pursue terrorists into urban areas where they can hide amongst the civilian population. The most likely use of the air component of the CRDF is to move troops and supplies quickly to the theatre of operations or from place to place within it, which is best done by helicopter.

Rather than using the VVS to destroy bridges, mine roads and cut off supply and retreat routes to armed terrorists, it makes more sense to go after them directly using Special Forces — supported by aviation — not aviation alone. What kind of antiterrorist operation is the VVS intended to support? If it is aimed against the IMU, making an incursion similar to those of 1999 and 2000 in the Batken, then conceivably the use of airpower could play a critical part. However, the initiative lies in the hands of the sub-state groups - they will determine the course and purpose of their own actions and may not conform to past practices. Furthermore, Rushailo's belief in the preventative dimension of the force ignores the Kyrgyz experience of the Batken when they drew back from using airpower because the terrorists had seized hostages.

Russian airpower and its performance in antiterrorist operations are also open to question. Similar problems afflicting the Russian military, such as indiscipline, low morale and personnel problems plague the VVS. Crucially, it is undermined by lack of finance and its combat readiness is further lowered by fuel shortages and the lack of flight training of its pilots, averaging 20 hours flying time per annum, in stark contrast to the 150 hours more common in the Soviet air force or the NATO standard of 180 hours. These conditions are not expected by analysts to markedly improve within the next decade. [\[111\]](#)

Possible weaknesses that would require rectifying, if the aviation group is to prove effective in Central Asia:

- Altered operational tactics to suit the Central Asian region;
- Enhanced intelligence gathering, a more responsive targeting process, and speed of implementation;
- Well trained pilots that are able to operate at night;
- Defense countermeasures against shoulder launched AAMs;
- A lack of trained Kyrgyz Forward Air Controllers and their support equipment for deployment with ground units or to operate in the air.

As an antiterrorist force, aviation operating alone is of limited value, as has been demonstrated in the history of recent conflict. After the initial use of the US air force in Afghanistan it required the follow up of Special Forces on the ground. Terrorist tactics can also influence the decision on whether the use of airpower is appropriate, as witnessed during the Batken campaign in 1999; militants were avoiding being brought to battle and timing their operations to coincide with poor weather conditions or nightfall.

Assessment: Bishkek's Security Tightrope

Clearly, the security environment has markedly changed following the chain of tragic events that brought US troops into Kyrgyzstan and resulted in the defeat of the Taliban and occupation of Afghanistan, and damage to the infrastructure of several terrorist organizations, including the IMU. But the war itself did not stabilize Bishkek's security environment, nor did it 'alter many basic long-term trends in the region' that will affect the role of the major players, especially the outsider – the US. The political and security environment will continue to both complicate US activities and color Kyrgyz and broader regional perceptions of US moves and intentions.^[112] Key players such as Russia and China, despite common desires for regional stability, undoubtedly will interpret US activity as an effort to gain hegemony in what they consider their backyard.

For Russia, the situation is much different, as it has long been a provider of markets and assistance, including security assistance, to Bishkek. But the nature and level of that support has been far below expectations. During the latter part of the Yeltsin presidency, the Central Asian states virtually fell off Moscow's foreign policy agenda and it was President Putin that scrambled to re-establish fruitful relations with these states, building on their common concern over the spread of fundamentalist bred terrorism. Following 9/11, Putin offered Russian support for the war on terrorism, but more importantly for Bishkek, he raised no public opposition to the establishment of a US military presence in Central Asia. For many Russians and their allies, Putin's action was in contravention of one of Russian military doctrine's key principles by allowing an outside party to establish military presence in or an alliance with a member of CIS, especially the US.

Political and economic concerns

Although there has been a modest improvement in the country's economy, unemployment remains high and the population's standard of living has yet to return to the pre-independence level. Unemployment, economic hardship and regional disparity all contribute to the growing public unrest and anti-government opposition. Looking for some relief, the Akayev government is desperately trying to attract foreign investment to give a much-needed stimulus to the economy and provide stable export and import markets. Russia is the country's traditional market and holds the lion's share of the country's external debt, with Moscow's share currently standing at \$160 million. Moscow recently extended the repayment of this debt once again and has increased its trade with Kyrgyzstan; but Moscow has not provided, nor can it afford to provide the level of economic assistance possible from the US and the West.

Growing security concerns

Clearly, the war in Afghanistan dealt a serious blow to the leadership of the IMU, but it did not entirely eliminate the threat, as drugs and other contraband from Afghanistan is still seeking an outlet to markets and transit through Kyrgyzstan, which remains a preferred option. Moreover, the tension between Kyrgyzstan and its neighbors, especially Uzbekistan, over border issues continues to escalate, with a battle over precious water resources not far removed. These developments are causing anxiety in Bishkek and prompted even President Akayev's strongest opponents to 'support his policy on broadening cooperation with Russia' and not placing too much dependence on the US to resolve the country's growing security concerns. ^[113] Ishenbal Kadyrbekov, leader of the opposition group in Parliament, underscored a concern for the unfamiliar ally, stating 'Recent events have convinced us that neither the US, China, nor any state other than Russia can become Kyrgyzstan's strategic partner. A range of historic, economic and other factors means only Russia can protect us from an external threat.' Could this be construed as a call to evict US troops or does it reflect Bishkek's awareness of its own military limitations and its need to seek help wherever possible?

Who can help and who will remain committed?

Kyrgyzstan is too close to potential disaster to turn down reasonable assistance from any party, as long as the conditions are tolerable and the demands are reasonable; and it finds itself in a position where two powers see strategic value in fostering expanded relations. Both the US and Russia can effectively provide both military and economic assistance, however, what Russia can provide is tempered by its own economic constraints and the limitations of the Russian military, which remains heavily committed in Chechnya. US military assistance since 9/11 has been significant and increasing, but Washington has not shown a willingness to extend to Kyrgyzstan security guarantees similar to those it has recently extended to Uzbekistan. Moreover, the Kyrgyz regional concerns remain focused on Tashkent's perceived aggressive actions, more than those of any other regional state. By contrast, Russia through the CIS and CST agreement has committed itself, even if Moscow's track record has been less than stellar, to Kyrgyzstan's security. Another Kyrgyz concern is that Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan appear to be the focus of US regional policy and the question remains open in Bishkek as to whether Washington's policy toward it is only one-dimensional. What will happen when the situation in Afghanistan stabilizes and America's war on terrorism moves elsewhere? What other interests will tie it to Kyrgyzstan? Meanwhile in Washington, many argue that the biggest challenge that US policy

will confront in the region will be ‘the nature of Central Asian regimes and their resistance to modernization.’ There is a concern that continued US military presence and the political involvement that follows may develop into a de facto security guarantee to regimes, like Kyrgyzstan’s, that will resist American efforts to prompt both political and economic reform. [\[114\]](#)

For Moscow, Bishkek seems to have broader implications and plays an important role in challenging Washington’s mantle as the region’s new security manager and help re-establish Russia’s position as a critical regional player. Moreover, the government in Moscow will not push for political and economic reform and will be much more willing to support President Akayev against his domestic opponents.

For the moment, Bishkek has both Washington and Moscow vying to maintain a military presence in Kyrgyzstan, for their own reasons. They are playing a very difficult game, walking a security tightrope between the two in an effort to gain access to much-needed military assistance and to enhance their own long-term security. The trick is to maintain a balance between the two, as they each convey their own benefits. History has shown, however, that Russian patronage alone will not bring about the political, economic or security improvement being sought, leaving Kyrgyzstan vulnerable to low-intensity threats as its military slowly evolves to meet these challenges.

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[2] 'Russia Does Not Have an Aviation Base in Kyrgyzstan', *Vremya Novostei*, 26 December 2002, p. 5.

[3] Armenia and Belarus are also CST members. The CRDF is divided into three operational zones — Western Zone (Russia and Belarus), Caucasus Zone (Russia and Armenia) and the Central Asian Zone (Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan).

[4] 'Kyrgyz Troops Hold Strategic Heights Against Militants', *ITAR-TASS*, Moscow, FBIS-SOV-1999-1002, 2 October 1999.

[5] 'Russia to Supply Arms to Kyrgyz Government', *ITAR-TASS*, Moscow, 20 September 1999; 'CIS Countries to Give Military Help to Kyrgyzstan', *Interfax*, 2 October 1999.

[6] Bakhrom Tursunov & Marina Pikulina, *Severe Lessons of Batken*, K28, CSRC: Camberley, pp. 8-10.

[7] Ibid; Asel Otorbaeva, 'Kyrgyz Private Relives Batken Nightmare', *Reporting Central Asia*, No. 18, IWPR, 1 September 2000.

[8] 'Kyrgyz Militants Demand Corridor to Uzbekistan', *Interfax*, Bishkek, FBIS-SOV-1999-1008, 8 October 1999.

[9] Otorbaeva, 'Kyrgyz Private Relives Batken'.

[10] Leonid Bondarets, 'On the Optimization of the Defense and Security Systems', *George C. Marshall Center*, 2000; 'Terrorist Group in Uzbekistan Destroyed', *Interfax*, Tashkent, FBIS-SOV-1999-1129, 29 November 1999.

[11] 'Kyrgyzstan's Islamic Militants Controlling Drug Routes', *Interfax*, Bishkek, FBIS-1999-1004, 4 October 1999; 'Kyrgyz President Urges Expulsion of Islamic Militants', *Interfax*, Bishkek, FBIS-1999-1009, 9 October 1999.

[12] Turat Akimov, 'Batken Conflict Returns', *RCA*, No. 116, IWPR, 18 August 2000.

[13] Ustina Markus and Rafts Abasov, 'Kyrgyzstan: In Search of a Regional Security System', in Ustina Markus and Daniel N. Nelson, eds., *Eurasian and East European Security Yearbook*, Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2000, pp. 537-541.

[14] *The Military Balance 1993-2003*, IISS: Oxford. Converting the local currency (Som) into US\$ does not readily or accurately convey the full extent of local spending power. The defense budget figure given for 1999 is probably overstated by the *Military Balance* – with the actual figure being nearer to 33% less. However, in practise bartering and subsidies given by local companies to the armed forces augment shortfalls in the Kyrgyz defense budget. Furthermore, Kyrgyz servicemen pay no income tax, and also receive special allowances.

[15] The large budget numbers in the early-1990s may reflect several things, to include: MoD's early efforts to maintain most of the legacy force; the inclusion in the budget of the paramilitary and security forces in the figures reported for the defense budget, which was common Soviet practice.

[16] Bondarets, 'On the Optimization'.

[17] Igor Grebenshikov, 'Kyrgyz Army in Crisis', RCA, No. 44, IWPR, 14 March 2001; Maria Utyaganova, 'IMU Incursion in Central Asia: Earlier and Later', Central Asia & Caucasus Analyst 28 March 2001.

[18] The antiterrorist center in Bishkek was actually created in 2000 to coordinate the activities of CST member states. At the time, it was a headquarters without any troops and seen as yet another Russian-sponsored paper security structure. Sophie Lambroschini, 'Central Asia: CIS Plans Rapid-Reaction Force to Fight Terrorism,' *RFE/RL Newslines*, 22 May 2001, <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2001/05/22052001112028.asp>.

[19] Ibid. and 'CIS Collective Rapid Deployment Forces to Hold Exercises in Central Asia', *Interfax*, Moscow, 16 May 2002.

[20] See: Roger N. McDermott, 'Russia's Security Agenda in Central Asia', *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, 2 (14), 2002, pp. 16-22.

[21] Vladimir Georgiyev, 'Our Way of saying "Get Lost"'. Moscow Tries to Revive CIS Collective Defense as Counterweight to Deployment of US Bases in Central Asia and Transcaucasus', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 23 March 2002, p5; Vladimir Mokhov, 'Military and Political Review: Rumors of the DKBs Demise "Extremely Exaggerated"', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 23 April 2002.

[22] In May 2001, Vladimir Romanenko, the deputy director of the CIS Institute stated: 'Another factor weakening the collective security of the CIS is that the agreements are often not collective. Uzbekistan, where Islamic extremism has contributed to growing instability in its Ferghana Valley, should be a prime candidate for joint military agreements. But Tashkent abandoned the CST in favor of drafting a bilateral agreement with Russia to exchange weapons for natural gas.' Quoted in Sophie Lambroschini, 'Central Asia: CIS Force Not Best Way to Combat Islamic Threat, Say Analysts,' *RFE/RL Newslines*, 23 May 2001, <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2001/05/23052001114026.asp>.

[23] Yuri Golotyuk, 'The External Enemy is Coming to be the Enemy Within: Lubyanka is Teaching its Central Asian Allies Mopping-Up Operations', *Vremya Novostei*, 4 April 2002.

[24] Yemelyan Brandin, 'War Games in the CIS. The Terrorists Whom the Americans Had Not Wiped Out Were "Finished Off" in the South Antiterror 2002 Exercises', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 23 April 2002.

[25] 'CIS Antiterrorist Exercises to Begin in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan', *ITAR-TASS*, Moscow, 1327 GMT, BBC Monitoring Service, 13 June 2002.

[26] Alexey Malashenko, scholar-in-residence at the Carnegie Endowment office in Moscow, said that "he doubts that collective CIS efforts like the proposed rapid-reaction force will have much success." Vladimir Romanenko, the deputy director of the CIS Institute indicated: 'Everyone quickly and happily agrees that the measure is necessary, everyone signs really nice documents. But everyone then quickly forgets about the concrete steps that need to be taken. Of the 400 documents adopted by the CIS within a military cooperation framework, in practice, only one, two, or three really work...' Quoted in Lambroschini, 'Central Asia: CIS Force Not Best Way to Combat Islamic Threat, Say Analysts'.

[27] 'Security Structures of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are Prepared for Gunmen of the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan', *Kommersant*, 5 June 2002, p2; 'Kyrgyz Defense Chief: Enough Forces to Repulse Attacks by Afghan-Based Fighters', *AKIpress*, Bishkek, BBC Monitoring Service, 14 June 2002.

[28] 'Kyrgyz President Terms Russia "Main Strategic Ally"', *RFE/RL, Newslines*, 3 July 2000.

[29] 'Kyrgyz, Russian Presidents Sign Eternal Friendship Declaration', *RFE/RL, Newslines*, 28 July 2000.

[30] The trade turnover dropped in 2001 by 25%, See: Yuri Golotyuk, 'Moscow May Lose Kyrgyzstan as its Major Naval Ally', *Vremya Novostei*, 11 June 2002, p. 4.

[31] 'Kyrgyz, Russian Leaders Praise Inter-State Relations, Pledge Cooperation', *Kyrgyz Radio First Programme*, Bishkek, 1500 GMT, BBC Monitoring Service, 5 December 2002.

[32] 'Russia: Russia, Kyrgyzstan to Sign Military Cooperation Deal', *Interfax*, Moscow, FBIS-SOV-1998-1124, 24 November 1998; 'Russia: Kyrgyz President Confirms Strategic Partnership With Russia', *Interfax*, Moscow, FBIS-2000-0727, 27 July 2000; 'Department for Aid to Kyrgyzstan Set Up at CIS HQ', *ITAR-TASS*, Moscow, FBIS-SOV-1999-0903, 3 September 1999.

[33] 'Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Kazakhstan Air-Defense Forces to Hold Joint Exercises', *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, Moscow, 18 October 2002; 'Russia to Turn Over S-300 Missiles to Kyrgyzstan', *Interfax*, Bishkek, 29 October 2002.

[34] Golotyuk, 'Moscow May Lose Kyrgyzstan as its Major Naval Ally'.

[35] 'Kyrgyzstan Asked Russia for Military Aid', *Pravda.ru*, 14:05, 31 October 2001.

[36] 'Kyrgyzstan to Broaden Relations With Russia', *ITAR-TASS*, Moscow, 1051 GMT, 24 December 2002.

[37] Arkady Dubnov, 'Putin Asked to Become a "Pillar"', *Vremya Novostei*, 6 December, p. 2.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Marina Kozlova, 'Kyrgyzstan Dances With US, China', *UPI*, 10 October 2002.

[40] Roger N. McDermott and William D. O'Malley, 'Countering Terrorism in Central Asia', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, October 2003, pp. 16-19.

[41] In September 2002 the East Turkistan Islamic Movement was placed on the UN list of terrorist groups by the UN Security Council. Zhou Xiaohua & Tang Oi, 'The International Community Steps Up the Counter-Terrorism Struggle', *Xinhua*, Beijing, FBIS-CHI-2002-1224, 24 December 2002.

[42] 'China, Kyrgyzstan Sign Antiterrorism Agreement', *Xinhua*, Beijing, 1559 GMT, FBIS-CHI-2002-1211, 11 December 2002.

[43] 'Kyrgyzstan FM Says Russia Airbase Not to Affect Kyrgyzstan-China Ties', *ITAR-TASS*, Bishkek, 24 December 2002.

[44] In congressional testimony on March 17, 1999, then-Ambassador-at-Large for the New Independent States, Steve Sestanovich indicated that 'the over-arching goal of U.S. policy in Central Asia was to secure the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the states'. Quoted in Jim Nichol, 'Central Asia's New States: Political Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests', *CRS Issue Brief for Congress*, IB93108, May 18, 2001, <http://www.NCSEonline.org/NLE/CRSreports/international/inter-76.cfm?&CFID=6418985&CFTOKEN=85041449>, p. 3.

[45] Eugene B. Rumer, 'Flashman's Revenge: Central Asia after September 11', *Strategic Forum*, No. 195, December 2002, Washington, D.C.: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, p. 1.

[46] CTR would be used with several other regional states, as a means to dismantle and destroy other nuclear, chemical, or biological sources of possible proliferation. Elizabeth Wishnick, *Growing U.S. Security Interests in Central Asia*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, October 2002, p. 3.

[47] Nichol, 'Central Asia's New States: Political Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests', p. 2.

[48] This table is extracted from Jim Nichol's CRS Issue Brief, Ibid., p. 13.

[49] Lyle J. Goldstein, 'Making the Most of Central Asian Partnerships', *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Summer 2002, pp. 82-83.

[50] Wishnick, p. 3.

[51] Kenley Butler, 'U.S. Military Cooperation with the Central Asian States', CNS, Monterey Institute of International Studies, <http://cns.miis.edu/research/wtc01/uscamil.htm>.

[52] Nichol, 'Central Asia's New States: Political Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests', p. 9.

[53] The Army's 5th Special Forces Group at Fort Campbell is responsible for the Middle East and Southwest Asia in support of CENTCOM and provided most of the 12-man teams that supported this training. Glenn W. Goodman, Jr., 'Central Asian Partners', *Armed Forces Journal International*, January 2002, pp. 60-61.

[54] Wishnick, p. 5.

[55] Between 1994 and 2000, out of the \$590 million appropriated for PfP approximately 70 percent of the funds went to the European states tagged as probable candidates for membership. These states received roughly between 4 and 6 percent of the total each, while the Central Asian states got only about 1.5 percent. See details of a U.S. General Accounting Office study that bolsters this point in Goldstein, 'Making the Most of Central Asian Partnerships', pp. 86-87.

[56] For more details see Goodman, 'Central Asian Partners', pp. 60-61.

[57] Ibid., p. 88 and Rumer, 'Flashman's Revenge: Central Asia after September 11', pp. 1-2 and Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott's major address outlining the U.S. approach to Central Asia on July 21, 1997, see <http://www.state.gov/www/regions/nis/970721talbott.html>.

[58] For details of this philosophy see Rumer, 'Flashman's Revenge: Central Asia after September 11', pp. 3 and 7.

[59] Ibid., p. 1.

[60] State Department Press Statement, September 25, 2002, 'redesignation of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan as a Foreign Terrorist Organization,' <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2002/13708.htm>.

[61] Although the lease is only for a year, it is reportedly automatically renewed unless either country opts out.

[62] Like so many Soviet built airfields, Manas does not have much hard-surface ramp space on which to park heavy aircraft. Reportedly there is currently only room along the taxiway for four C-5 type aircraft, which discourages the permanent stationing or even overnight stay of large numbers of such aircraft.

[63] Bruce Pannier, 'Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan Balancing Relations with West, Russia', *Eurasia Insight*, December 8, 2001. In part, the lease agreement's terms reportedly include the payment of \$7,000 every time a plane lands or takes off from the airport, and \$1,000 and \$500 for every truck and car entering the airport. In addition, the U.S. promised the Kyrgyz \$3.5 million to be

used towards the repair of its combat equipment and the provision of spare parts. Tamara Makarenko, 'The Changing Dynamics of Central Asian terrorism', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, February 2002, p. 37.

[64] This assistance includes radios, computers, refurbishment/upgrades to helicopters, surveillance and communication equipment, night-vision goggles, body armor, spare parts, vehicles and shelters to assist patrolling and securing the border regions. U.S. State Department Fact Sheet, 'U.S. Assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic – Fiscal Year 2002,' <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/15220.htm>.

[65] Reporting indicates that Kyrgyzstan will receive a total of \$7.2 million in military aid (\$1.2 million in IMET and \$6 million in FMF funding) in 2004. Ibid and 'Kyrgyzstan set to get over 7m dollars of US military aid in 2004,' BBC Monitoring Service, February 4, 2003, transcribed from the Kabar News Agency, Bishkek, in Russian, 4 February 2003.

[66] For details of this perspective see Rumer, 'Flashman's Revenge: Central Asia after September 11'.

[67] Comments by Rear Admiral Craig Quigley, Director of Public Affairs, CENTCOM, January 24, 2002, <http://usembassy.state.gov/Tokyo/wwwhse0958.html>.

[68] Colin Powell, remarks at the International Conference for Reconstruction Assistance in Afghanistan, Tokyo, Japan, January 21, 2002, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2002/7366.htm>, quoted in Rumer, 'Flashman's Revenge: Central Asia after September 11', p. 8.

[69] United States-Uzbekistan Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework, March 12, 2002, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2002/8736.htm>.

[70] Quoted in Wishnick, p. v.

[71] Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on Central Asia and the Caucasus, Washington, DC, December 13, 2001, <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2001/11299.htm>.

[72] 'US Ready to be "Junior Partner" in Central Asia', *Izvestia*, Moscow, 5 December 2002; 'Russian Aircraft Group in Kyrgyzstan to Repel "Terrorist" Attacks', *Interfax*, Moscow, 1607 GMT, 4 December 2002; Sergei Sokut, 'We Will Threaten Terrorists from Bishkek', *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozrenie*, 6 December 2002, pp. 1-3.

[73] Dmitry Glumskov, 'Kyrgyzstan Will Shelter CIS Collective Forces', *Kommersant*, 2 July 2002, p. 6.

[74] 'Russia Deploys Combat Aircraft in Kyrgyzstan', *Interfax*, Moscow, 0940 GMT, 30 November 2002.

[75] Lipetsk Air Base is home to the 968th Research Training Mixed Air Regiment in Russia.

[76] Sergei Sokut, 'We Will Threaten Terrorists'.

[77] Amongst these airfields, only Bishkek has a runway of 9,000 feet or greater.

[78] The Soviet Air Force literally stripped Kant Air Base clean when they withdrew. The Kyrgyz Armed Forces maintained a caretaker team at the airfield after the transfer of control to preclude any further damage. Their contingent to the Central Asian Peacekeeping Battalion was also stationed for a while at the airbase and assisted in its cleanup. The Kyrgyz were for many years trying to entice the Russian Air Force to lease the base and use it once again as a training facility.

[79] 'Kyrgyz Airfield Said Ready for Deployment of Collective Forces', *Vecherniy Bishkek*, 9 December 2002.

[80] 'Kyrgyz Defense Minister: Military Airfield Fully Meets Russia's Requirements', *Interfax-AVN*, Moscow, 0919 GMT, 9 December 2002.

[81] One of the principal concerns about using Kant AB was that the airstrip would not hold up to the anticipated operational tempo (OPTEMPO), especially given the size and weight of many of the key support aircraft being deployed. Manas was selected for a number of reasons, to include: (1) it was up and operating as the country's international airport and it could effectively support an immediate deployment; (2) as an international airport, its runway, navigation, and communication systems were readily compatible with the deploying air units; (3) U.S. strategic lifters and tankers would be necessary to support the deployment and sustainment of Western air assets and runways in excess of 10,000 feet are preferred – only Manas among the proposed sites had the preferred runway length; (4) cargo aircraft require hard surface ramp space to unload and load, be serviced, and park – Manas is one of the few airfields in country that had sufficient square feet of ramp space to meet anticipated needs. For details on Air Force deployment planning factors see Chapter One, William D. O'Malley, *Evaluating Possible Airfield Deployment Options: Middle East Contingencies*, Santa Monica: RAND, 2001.

[82] There are three sections to the airstrip at Kant. One is paved with asphalt, another is unpaved and the third with 500 concrete slabs, recently replaced as part of the Kyrgyz 'reconstruction' of the base; Yekaterina Grigoryeva & Dmitry Litovkin, 'Security Council Secretaries Determine Preventative Measures', *Izvestia*, 11 December 2002, p. 2.

[83] 'Russian Facility in Kyrgyzstan Not an Airbase, Military Attaché Says', *Interfax*, Moscow, 1212 GMT, 25 December 2002.

[84] 'Russian Planes in Kyrgyzstan Attached to Collective Security Treaty', *Interfax*, Moscow, 1151 GMT, 2 December 2002; 'Kyrgyzstan: Anti-terrorist Force Commanders Consider Using Other Kyrgyz Airfields', *ITAR-TASS*, Moscow, 1235 GMT, FBIS-SOV-2002-0401, 1 April 2002.

[85] The relative costs for renovation should be different because the U.S. and Russia were looking at the installation to fulfil very dissimilar missions, house a very different mix of aircraft, and support operational tempo(s) that are miles apart. U.S. requirements demand much more from the airfield and would require more time to upgrade accordingly and at a higher cost.

[86] According to Kyrgyz Defense Minister, Esen Topoyev, 'the Russian airbase at Kant will be permanent and will be gradually expanded'. Zamira Eshanova, 'Central Asia: Diplomatic Visits Highlight U.S., Russian Competition,' *RFE/RL Newsline*, 3 December 2002, <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2002/12/03122002190915.asp>.

[87] 'Kyrgyz Airbase Seen as "Counterweight" to NATO's Manas', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 5 December 2002; 'Russia Deploys Combat Aircraft'; 'Russian Warplanes Arrive at Kyrgyz Base', *TVS*, Moscow, 1200 GMT, BBC Monitoring Service, 1 December 2002.

[88] By 1997, the local press was reporting that the air force was on the verge of collapse, as no training and few maintenance facilities were operating. Reporting further indicated that only a handful of the L-39 trainers that they inherited were still operational in 1998 and the same was being said for less than 50 percent of their helicopters. Markus and Abasov, 'Kyrgyzstan: In Search of a Regional Security System', pp. 542-543.

[89] 'Russian Defense Minister on Plans to Base Russian Warplanes in Kyrgyzstan', *Channel One TV*, Moscow, 1200 GMT, BBC Monitoring Service, 5 December 2002.

[90] Eshanova, 'Central Asia: Diplomatic Visits Highlight U.S., Russian Competition'.

[91] Sokut, 'We Will Threaten Terrorists'.

[92] 'Russian Planes in Kyrgyzstan Attached to Collective Security Treaty', *Interfax*, Bishkek, 1151 GMT, FBIS-SOV-2002-1203, 3 December 2002. Before this proposed deployment to Kyrgyzstan, Russia retained its only permanent Central Asian military presence in Tajikistan. It is interesting to note that in September 2000, the aviation regiment that had been long stationed in Dushanbe was reduced to an aviation group similar in composition to that proposed for Kant. Michael Jasinski, *Russian Military Capabilities in Central Asia*, Monterey Institute of International Studies, 17 September 2001, <http://cns.miis.edu/research/wtc01/rusmil.htm>.

[93] Ibid; 'Russian Aircraft Arrive in Kyrgyzstan to Beef Up Collective Force', *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, Bishkek, 5 December 2002.

[94] The cockpit is almost surrounded by 17mm of titanium armor, which deflects small arms fire and even 20mm rounds. Timothy L. Thomas, 'Air Operations in Low Intensity Conflict: The Case of Chechnya,' originally published in *Air Power Journal*, Winter 1997, found on the Foreign Military Studies Office website: <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/fmsopubs/issues/chechnya.htm>.

[95] The initial Kyrgyz operations against the IMU suffered greatly from a lack of helicopter support for the movement of supplies to troops in the field, the medevac of the wounded, as well

as the timely movement of troops and firepower from one area to another in response to operational needs.

[96] Jasinski, *Russian Military Capabilities in Central Asia* and 'Russian Aircraft Arrive in Kyrgyzstan to Beef Up Collective Force', *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*.

[97] The Su-24D is capable of being refueled in the air. See: Sokut, 'We Will Threaten Terrorists'.

[98] Emphasis added by the authors.

[99] 'Russia: Air Force Unit in Kyrgyzstan to Serve Collective Security Treaty Members', *Interfax*, Bishkek, 5 December 2002.

[100] 'Russian President Comments on Military Cooperation with Kyrgyzstan, Role of CIS', *Radio Mayak*, Moscow, 1500 GMT, BBC Monitoring Service, 5 December 2002.

[101] 'Kyrgyzstan: Collective Security Treaty Meeting to Discuss Fighting Organized Crime', *ITAR-TASS*, Moscow, 1324 GMT, 10 December 2002.

[102] Ella Taranova & Igor Shestakov, 'Vladimir Rushailo: Prevention at the Planning Stage', *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 25 December 2002, p. 9.

[103] See: Stéphane Lefebvre, 'The Reform of the Russian Air Force', Roger N. McDermott & Anne C. Aldis (eds), *Russian Military Reform 1992-2002*, Frank Cass: London, 2003 (forthcoming).

[104] It is important to have a man in the loop that has a sense of the battlefield, provide updated target information to the incoming combat aircraft, rapidly address emerging targets, and provide battle management support to the combat pilot during the critical approach to the target. See, Glenn W. Goodman, Jr., 'Close Air Support: Air Strikes on Enemy Troops Remain "Trump Card" for Ground Force Commanders', *Armed Forces Journal International*, January 2002, p. 57 and John G. Roos, 'Turning Up the Heat,' *Armed Forces Journal International*, February 2002, pp. 36-42.

[105] L W Grau, 'Technology and the Second Chechen Campaign: Not All New and Not That Much', Anne C Aldis (ed), *The Second Chechen War*, P31, June 2000, p. 107.

[106] M. J. Orr, 'Better or Just Not so Bad? An Evaluation of Russian Combat Effectiveness in the Second Chechen War', *The Second Chechen War*, p. 94; Marcel de Haas, 'The Use of Russian Airpower in the Second Chechen War', Conference Paper, BISA, London, 16 December 2002.

[107] Few Russian attack helicopters are equipped with Global Position Systems (GPS), which forces the pilots in Chechnya to depend heavily on visual navigation over often unfamiliar terrain. Benjamin S. Lambeth, *The Continuing Crisis of Russian Air Power*, Conference Paper, Air Power Symposium, Trondheim, 6-8 February 2001, p. 18.

[108] Thomas, 'Air Operations in Low Intensity Conflict: The Case of Chechnya.'

[109] 'Kyrgyz Minister Says Some Russian Fighters to be Deployed Next Year', *Public Educational Radio and TV*, Bishkek, 1300 GMT, BBC Monitoring Service, 2 December 2002; 'Russian Aircraft Arrive in Kyrgyzstan to Beef Up Collective Force', *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, Bishkek, 5 December 2002.

[110] 'Kyrgyz, Russian Leaders Praise Inter-State Relations, Pledge Cooperation', *Kyrgyz Radio First Programme*, Bishkek, 1500 GMT, BBC Monitoring Service, 5 December 2002.

[111] See: Lefebvre, 'The Reform of the Russian Air Force'.

[112] Rumer, 'Flashman's Revenge: Central Asia after September 11'

[113] Sultan Jumagulov, 'Kyrgyzstan Courting Russia,' *IWPR's Reporting Central Asia*, No. 185, February 21, 2003.

[114] Rumer, 'Flashman's Revenge: Central Asia after September 11'