



Another Russian Base in Kyrgyzstan?

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past few years there have been discussions in Kyrgyzstan of the Russian government establishing another military base in the country. While these discussions have not resulted in any action being taken, the accompanying excerpted article reports how it is closer to becoming a reality. The article comes from the online version of *Vecherniy Bishkek*, a Russian-language newspaper supportive of the government, and it reports on a recent inter-parliamentary meeting between the governments of Kyrgyzstan and Russia over the establishment of another Russian military facility in Kyrgyzstan.

The Russian representative at the meeting, a deputy of the State Duma Defense Committee, stated, “Russia is interested in expanding the airbase in Kant and the inclusion of the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan.” Many of the previous discussions on the establishment of another

Russian base in Kyrgyzstan mentioned placing it in a southern province, most likely in Osh or Batken. This meeting brought up the expansion of the Kant airbase and utilizing it to provide operational coverage for the southern provinces, not necessarily establishing a new facility in the south. In addition, the article notes how both governments are considering another base as a response to what they see as regional threats. While here has been nothing mentioned about what additional aircraft or other units the Russian government would deploy to Kyrgyzstan, it could be a significant increase in the overall Russian presence if these discussions are any indication.

Lastly, the article brings up how the Kant airbase is not the only Russian military facility in Kyrgyzstan. Outside of Kant, other facilities include “the naval base at Issyk-Kul, the seismological station in the town of Mailuu-Suu and the communications relay in the village of Chaldovar.” While only a small number of Russian personnel are reported to be at each of these other facilities, the article mentions how “in exchange of rent for the land occupied by these bases, Russia provides weapons and equipment.” Regardless, if the Russian government adds another base or strengthens its military presence at Kant, the security assistance it provides to the Kyrgyz government will be worth watching for a likely increase. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“...the following Russian military bases are located in the republic: the Kant airbase, the naval base at Issyk-Kul, the seismological station in the town of Mailuu-Suu and the communications relay in the village of Chaldovar.”

Source: Marina Osipova, “Российское военное присутствие в Кыргызстане должно усилиться? (Should the Russian military presence in Kyrgyzstan be strengthened?),” *Vecherniy Bishkek*, 9 July 2018. https://www.vb.kg/doc/371995_rossiyskoe_voennoe_prisytstvie_v_kyrgyzstane_doljno_ysilitsia.html

The issues of strengthening Kyrgyz-Russian military cooperation, including the prospect of establishing another Russian military base in the south of Kyrgyzstan, have been actively discussed for more than a year since the then president, Almazbek Atambayev, mentioned the idea after a visit to Moscow...in the framework of the inter-parliamentary meeting of the deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic and the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Victor Zavarzin, deputy chair of the State Duma Defense Committee, stated that Russia is interested in expanding the airbase in Kant and the inclusion of the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan...

“...(The base in Kant) exists for ensuring security in the region. Within the CSTO framework and bilateral Kyrgyz-Russian cooperation, it fulfills strategic goals. We want to strengthen and expand the components of this base that will cover the south,” said the deputy...

The situation is such that Russia cannot put forth an initiative of the expansion of the military contingent of an independent state – it must come from the authorities of the republic...said political analyst Kubatbek Asanov...There are two perspectives on the role of Russia ensuring security in Central Asia. According to the first, Russia exaggerates the danger of ISIS to the region in order to keep it under control. I support the second perspective, according to which Moscow warns about the real threat and the need to fight it jointly. In my opinion, the problem is even more serious than the Russian authorities warn, said independent expert Taalatbek Masadykov...According to Alikbek Jekshenkulov, former Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan, the opening of a Russian military base in the south of Kyrgyzstan will be one of the key components of the countermeasures of the growing threats...

As of today, the main document regulating Kyrgyz-Russian military cooperation is the agreement on the status of Russian military bases in Kyrgyzstan from September 20, 2012. From it, the following Russian military bases are located in the republic: the Kant airbase, the naval base at Issyk-Kul, the seismological station in the town of Mailuu-Suu and the communications relay in the village of Chaldovar. In exchange of rent for the land occupied by these bases, Russia provides weapons and equipment...



Russian President Vladimir Putin and former Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev at the inauguration of the Russian airbase near the city of Kant, Kyrgyzstan (2003).

Source: President of Russia, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/29600>, CC 4.0.