

# ARMED FORCES AND MILITARY REFORM IN KYRGYZSTAN

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## *I n t r o d u c t i o n*

Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, Kyrgyzstan started hastily building its own Armed Forces. Although the Kyrgyz Republic inherited some military units and weapons from the powerful Soviet Empire, it lacked defense infrastructure and efficient command personnel. More than 15 years have passed since then. During this time a national military security system has been put in place, the Armed Forces being its core.

This article considers the status of Kyrgyzstan's Armed Forces, the evolution of state security policy, and measures to advance military reform in the republic.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the present article, the terms "military reform" and "reform of the Armed Forces" are used interchangeably. Since the Defense Ministry is the core of the Armed Forces of the Kyrgyz Republic, this article devotes more attention to activities implemented by the ministry.

## 1. The Composition and Structure of the Armed Forces

Kyrgyzstan's Armed Forces comprise ground, naval, air, and air defense units, military agencies and military training establishments, and local military command and control agencies.<sup>2</sup> At present, in accordance with the Military Doctrine of the Kyrgyz Republic (Art 2.12), the Armed Forces of Kyrgyzstan comprise:

1. The Defense Ministry.
2. The Border Service.
3. The Interior Ministry (MVD) Internal Troops.
4. The National Security Service.
5. The Environmental Protection and Emergency Situations Ministry.
6. The National Guard.

<sup>2</sup> The Law on Defense No. 1462-XII of 13 April, 1994, Art 13.

7. The State Protection Service.
8. Military Justice Agencies.

**Structurally**, the Armed Forces include general purpose forces, rapid deployment, rapid reaction and state border protection forces.

The Armed Forces are built on the basis of a professional, regular army. The president is the commander in chief of the Armed Forces. The general supervision of the Armed Forces is exercised by the president and the government. Immediate command of the Armed Forces is ensured by the Defense Ministry through the General Staff, which is an agency that provides direct command and control of troops and develops plans for the use of troops.<sup>3</sup>

At present, the Defense Ministry has about 8,0000 servicemen.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. State Military Policy and Military Reform in Kyrgyzstan

Before considering specific moves in the organizational development and reform of the KR Armed Forces, it is essential to answer the question: “Why is military reform so important for the republic?” There are several reasons for that.

- *First*, following the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of a bipolar world order, the nature of security threats has changed substantially. Global wars with large armies and clearly defined adversaries have become history. Now other threats are on the agenda: local conflicts, international and national terrorism, drug trafficking, and so on.
- *Second*, during the Soviet era, military servicemen were trained for operations on the Western theater—that is to say, in Europe. That is irrelevant for Kyrgyzstan today. Practice shows that infiltration into Kyrgyzstan, 70 percent of whose territory is occupied by mountains, occurs mainly via mountain paths: In other words, militants prefer to operate on mountainous terrain. Therefore, the modern military should be in a position to respond to real needs—i.e., be compact, mobile, flexible, well controlled and effective in operating on mountainous terrain.
- *Third*, the principle of manpower acquisition in the military should change from draft to professional, contract service. In that case, specially trained personnel will operate and service military equipment and conduct combat operations. Furthermore, many outstanding problems will be eliminated—e.g., corruption in the process of recruitment, desertion, hazing, and so on.
- *Fourth*, the KR Armed Forces are still rather off-limits to society. In the context of a democratic state, it is necessary to practice greater openness and transparency—for example, with the help of civil and parliamentary oversight.

Several stages in the evolution of state defense policy can be singled out in Kyrgyzstan.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Art 13 (see also: Military Doctrine, Arts 1.11-1.18).

<sup>4</sup> See: A. Kasybekov, “Armia opiat’ stala ne nuzhna?” *Vechernii Bishkek*, 22 September, 2006, available at [<http://members.vb.kg/2006/09/22/protivn/3.html>], 3 March, 2007.

### 2.1. Stage 1 (1991-1999)

In 1993, Kyrgyzstan sent a peacekeeping force to neighboring Tajikistan (500 troops) to protect Tajikistan's state border with Afghanistan, which remained there until February 1999.<sup>5</sup>

At that time, a public debate about the expediency of the military was ongoing in the republic. On the one hand, the proposal that the Armed Forces be disbanded stemmed from the country's financial difficulties. The thesis about the republic's peace-loving policy was quite popular: "We are a peaceful nation; we will not attack anyone nor will anyone attack us." On the other hand, the inappropriate attitude toward national defense arose from the fact that force development was driven not by a threat of attack from the outside, but rather by the need to create a semblance of such an institution as an essential element of statehood.

That initial stage was marked by declining morale in the Armed Forces, caused by financial problems, the nonpayment of wages and other allowances, and the falling prestige of military service. Military servicemen were leaving the defense related structures in droves. That trend was reflected in official documents. In particular, in 1994, in a special resolution, the government directed the Defense Ministry to "analyze the causes of the outflow of officer cadre from the Armed Forces of the Kyrgyz Republic and ... to submit their proposals to the Government."<sup>6</sup> Other shortcomings, according to government agencies, included a lack of coordination between the various arms and branches of service, especially in operations on mountainous terrain, negligence with respect to storage, operation and maintenance of arms and military equipment, theft, desertions, and rampant crime in the military.<sup>7</sup>

The subsequent document regulating the course of military reform appeared in 1998.<sup>8</sup> In accordance with that government resolution, an essential element of military reform was to be a national security concept, a military reform program for 1998-2005, and guidelines for military doctrine. Those documents provided for a downsizing of the Defense Ministry staff to 9,000, starting in 1999.<sup>9</sup>

In 1992 through 1999, the following laws were adopted: On Alternative (Non-Military) Service (1992, as amended in 1994), On Defense (1994, as amended in 1997), On the State Border of the Kyrgyz Republic (1999), and On the Border Service of the Kyrgyz Republic (1999).

In 1994, the first institution of civil control over the Armed Forces appeared in the country—the Public Association of Soldiers' Mothers. Representatives of this organization started visiting military units, meeting and talking with military commanders and servicemen with the aim of identifying instances of hazing, bullying, violation of servicemen's rights, and combating corruption and graft in the defense sector. Therefore, outstanding military problems had a big public response, causing law-enforcement and other agencies to take robust measures to tackle those problems.

### 2.2. Stage 2 (1999-2005)

One of the fundamental documents in state military policy is the 2002 Military Doctrine, which formulated the state policy of organizational development and reform of the Armed Forces in the Kyrgyz

<sup>5</sup> KR Government Resolution No. 298 of 9 July, 1993, On Sending a Military Contingent to Reinforce the Protection of the Tajik-Afghan State Border. In September 1993, the peacekeeping force comprised, in addition to a Kyrgyz battalion, a Russian division (6,000 servicemen) and an Uzbek battalion (450) (see: R. Burnashev, "Tadzhikistan: politika i vooruzhennyye sily," *Kontinent*, available at [<http://www.continent.kz/2002/14/13.html>], 20 May, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> KR Government Resolution No. 396 of 8 June, 1994, On Progress of Reform in the Armed Forces of the Kyrgyz Republic.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>8</sup> KR Government Resolution No. 570 of 28 August, 1998, On Measures to Implement Resolution No. 1 of 31 July, 1998 of the KR Security Council, On the Status of Military Reform in the KR and Measures to Intensify It.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

Republic. The document stipulated that organizational development of the Armed Forces would proceed in three stages.

- At **Stage 1 (2002-2003)**, it was planned to create a legislative basis in ensuring military security and to continue preparing rapid reaction forces to rebuff possible penetration by international terrorists.
- At **Stage 2 (2004 through 2007)**, it was planned to organize and maintain armed forces that would be able—after being brought to full strength and mobilized—to perform various missions in local armed conflicts, independently or as part of the Collective Rapid Deployment Forces of the Central Asian Collective Security Region.
- At **Stage 3 (2008 through 2010)**, it is planned to train and maintain the Armed Forces capable of performing missions in armed conflicts on a regional level, independently or as part of the Coalition Armed Forces of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).<sup>10</sup>

Strictly speaking, before 1999, the main goal was to *build* national armed forces. Although the republic inherited basic military components from the Soviet Union, the Armed Forces as a national institution and an essential element of the state had to be built from scratch. After 1999, first progress was made in the reform process. One landmark, in a sense, were the so-called Batken events (1999-2000). For two years in a row, a group of militants had been penetrating the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic, while its Armed Forces had to repel attacks by international terrorists.<sup>11</sup> Fifty-five military servicemen were killed and 88 wounded in clashes with terrorists who had twice intruded into the Batken region. The fighting displaced 8,000 people.<sup>12</sup> Terrorist attacks caused the state \$30 million damage.<sup>13</sup>

Those events showed how defenseless the republic was without its Armed Forces. Society and the ruling authorities realized the vital importance of maintaining the so-called power structures—both financially and morally, in order to boost the prestige of the Armed Forces.

Speaking in 2004 during the unveiling of a monument to military servicemen killed in action, Prime Minister N. Tanaev said: “The events of the past few years have shown that in order to ensure its stability and prosperity, the country needs powerful Armed Forces. The danger of regional destabilization remains: After all, various terrorist and extremist organizations are attempting to raise their profile.”<sup>14</sup>

So, what has been done in practice since then?

The first step was the unification of three western districts in the Osh region—Lialiak, Batken, and Kadamdzhai, which bordered on Tajikistan, as well as with the towns of Kyzyl Kia and Suliukta. The formation, in October 1999, of a new province—the Batken region—helped tackle socioeconomic development problems in the area by increasing the allocation of budgetary funding. Furthermore, units of the Kyrgyz Defense Ministry Southern Grouping of Forces were deployed in the region and in 2001, a military exercise was conducted there.

The next step was an increase in spending for the Armed Forces. In the spring of 2000, the government said that stable financing was ensured for the military.<sup>15</sup> In 2001, the republic’s defense budget

<sup>10</sup> KR military doctrine was adopted on 23 March, 2002 by the KR Security Council Resolution On the Military Doctrine of the Kyrgyz Republic during the Transition Period until 2010.

<sup>11</sup> The raid was an attempt by militants to break through Kyrgyz territory to Uzbekistan. In addition to that, shortly before the incursion, neighboring Tajikistan announced the closure of a civilian disarmament program.

<sup>12</sup> See: E. Satybekov, A. Kasybekov, “Batken: ispytanie na prochnost,” *Vechernii Bishkek*, 16 October, 2002, available at [<http://members.vb.kg/2002/10/16/vizit/2.html>], 15 May, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> In relation to the average rate of the dollar in 1999-2000—1.2 billion som.

<sup>14</sup> A. Kasybekov, “Batken zhivet v nashikh serdtsakh,” *Vechernii Bishkek*, 31 May, 2004, available at [<http://members.vb.kg/2004/05/31/panorama/1.html>], 17 May, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> See: D. Glumskov, “Mirnogo neba, zemliaki,” *Vechernii Bishkek*, 24 March, 2000.

was \$18.7 million (897 million som), or 1.2 percent of GDP; in 2002, it was \$22 million (1.03 billion som), or 1.4 percent of GDP; in 2003, \$26.7 million (1.12 billion som), or 1.3 percent of GDP.<sup>16</sup> Subsequently, the question of increasing defense spending was brought up on several occasions. In particular, addressing a meeting of the National Security Council in May 2004, President Akaev said that “the economic growth of the past few years makes it possible to support the Armed Forces not only morally but also financially.”<sup>17</sup> G. Afonina, a representative of the Soldiers Mothers’ Committee who had just inspected a number of military units, also pointed to an improvement in the military’s financial situation: “The food and supply situation in the Army has improved recently. So young men from poor families are joining the service without any coercion: They will be fed and clad here.”<sup>18</sup>

Yet another important measure implemented during that period was the reorganization of state control in the security and defense realm. Thus, on 4 January, 2001, the National Security Service was created (replacing the National Security Ministry). Furthermore, the NSS was placed outside the executive chain of command and control and was made answerable directly to the president. The reorganization also applied to the Border Service. It was created in 1997 as the Main Directorate of the Border Service<sup>19</sup> in the structure of the National Security Ministry. Following the withdrawal of Russian border guards in 1999, the service had by 2002 gone through a series of reorganizations.<sup>20</sup> The Border Service, comprised of the Main Border Protection Directorate of the Defense Ministry and the Main Border Control Directorate of the National Security Ministry, in August 2002, was reorganized as an independent agency. Whereas in 1999, the Border Service had about 3,000 servicemen,<sup>21</sup> by 2002, its numerical strength increased to 5,000<sup>22</sup> and in the subsequent two years, to 6,000.<sup>23</sup> Today the Border Service answers directly to the president of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Alongside the reorganization of the existing “power bodies,” in 2002, formation of rapid reaction units began. These special purpose units were created to repel attacks by international terrorists and extremists. Their main distinguishing feature was their ability to conduct combat operations on mountainous terrain. Special purpose units are provided with special gear and equipment to operate in mountain areas. They also receive special food rations. They are manned on a contract basis.<sup>24</sup> It would be appropriate here to draw a parallel with Russian mountain brigades. Incidentally, the only Soviet-

<sup>16</sup> According to the KR National Bank exchange rate. Sources for 2001-2002 data: *Otchet po itogam proverki Otcheta Pravitelstva Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki ob ispolnenii respublikanskogo biudzheta za 2002 god*, Schetnaia palata KR, available at [[http://www.ach.gov.kg/otchet\\_2.html](http://www.ach.gov.kg/otchet_2.html)], 31 May, 2007. Sources for 2003 data: *Raskhodnaia chast biudzheta za 2003 god*, KR Finance Ministry, available at [<http://www.minfin.kg/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=296>], 31 May, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> A. Otorbaeva, “Ves generalitet, i ob odnom,” *Vechernii Bishkek*, 15 June, 2004, available at [<http://members.vb.kg/2004/06/15/panorama/6.html>], 1 June, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> “Pomogi armii,” *Vechernii Bishkek*, 20 April, 2004, available at [<http://members.vb.kg/2004/04/20/prizyv/4.html>], 25 March, 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Statute No. 332 of 14 October, 1998, On the Main Directorate of the Border Service of the Defense Ministry of the Kyrgyz Republic.

<sup>20</sup> For example, in May 1999, the Border Service was divided in two wings—the Main Border Protection Directorate, as part of the Defense Ministry, with the function of protecting the state border (about 3,000 servicemen). The second wing, the Main for Border Control Directorate (about 300 servicemen), as part of the National Security Ministry, tasked with ensuring controlled border crossing (see: Decree of the President of the KR No. 131 of 28 May, 1999, On the Border Service of the KR).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>22</sup> Decree of the President of the KR No. 241 of 31 August, 2002, On the Border Service of the KR.

<sup>23</sup> Decree of the President of the KR No. 366 of 18 November, 2003, On Introducing the Amendments into the Decree of the President of the KR On the Border Service of the KR of 31 August, 2002, and Decree of the President of the KR No. 352 of 13 October, 2004, On Introducing the Amendments into the Decree of the President of the KR On the Border Service of the KR of 31 August, 2002.

<sup>24</sup> See: Iu. Orlova, “Kirghizia sozdaet sobstvennye sily bystrogo razvertyvaniia,” *RIA Novosti*, 2 August, 2002, available at [[http://www.rian.ru/defense\\_safety/20020802/201750.html](http://www.rian.ru/defense_safety/20020802/201750.html)], 20 March, 2007.

era mountain brigade (the 68th Independent Motorized Rifle Brigade) was based in the Kirghiz S.S.R., in the Alai Valley.<sup>25</sup>

At that stage, personnel training programs were launched at national military training establishments. One of them was the Bishkek Higher Military School (formerly the Bishkek Military Flight Training College). First four-year training programs were started in 2001.<sup>26</sup>

The structure of the Armed Forces was also reorganized: The Defense Ministry abandoned the Soviet-era “regiment-division” system and adopted the “battalion-brigade” system, which makes it possible to conduct independent action in specific sectors of operation.<sup>27</sup>

In the interest of strengthening the nation’s defense capability and enhancing the prestige of the Armed Forces, the course was set for increasing the share of career and contract servicemen. The term of conscript service was reduced from 18 months to 12: President A. Akaev issued an appropriate decree in 2004.<sup>28</sup> The transfer of the Armed Forces to a professional [contract] basis was designed also to help resolve numerous social problems. According to E. Topoev, the country’s defense minister in 2002, “today, the number of conscripts greatly exceeds the Army’s manpower needs.”<sup>29</sup>

During that period, the Soldiers Mothers’ Committee continued to work proactively, initiating checks at military enlistment offices throughout the country and instituting the use of anonymous comment cards at all military units.<sup>30</sup> In addition to that, special parents’ committees were periodically inspecting military subunits, reporting the results of their “raids” to the Defense Ministry leadership.<sup>31</sup>

Despite all of those measures, the situation in the Armed Forces left much to be desired. “Today, our Armed Forces are, figuratively speaking, in a dormant state. The situation in that area is deplorable,” MP K. Baibolov said in 2003.<sup>32</sup>

That situation eroded the credibility of the “power agencies” and prompted the Kyrgyz parliament to consider instituting parliamentary control over the military.<sup>33</sup> In 2003, a group of MPs prepared a draft law on civilian control of the country’s Armed Forces. Under the document, the activity of the republic’s power agencies was to be monitored not only by state structures but also by representatives of civil society—political parties, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and research and scientific establishments. The draft also provided for the introduction of a new post—official representative for military servicemen’s affairs. The parliament was ready to consider yet another proposal within the framework of military reform—to permit civilians to be appointed to head military departments and agencies.<sup>34</sup> But for various reasons the draft law was never passed.

<sup>25</sup> See: I. Plugatarev, “Est vse, krome lichnogo sostava,” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 26 January, 2007, available at [http://nvo.ng.ru/forces/2007-01-26/3\_ludi.html], 25 March, 2007.

<sup>26</sup> See: Decree of the President of the KR No. 184 of 15 July, 2000, On the Establishment of the Bishkek Military School of the Armed Forces of the KR, and KR Government Resolution No. 12 of 17 January, 2001, On Implementation of the Decree of the President of the KR No. 184 of 15 July, 2000, On the Establishment of the Bishkek Military School of the Armed Forces of the KR.

<sup>27</sup> A series of interviews *Kak obespechit zashchitu granits Kyrgyzstana?* 5 June, 2006, an interview with K. Tynaliev, deputy chief of staff of the KR Armed Forces, available at [http://www.open.kg/ru/blics\_archive\_2006/blics\_border\_security], 26 May, 2007.

<sup>28</sup> See: “Dinozavry v sapogakh,” *Vechernii Bishkek*, 30 July, 2004, available at [http://members.vb.kg/2004/07/30/panorama/14.html], 20 April, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Iu. Orlova, “Kirghizia pristupit k formirovaniu professionalnoi armii,” *RIA Novosti*, 2 August, 2002, available at [http://www.rian.ru/defense\_safety/20020802/201663.html], 30 May, 2007.

<sup>30</sup> See: S. Kozhemiakin, “Galina Afonina: ‘Ne nado boiatsia sluzhit v armii,’” *Bely parokhod*, 16 February, 2007, available at [http://www.parohod.kg/index.php?option=com\_content&task=view&id=4943], 16 February, 2007.

<sup>31</sup> See: “Pomogi armii,” *Vechernii Bishkek*, 20 April, 2004.

<sup>32</sup> E. Temir, “Nedorosli budut vkalyvat kak vse,” *Vechernii Bishkek*, 8 October, 2003, available at [http://members.vb.kg/2003/10/08/politika/4.html], 29 June, 2007.

<sup>33</sup> See: D. Karimov, “Deputatam teper ne khvataet armii,” *Vechernii Bishkek*, 27 May, 2003, available at [http://members.vb.kg/2003/05/27/politika/1.html], 26 March, 2007.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*.



### 2.3. Stage 3 (2005-2007)

Following the change of leadership in the country, after 24 March, 2005, the guidelines for state military policy were also revised. As will be shown below, priority shifted to the development of the social infrastructure of the Armed Forces and improving their image.

**Reorganization measures** in state governance, which were implemented after 24 March, applied to several “power” ministries.

A month after he came into office, acting President K. Bakiev signed a decree on the reorganization of the Border Service as the Border Troops of the National Security Service.<sup>35</sup> However, following a raid by a group of militants (12 May, 2006)<sup>36</sup> the Border Troops were removed from under the command of the National Security Service and reorganized as an integrated executive power agency. They had their former name returned to them—the Border Service. The chairman of the Border Service was as of now appointed by the president of the Kyrgyz Republic.<sup>37</sup>

Yet another consequence of the raid by militants was the adoption of a law (on 8 June, 2006) stripping the National Security Service of the right to investigate criminal cases related to economic and abuse of office offenses. That enabled the NSS to focus on intelligence and counter terrorism activity—that is to say, on its principal mission.<sup>38</sup> Subsequent reorganization of the NSS occurred in early 2007, following the adoption of an amended Constitution. The NSS was reorganized into the State Committee for National Security and incorporated into the structure of the government—in other words, it ceased answering directly to the president.<sup>39</sup>

**Reform of the Armed Forces** per se comprises several components: transition to a one-year term of conscription service, raising the draft age to 20, and the related system of deferrals. At present—the financial situation not being favorable enough—the Armed Forces rely for manpower acquisition both on conscripts and contract servicemen. In 2006, the share of contract servicemen was 15 percent.<sup>40</sup>

Yet another innovation was relieving military servicemen of a part of the so-called economic functions [functions unrelated to their military duties]: in order not to distract conscripts from essential training, 300 to 350 jobs were created for civilian employees—at canteens and other auxiliary services.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to that, as of 2006, in the interest of strengthening military discipline, conscripts started serving in units located not less than 300 km away from the place of their permanent residence.

Military reform also extended to formal trappings, including the translation of official documentation and military terminology into Kyrgyz, the state language, and the introduction in 2005 of na-

<sup>35</sup> Decree of the Acting President of the KR No. 183 of 23 May, 2005, On Measures to Improve State Administration in the Security Sphere of the KR.

<sup>36</sup> All militants were activists of the outlawed Islamic Movement of Afghanistan (IMU). Units of the National Security Service Special Operations Directorate Alfa, the Interior Ministry Special Purpose Forces, and the Border Troops participated in the counter terrorism operation. KR losses: six killed, including four military servicemen; militant losses: four killed, one captured. There were 10 militants in all. According to law-enforcement agencies, the group planned to stage a number of terrorist attacks in the Ferghana Valley to “celebrate” the anniversary of the Andijan events in Uzbekistan (see: Iu. Kuzminykh, “Oni vypolnili svoi dolg,” *Vechernii Bishkek*, 16 May, 2006, available at [http://members.vb.kg/2006/05/16/anti/1.html], 6 May, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> Decree of the President of the KR No. 270 of 22 May, 2006, On Improving State Administration in Protecting the KR State Border.

<sup>38</sup> See: “Deputy otobrali u SNB belovorotnichkovye dela,” *Delo No.*, 14 June, 2006.

<sup>39</sup> Decree of the President of the KR No. 96 of 16 March, 2007, On Organizational Measures to Ensure the Implementation of the KR Law on the Structure of the KR Government.

<sup>40</sup> See: G. Platonov, “Osobennosti natsionalnogo prizyva,” *Delo No.*, 18 October, 2006, available at [http://delo.ktnet.kg/2006/35/07.shtml], 28 March, 2007.

<sup>41</sup> See: “Kirghizskaia armia pereshla na prizyv s 20 let,” *Delo No.*, 14 June, 2006.

tional military uniforms and insignia.<sup>42</sup> For 14 years prior to that, the republic's military servicemen had worn Soviet and then Russian uniforms. Sometimes servicemen were issued U.S., Turkish or French clothing and equipment, supplied as humanitarian aid from NATO member countries. Today the Defense Ministry places contracts among domestic producers, who make military uniforms not only for the Armed Forces but for all power structures in the republic.

There has been a visible improvement in the **organization of logistics**. According to the Defense Ministry press service, exercise and training facilities, including field engineering structures, artificial obstacles and assault courses, are being modernized and upgraded. Servicemen participate in night time tactical and live fire drills. Tank, CW, artillery, and engineer subunits exercise on a regular basis. Supply of fuel and lubricating materials to all military units is improving, which makes it possible to conduct scheduled motor vehicle and armor drills.<sup>43</sup>

As for advanced **professional training of military servicemen**, every year about 40 Defense Ministry officers upgrade their qualifications at special training courses abroad.

In early 2007, the Defense Ministry Center for Advanced Officer and NCO Training was opened, offering one-month professional training courses. Furthermore, in 2005, the NCO Training School of the Combined Arms Training Center of the Armed Forces of the Kyrgyz Republic was opened at the Second Independent Motorized Rifle Brigade. The NCO institution is especially important in the process of transition to contract service, since it helps relieve the officers' workload and shift a substantial part of duties and responsibilities to NCOs. NCO schools prepare section commanders and deputy commanders of motorized rifle, mountain, and special purpose sub-units.

Students at the Bishkek Higher Military School with the best grades are entitled to a special stipend (about \$12).

**Changes in social infrastructure** include the building of new homes and apartments for officers and NCOs, renovation of a hotel for military servicemen in Bishkek, repair and modernization of storehouses and bath and laundry facilities, modernization and upgrading of military polyclinics in Bishkek and Osh, and renovation of the Defense Ministry Tamga sanatorium.

Representatives of civil society note that the improvement of social infrastructure and housing conditions has generally helped improve the image of the Armed Forces: "On the whole, there has been a substantial improvement, which benefited everyone... I remember when keys to the first few apartments were being presented to officers' families, one colonel started crying in full view of everyone. That was hardly surprising, considering that a person, whose children are already over 20, has had to rent housing throughout his life. Many officers have received apartments of their own. Second, the new minister immediately paid attention to how the servicemen are clad and equipped, what sort of food they eat, and in what conditions they live."<sup>44</sup>

Certain changes have also occurred in the relationship between civil society and the Defense Ministry. "The attitude toward us has changed considerably. Now I can easily call his aide and arrange for a meeting with the minister. 'Tomorrow, if necessary,' Isakov will say... Today, we are not in a state of confrontation with the military, but in dialog and cooperation," G. Afonina, chairman of the Soldiers Mothers' Committee, says.<sup>45</sup> The Soldiers Mothers' Committee continues a variety of activities in military units, including the organization of competitions (not least with the aim of eradicating such problems as hazing) and training in election technology. Not long ago, the republic's

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<sup>42</sup> Decree of the Acting President of the KR No. 311 of 11 August 2005, On National Military Uniforms and Insignia in the Armed Forces of the KR.

<sup>43</sup> See: T. Orlova, "Voyennyye raportuiut s optimizmom," *MSN*, 22 November, 2005, available at [<http://www.msn.kg/ru/news/12028/>], 27 March, 2007.

<sup>44</sup> S. Kozhemyakin, op. cit.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*.



authorities put into practice yet another idea proposed by G. Afonina: In order to boost the prestige of the Armed Forces, official sending-off parties for conscripts, practiced during the Soviet era, have been restored. The first such event took place in the fall of 2006 on the central square of Bishkek, in the presence of city authorities and Defense Ministry officials, as well as the conscripts' parents.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the Soldiers Mothers' Committee publishes its own magazine, *Armeisky pedsovet*, the *Tvoi prava soldat* [Soldiers Rights] bulletin, and other publications.

Therefore, the Defense Ministry's cooperation with this civil society institution helps improve the image of the military in the public eye.<sup>47</sup>

Yet another important development has been the introduction of parliamentary control over military organizations in Kyrgyzstan. A draft law on parliamentary control was previously rejected by the government and sent back for a review in 2006.<sup>48</sup> An amended version of the bill was approved by the Kyrgyz parliament in January 2007. In accordance with the document, the law makers may determine the command and control system in the KR Armed Forces and the procedure for the use and employment of the Armed Forces, as well as the purposes, principles and powers of the republic's Armed Forces. The deputies established the Office of the Parliamentary Representative for the Affairs of Military Organizations. The entire Armed Forces are now subject to parliamentary control.<sup>49</sup>

### 3. Problems

In accordance with the Law on Defense, funding for defense programs is provided from the budget of the Kyrgyz Republic (Art 21). However, military officers of different ranks have admitted in personal interviews that military reform cannot be implemented effectively enough due to severe under funding of the military.

Experts say that only 20 percent to 50 percent of the military needs are being met.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, the military leadership is looking for additional sources of funding. One of the extra budgetary sources of funding is the sale of morally and technically obsolete weapon systems, as well as Soviet era military equipment. According to K. Tynaliyev, deputy chief of staff of the KR Armed Forces, "we have obsolete equipment that it is practically impossible to use; we sell it, using the receipts to buy clothing and gear."<sup>51</sup>

The KR's 2007 draft defense budget earmarked funding for four power agencies: the Defense Ministry, the Border Service, the National Guard, and the Military Court—a total of \$25 million (988.9 million som), or 0.8 percent of GDP.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>46</sup> See: Zh. Ibraliyev, "V Kyrgyzstane vozrozhdauiu traditsiiu torzhestvennykh provodov prizyvnikov v armiu," *24.kg*, 17 October, 2006, available at [<http://www.24.kg/community/2006/10/17/8462.html>], 7 April, 2007.

<sup>47</sup> See: S. Kozhemyakin, op. cit.

<sup>48</sup> KR Government Resolution No. 144 of 6 March, 2006, On the KR Government Conclusion concerning the Draft Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Parliamentary Control over the KR Military Organizations.

<sup>49</sup> See: Zh. Ibraliyev, "Parlament Kyrgyzstana odobril zakonoproekt o parlamentskom kontrole nad voyennymi organizatsiyami KR," *24.kg*, 11 January, 2007, available at [<http://www.24.kg/politic/2007/01/11/21471.html>], 10 April, 2007.

<sup>50</sup> See: L. Bondarets, "Vooruzhennoe stolknovenie 12 maia 2006 goda: uroki, vyvody, predlozhenia," *Otkrytyi Kyrgyzstan*, available at [[http://www.open.kg/upload/express\\_analysis/bondarec.doc](http://www.open.kg/upload/express_analysis/bondarec.doc)], 16 March, 2007.

<sup>51</sup> A series of interviews, *Kak obespechit zashchitu granits Kyrgyzstana?* 5 June, 2006. An interview with K. Tynaliyev.

<sup>52</sup> The other four agencies—the National Security Service, the State Protection Service, the Interior Ministry Internal Troops, and the Ministry for Affairs of Civil Defense, Emergency Situations, and Elimination of Natural Disasters—are included in the "Public Order and Security" category (see: "Poiasnitelnaia zapiska k proektu biudzheta KR na 2007 god," KR Finance Ministry, available at [<http://www.minfin.kg/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=679>], 26 May, 2007.

Because the power structures are under financed, their training standards declined to the minimum; therefore, the servicemen's ability to perform missions assigned to them leaves much to be desired.

Apart from other things, military reform includes upgrading weapons and equipment. Kyrgyzstan's Armed Forces have not been reoutfitted since the declaration of independence. According to K. Tynaliev, the budget does not earmark any funding for the acquisition of military equipment. Compared to Russia, where 40 percent of the defense budget goes to maintenance of the Armed Forces and 60 percent for the procurement of arms and equipment, the entire funding in the KR goes for maintenance.<sup>53</sup> His view is shared by D. Kozhobergenov, deputy chief of staff of the Border Service: "The 400 million som earmarked in the budget is only enough to pay wages and provide food to servicemen."<sup>54</sup>

An insufficient supply of arms and military equipment leads to a substantial increase in expenditure in the event of emergency situations (for example, incursions by armed groups across the border) and impairs the effectiveness of military operations in general. In 1999, an extra \$4.5 million had to be spent on eliminating a group of international terrorists.<sup>55</sup>

The lack of funds for the procurement and maintenance of arms and military equipment, military training, reservist training, etc., imminently weakens the Armed Forces' ability to perform their duties in defending the country. Therefore, it is essential to review matters relating to the effectiveness of the Armed Forces, a rational distribution of available resources, the required numerical strength and training of officers and enlisted personnel.

In addition to that, an appropriate scientific and research base in the security realm is also lacking. Conclusions that are made here are based on data provided by the Soviet or Russian military science, while such compilation is counterproductive. All of these factors—the two countries' territorial scale, geographic specifics, military-political goals, financial status, etc.—are as different as can be.

Yet another impediment to military reform is the lack of civilian control over the reform process. Since the republic has no experience in such transformations, the implementation of all measures and activities involved in reforming the Armed Forces as a whole has been entrusted to the Defense Ministry, which effectively closed all avenues to civilian oversight. Needless to say, military reform, both on the theoretical and practical level, is the domain of the state, above all the Defense Ministry, but not to the exclusion of other government agencies. For example, in Russia, the Public Council under the Defense Ministry is actively involved in developing new military doctrine.<sup>56</sup> It would be advisable to create scientific research centers to study military problems in the KR or to tap some of the existing research facilities. Some of the principal questions for research should be as follows: society's vision of the military of the future, the main goals of the military reform, and so on.

It is high time to review the existing legislative basis, primarily the military doctrine. The current doctrine was adopted in 2002, but it was developed earlier, in 2000. The document fails to take into account most of the recent developments—e.g., the deployment of two [foreign military] bases on the republic's soil,<sup>57</sup> periodic attacks on border posts, and changes that have occurred in the situ-

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<sup>53</sup> A series of interviews, *Kak obespechit zashchitu granits Kyrgyzstana?* 5 June, 2006. An interview with K. Tynaliev.

<sup>54</sup> Ibidem. An interview with D. Kozhobergenov, Chief of the Main Operations Department, deputy chief of staff of the Border Service, available at [[http://www.open.kg/ru/blics\\_archive\\_2006/blics\\_border\\_security](http://www.open.kg/ru/blics_archive_2006/blics_border_security)], 28 May, 2007.

<sup>55</sup> See: L. Bondarets, op. cit.

<sup>56</sup> RF Defense Minister's Order No. 490 of 16 November, 2006, On the Formation of the Public Council at the RF Defense Ministry.

<sup>57</sup> The Manas air base of the U.S.-led antiterrorist coalition is located not far from Bishkek (established in 2001). The Kant air base of the Collective Security Treaty Organization is located in the town of Kant, 20 km from Bishkek (established in 2003).

ation in the region as a whole. Furthermore, the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York have shown that the use of relatively small armed groups in the present day world can cause devastating consequences even for the great powers. All of that requires a review and a clarification of threats to KR security, a redefinition of the Armed Forces' functions, and developing new approaches toward military doctrine in such a small country as Kyrgyzstan.

## *C o n c l u s i o n s*

Analysis of military reform in the KR shows that there are two opposite views of the problem at hand. The first view, which could be described as pessimistic, is as follows: "There is in effect no military reform. There are only assurances [from the government] that reform is underway, but little else."<sup>58</sup> The second view—optimistic—posits: "Military reform has begun and is moving full steam ahead."<sup>59</sup> It seems that the truth lies somewhere in between. During the aforementioned three stages, state policy with respect to the Armed Forces has undergone substantial change—from complete denial that the country needs Armed Forces to the realization that the state cannot survive without a robust military security system, especially in such a problem ridden region as Central Asia. But as one expert said, "for our Armed Forces to meet the requirements of the time, it is necessary that the state give them higher priority."<sup>60</sup> In addition to that, good teamwork by all agencies and departments in organizing a military security system is of the essence.

There are two principal components of military reform.

- The first, which can be conveniently described as "**internal reform**," involves changes that directly enhance the state's defense capability. These transformations include restructuring the Armed Forces, reoutfitting and modernization, professional training by taking the country's geographic specifics into account, and so on.
- The second component—"external reform," involves measures designed to boost the image of the Armed Forces. They pertain to the introduction of national military uniform, improvement of social infrastructure, resolution of housing and related problems, implementation of cultural and health oriented activities, etc. Needless to say, the two components are closely interconnected. Since the republic at present lacks sufficient financial resources, only the second component of military reform is being implemented. But for the national security system to operate smoothly and effectively, it is still necessary to implement the first component—i.e., "internal reform." Without that, external transformations alone will not improve the country's defense capability.

In conclusion, it should be noted that many of the problems in the KR Armed Forces are connected with the initial stage of the development of the republic's power agencies. The aforementioned measures and activities indicate that military reform in its classic understanding is only beginning to gain momentum. Today, Kyrgyzstan cannot afford to completely reoutfit the military and acquire

<sup>58</sup> A series of interviews, *Kak obesptechit zashchitu granits Kyrgyzstana?* 5 June, 2006. An interview with Col. Iu. Pogrebniak (Ret.), available at [[http://www.open.kg/ru/blics\\_archive\\_2006/blics\\_border\\_security](http://www.open.kg/ru/blics_archive_2006/blics_border_security)], 26 May, 2007.

<sup>59</sup> E.g., an interview with KR Defense Minister I. Isakov (quoted from: Iu. Gruzdov, "U silnoi armii—krepkiye tyly," *MSN*, 4 October, 2005, available at [<http://www.msn.kg/ru/news/11834/>], 30 May, 2007); a news conference by M. Bekboev, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, first deputy defense minister of Kyrgyzstan (quoted from: "Armia sovershenstvuetia," *MSN*, 18 October, 2005, available at [<http://www.msn.kg/ru/news/11629/>], 31 May, 2007).

<sup>60</sup> A series of interviews, *Kak obesptechit zashchitu granits Kyrgyzstana?* 5 June, 2006. An interview with K. Tynaliyev.

modern arms and military equipment. On the other hand, the operational effectiveness of the Armed Forces does not always directly depend on financial resources. Boosting the prestige of military service by improving social infrastructure (which is happening now) has an indirect impact on the state's defense capability.

But the key ingredients of success are full-scale funding, in-depth analysis of outstanding problems in the military, and the political will of the country's leadership. Time will show whether they will be in place.

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