

THE U.S. VS RUSSIA IN MILITARY-POLITICAL COOPERATION WITH TAJIKISTAN

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U.S. Policy after 2001

Tajikistan, which has a 1,200-km-long border with Afghanistan, was in demand during Operation Enduring Freedom. At the beginning of 2002, Tajikistan opened its air corridor to NATO's military transport aircraft and 250 French servicemen were deployed at the civilian airport in Dushanbe. The United States was allowed to use the Dushanbe and Kulob aerodromes for deploying its contingents.¹ American congressmen, senators, ministers, and the heads of military departments began paying more frequent visits to the republic.

The republic, which borders directly on Afghanistan, was hoping for military-technical assistance in the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking. This hope was encouraged when U.S. Congress cancelled the embargo on arms deliveries to Tajikistan. However, the U.S. did not ask Tajikistan for permission to deploy its bases in the country. This was partly because, after taking a look at Kulob (a former Soviet base), the U.S. Central Command deemed it insufficiently equipped and too small,² although it could have provided the best access to the strategically important Pan-sheer Valley. Moreover, Dushanbe could not respond in any way without first resolving the problem of Russia's military base, talks on which began back in 1999. However, the country's president, Emomali Rakhmon, was potentially in favor of deploying the American military base provided it brought economic benefit.

But the Americans did not want to have their military bases right next to the 201st Russian division. Nevertheless, American experts did call on the U.S. to deploy operational structures in Tajikistan in order to increase control over drug trade and support the American forces in Afghanistan in the event the Taliban or other anti-Western Islamic groups became further entrenched there.

¹ See: V. Kitspotter, "Bol'shaia igra v Tsentral'noi Azii," *Iadernyy kontrol'*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2005, pp. 81-102.

² See: V. Loeb, "Footprints in Steppes of Central Asia; New Bases Indicate U.S. Presence Will Be Felt after Afghan War," *The Washington Post*, 9 February, 2002, p. A01, Lexis-Nexis.

Deployment of the U.S. armed forces should have been explored as the first step in U.S. influence on Indian territory, a step that would cement the growing security relationship between New Delhi and Washington.³

Dushanbe could have gleaned benefit from Washington's interest in the region even without deployment of a military base. In 2003, Tajikistan was the last Central Asian country to join NATO's Partnership for Peace Program, which, according to Tajik Defense Minister Sh. Khairulloev, provided a new boost to the development of military cooperation with the Western countries. The development of these relations is gradually helping to resolve many problems facing the country's armed forces (personnel training and provision with means of communication, vehicles, clothing and medical supplies, engineer equipment, office equipment, and other supplies) thanks to the gratuitous assistance provided by partners.

Within the framework of the Border Security Program, with the participation of the U.S. embassy, the facilities of the Interior Ministry academy, expert-criminal department, and analytical center were repaired; support was rendered to departments engaged in fighting organized crime, illicit drug circulation, and illegal human trafficking; computer classes, lingaphone and study rooms in different departments were created; and special technical equipment was transferred to the investigative forces of the Tajik Interior Ministry.

The republic's Interior Ministry received a total of 15 million dollars in aid from the U.S. under this program.⁴ By 2005, the Defense Ministry had been allotted a total of approximately 25 million dollars in gratuitous aid. And between 2005 and 2007, Washington granted approximately 40 million dollars for the reconstruction, repair, and equipping of 15 posts on the border with Afghanistan.⁵

The U.S.'s willingness to assume responsibility for infrastructure development of the Tajik border is largely related to the experience accumulated in training the republic's law-enforcement and governmental structure employees. Beginning in 2002, more than 326 Tajik government officials went through training costing more than 6 million dollars.⁶

The desire to increase cooperation with the U.S. was expressed in the fact that Tajikistan did not extend the treaty with Russia on protection of the state border, while in response the American side told Dushanbe it was willing to modernize its border troops, ensure joint patrol of the border, and create Tajik-American border posts.

The Americans ended up not patrolling the Tajik border, but they did participate in modernizing the republic's border services. Evidently, the provision of this assistance hinged on withdrawal of the Russian border guards. Keeping in mind that talks were held as early as 2003 regarding extension of the treaty on the conditions for the stay of Russian border guards, Washington offered more advantageous conditions.

Talks between Moscow and Dushanbe on the status of the 201st division are dragging. Under pressure from the Tajik authorities, the headquarters of the 201st division and other contingents began being transferred from the center of the capital to its outskirts. While Washington has started to build an embassy complex there totaling 63 million dollars,⁷ and is also granting a billion-dollar loan and

³ See: *Central Asia in U.S. Strategy and Operational Planning: Where Do We Go From Here?*, ed. by J.K. Davis, M.J. Sweeney. The Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Washington DC, 2004, p. 79.

⁴ *U.S. Government Support to the Ministry of the Interior*, Press Releases, 25 July, 2007, available at [<http://dushanbe.usembassy.gov/>].

⁵ From the speech by Evan A. Feigenbaum, *Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs*, at a conference dedicated to the fifteenth anniversary of the establishment of relations between the U.S. and Tajikistan at the Center of Strategic Studies. Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 13 April, 2007, "Fifteen Years of Tajik-American Relations," Official site of the U.S. Embassy in Tajikistan [<http://dushanbe.usembassy.gov/speeches.html>].

⁶ See: Ministry of Interior, *U.S. Embassy Team up for Antiterrorism Training*, Press Releases, 19 February, 2008, available at [<http://dushanbe.usembassy.gov/>].

⁷ See: V. Mukhin, "Interesy SShA i Rossii stalkivaiutsia v Tadjikistane," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 12 August, 2003.

planning reconstruction of the military airport near Kulob, thus making Tajikistan even more dependent on it.

Russia in the Formation of Military Cooperation with Tajikistan

Between 2001 and 2004, there was another slump in military cooperation between Tajikistan and Russia. The arrival of the American military in the region and the financial acquisitions for U.S. military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan forced Dushanbe to increase its pressure on Moscow. The Tajik authorities demanded some preferences and delayed the talks on entry into force of the Treaty on the Status and Conditions for the Deployment of a Russian Military Base in the republic signed as early as 1999. Military-economic bargaining began on the principle of “investments in exchange for the base.”⁸ This is also confirmed by Chairman of the Military-Imperial Union of Russia Colonel General L. Ivashov. In particular, when answering the question of why the talks on creating a 4th military base in Tajikistan were going on so long, he pointed out that “the position of the Russian military will be stable while there is Russian economic interest in the republic. Russia should not restrict itself to military cooperation alone.”⁹

At the same time, Dushanbe got Russia to fully finance the base, transfer subordination of the base’s servicemen to the Tajik Ministry of Defense in emergencies, and write off the state debt of 300 million dollars. The question of the electronic-optical center of the Okno (Nurek) space control system that belongs to the air defense structures of the Russian armed forces was put on the agenda. This facility was built during Soviet times and has strategic importance for the security of the entire CIS.

The station was actively modernized after the U.S. withdrew from the ABM Treaty. Tajikistan suggested that Russia take over ownership of Nurek (the facility’s status was not determined before this) and insisted on the payment of 50 million dollars for its use.¹⁰

In June 2004, Russia and Tajikistan agreed to create a permanent base. In August of the same year, the presidents of the two countries signed a corresponding agreement and the 201st division was replaced with the 201st military base. Its facilities are located in three large population settlements—Dushanbe, Kurgan-Tiube, and Kulob. The base has approximately 6,500 servicemen, 15% of whom are Tajik citizens. But the number of servicemen cannot correspond to the base’s status. There are plans to expand it further to 8,500 people (this was the size of the division).

The Russian division/base consisted of three infantry regiments, an artillery regiment, tank battalion, and combat support unit, including a separate helicopter squadron and aviation group. The division units had the practical task of covering 11 operative areas of the Tajik-Afghan border and protecting several important facilities of the country and Russian institutions. The division has air defense forces and assets. But there has been no joint patrolling using Tajikistan’s air defense system, there is only distribution of responsibility by zone and cooperation.

⁸ Tajik expert J. Usmanov is of the same opinion (see: J. Usmanov, “Changes in the Configuration of Russia’s Military Presence in Tajikistan and its Influence on Maintaining Security in Central Asia,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 5 (47), 2007, pp. 94-105).

⁹ See: “Tiazhelo v tadjzhisko-rossiiskom uchenii...” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 6 August, 2003.

¹⁰ See: V. Panfilova, “Dushanbe nazval tsenu svoei druzhby,” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 19 March, 2004.

Russia's need to counterbalance its position against the U.S. made it possible for Dushanbe to obtain Moscow's consent to participate in restoring the republic's key hydropower station, Rogun, which required more than 2.5 billion dollars at that time to complete.¹¹ But the land still belonged to the base, and the technology and armaments were also owned by Russia, Russia is not charged rent or electricity fees.

When the military base acquired its official status, everyday conditions began to improve too. By April 2008, according to commander of the Volga-Ural Military Okrug V. Boldyrev,¹² more than 2 billion rubles had been spent by Russia on equipping the 201st base, and there are plans to spend another one billion on this in the near future. But V. Boldyrev noted that the everyday living conditions of the servicemen and the infrastructure of the military settlements in Kulob, Kurgan-Tiube, and Dushanbe leave much to be desired. "Each garrison should not simply have barracks for the contract servicemen, but individual housing, as is the usual procedure in Russia," said the general.¹³ Ninety percent of the contract servicemen at this base have been provided with housing.¹⁴ A secondary school has been built at the 149th guard infantry regiment, which is part of the base, on the Tajik-Afghan border in Kulob and a kindergarten has been built in Dushanbe. Now not only the children of the Russian military but also local residents are attending to school there. Several more schools and kindergartens are also being built. The most talented Tajik graduates will have the opportunity to study in Russian higher education institutions. Moreover, Russia is paying for a military hospital to be built in Dushanbe and refurbishing it with up-to-date equipment.

The Nurek station was transferred to Russia by way of settling Tajikistan's state debt. The land on which it is located was rented for 49 years at a symbolic fee of 30 American cents a year. Russia is writing 242 million dollars of the Tajik debt off to the facility, which, according to estimates, is less than its actual cost. The then Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov did not hide his satisfaction about this transaction, saying, "...we are renting the land on which the base at Nurek is located for 49 years for a symbolic fee of 30 American cents a year. This will allow the space forces to feel confident for at least the next 50 years."¹⁵

After signing these military agreements, Tajikistan retained good relations with Russia and received 2 billion dollars in investments from it. Russian President Vladimir Putin noted, "I don't think that anyone has invested this amount of money in Tajikistan in the past 12-13 years."¹⁶ The complex, which has been placed in a state of operational readiness, does not have a full complement of staff. The remaining 50 million dollars of the state debt will be settled by transferring a set of shares in the Sangtuda GES being built to Russia.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Vladimir Putin stated that the opening of this military base "meets the vital interests of the two nations and serves to strengthen peace and stability in Central Asia and security of the entire Commonwealth of Independent States. Along with the air base in Kirgizia, in the town of Kant, the military base in Tajikistan will be a reliable link in the region's united collective security system. This will be a system that is called upon to create conditions for neutralizing terrorist and extremist raids throughout the entire CIS and in Russia, as well as assist in the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime."¹⁷

¹¹ See: V. Panfilova, "Rossia ukreplit svoe voenno-politicheskoe vliianie v Tadjikistane," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 25 April, 2003.

¹² At present commander-in-chief of the Russian Federation Armed Forces Land Troops.

¹³ See: "Rossiiskaia voennaia baza v Tadjikistane obespechivaet bezopasnost' gosudarstv ODKB—komanduiushchii okrugom," *Interfax-Kazakhstan*, 17 April, 2008.

¹⁴ See: "Zhiloi dom dlia voennykh postroen na baze PurVO v Tadjikistane," *Informatsionnoe agentstvo API*, 17 April, 2008.

¹⁵ See: N. Karshiboev, V. Panfilova, and I. Plugatarev, "V Tadjikistane poiavilas' voennaia baza RF," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 18 October, 2004.

¹⁶ See: "V Tadjikistane poiavilas' voennaia baza RF," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 18 October, 2004.

¹⁷ See: "201 Gatchinskaia dvazhdy Krasnoznamennaia voennaia baza," available at [<http://rusemb.tj/ru/index/index/pageId/95/>].

In addition, the importance for Russia of ensuring Tajikistan's security and the military base, according to Vladimir Putin's statement, guarantee the stability of Russian investments. But it is not clear why Germany, for example, which invests billions in investments in the Dutch economy, is not trying to deploy a military base in this country.¹⁸

The Tajik Foreign Ministry, in turn, believes that the need for Russia's military presence in the republic proceeds from the overall concern and interest in resolving the problems in Afghanistan, in particular the illicit circulation of drugs and fighting extremism and terrorism.¹⁹

In exchange for its military presence in Tajikistan, Russia pledged to modernize the republic's armed forces. For example, according to first Tajik deputy defense minister Major General R. Nadyrov, the military departments of the two countries are looking at the possibility of creating a regional center in Tajikistan for repairing and modernizing artillery systems and armored vehicles.²⁰ Of course, he is talking about Russia financing this project. For it is "thanks to Russian aid that it was possible to repair the radar stations that belong to the national air defense system," said the major general.²¹

In addition, it became obvious that withdrawal of its border guards from the Tajik border was the price Russia paid for the 201st base and Nurek station. In August 2004, an agreement was signed on withdrawal of the Russian border guards. However, Tajikistan benefited from the presence of the Russian border guards, during their entire stay more than 30,000 Tajik border guards obtained an education in Russian military academies.

Justifying Tajikistan's ability to defend its statehood without foreign military presence (in this case Russian), head of the Department of International Military Cooperation of the republic's Defense Ministry M. Khasanov emphasized: "... we should not play down or ignore the role of other states that are jointly protecting peace in Tajikistan,"²² in so doing making it understood that Dushanbe will not cooperate exclusively with Russia, but will expand its military-technical cooperation with other countries too, primarily with the U.S.

In July 2005, the Russian border guards, with the exception of a group of advisors (consisting of 300 people) from the FSS border service, were moved out of Tajikistan, and the U.S. essentially assumed full responsibility for financing the border service, export control services, and customs, positioning its help as support of sovereignty. It was precisely national control of the border that was the condition for allotting American and other Western aid to its infrastructure development. Training sessions, joint exercises, and deliveries of equipment were carried out for Tajik border guards. Keeping in mind that 50% of the activity of the Russian border guards is financed by Tajikistan, it was easy for Dushanbe to agree financially to "independent" protection of its border with the help of the U.S. government.

The seeming speed with which the decision was adopted is explained by the fact that as early as September 2003, the then NATO Secretary General George Robertson promised, during a visit to Dushanbe, that the North Atlantic Alliance and OSCE would soon open a training center in Tajikistan and begin refresher training courses for the border guards of the Central Asian states.²³

Despite the transfer of border patrol to the Tajik military, the then Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed the desire to help "our Tajik friends to fortify the state border. We are the ones who

¹⁸ See: V. Socor, "Russian Army Base in Tajikistan Legalized; Border Troops to Withdraw," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 1, Issue 108, 18 October, 2004.

¹⁹ See: *ShOS-2009. Novyy shag v strategicheskoye partnerstvo. Vzgliad iz Tadjikistana*, Exclusive interview of Tajik Foreign Minister H. Zarifi to "Nakanune.ru," 15 January, 2009, available at [<http://www.nakanune.ru/articles/13812>].

²⁰ See: A. Orlov, "Rossiisko-tadjikskoe sotrudnichestvo," *Voenna-promyshlennyy kurier*, 11-17 February, 2004, No. 5 (22).

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² "Opora na sobstvennye sily," *Voenna-promyshlennyy kurier*, 24-31 March, 2004, No. 1 1(28).

²³ See: "OBSE i NATO vydavlivaiut Rossiiu s tadjikskoye-afganskoye granitsy," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2 December, 2003.

are primarily interested in this,” said the president during a meeting with the new ambassador to Tajikistan R. Abdulatipov in June 2005. “It is a well-known fact that a large flow of drugs headed both for Western Europe and the Russian Federation is still crossing the Afghan-Tajik border,” said Putin.²⁴ But things got no further than words. It was the U.S. that rendered the Tajik border services the main assistance.

As a result, having created the Russian base, Tajikistan retained fairly good relations with Russia and, after withdrawal of the Russian border guards, drew the U.S. into security cooperation. In 2006, with the support of the United States, the World Bank wrote off Tajikistan’s state debt and, at Russia’s proposal, the republic’s state debt to the member states of the G-8. So Tajikistan not only remained on good terms with Russia, but also wrote off its debt, asked for investments, and received compensation from the U.S. for withdrawal of the Russian border guards, expecting in so doing stronger cooperation with the U.S. Later, when Russia entered advantageous military agreements, problems began with the fulfillment of Russia’s investment obligations in the Tajik hydropower industry, which indirectly shows that due to its desire not only not to lose but to increase its control, Moscow agreed to sign agreements on investments in the Tajik hydropower and aluminum industries.

Since 2005, the training of Tajik military at Russian military academies has been carried out on privileged conditions. Every year more than 80 Tajik servicemen have been obtaining an education in Russia’s military academies on a gratuitous basis and more than 20 on a privileged basis. Tajikistan is regularly participating in the military exercises of the CSTO and SCO, as well as in bilateral exercises with Russian servicemen.

Increase in the U.S.’s Role in the Military-Political Sphere

A new spiral in the U.S.’s political activity in Tajikistan began after the ambassador to the U.S. Hamrokhon Zarifi was appointed to the post of Tajik Foreign Minister in December 2006, which shows Dushanbe’s willingness to expand bilateral cooperation. In May 2007, due to the ongoing campaign in Afghanistan, NATO adopted a decision to increase the transit of freight through Tajikistan. In so doing, the Russian side was assured that the Alliance had no intention of increasing the actual size of the NATO contingent in Tajikistan. This question was discussed by NATO representative Robert Simmons, who came to Dushanbe in May 2007.

The increased attention to Tajikistan aimed at supporting the antiterrorist campaign in Afghanistan was confirmed during the visit in June 2007 by another high-ranking official—Commander of the U.S. Central Command General William Fallon, who held talks with President Emomali Rakhmon and others officials responsible for national security. And although there was no talk about opening another American base, which everyone had been repeating over and over for several years since the U.S. withdrawal from Uzbekistan, there was talk about increased cooperation in terms of airport use. It became known that by 2010-2011, the Pentagon hopes to take up residence at the aerodrome in Khorog on the border with the PRC. It is justifying this by saying it needs to repair the runway should there be an emergency in the air involving airplanes of the international coalition in Afghanistan.

²⁴ “Nachalo vstrechi s poslom Rossii v Tadzhikistane Ramazanom Abdulatipovym,” 3 June, 2005, Novo-Ogarevo, available at [http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2005/06/03/1707_type63378_89054.shtml].

Admiral William Fallon also suggested that Tajik servicemen participate in the peacekeeping operations. In response, in September 2007, in order to study possible ways to intensify cooperation with NATO, a group of Tajik government officials visited the NATO Headquarters and Allied Command.

In March 2007, for the first time in Tajikistan's history, joint training exercises of American servicemen and Tajik border guards were carried out on its territory. According to Kh. Rakhmatulloev, press secretary of the border department of the Tajik Committee of National Security, these exercises represented an exchange of experience between the two countries. "It is all related to drug trafficking from Afghanistan, international terrorism, and religious extremism," he noted.²⁵ But drug production in Afghanistan has grown during the years of the U.S. presence in this country, although no joint exercises were carried out until recently. It can be presumed that the increase in the U.S.'s activity is related to the expansion of Russia's military presence in the region, in particular to the agreements signed on the deployment of Russian military facilities.

Whereby, according to S. Safarov, deputy director of the Center of Strategic Studies under the President of Tajikistan, when the republic follows a multi-vector policy, this policy also works in the military sphere. But according to him, "the exercises carried out with Russia and China were very extensive, whereas the exercises with the U.S. were only symbolic."²⁶ Moreover, the list of units and contingents ready to participate in operations and exercises within the Partnership for Peace Program is essentially not used. Armaments and the command structure are still Soviet/Russian, which is preventing the development of cooperation in this sphere. And Tajikistan will not be of primary importance to NATO since the republic is still economically backward and does not have the means for full-fledged military cooperation.

In 2007, with U.S. support, international financial institutions granted Tajikistan loans totaling 1 billion 43 million dollars and grants amounting to 145.3 million dollars, which constitutes more than two of the country's budgets.²⁷ The United States itself raised financial aid to Tajikistan to 50 million dollars in 2007-2008.

The growing cooperation with the United States was confirmed at the end of 2007 by Tajik Foreign Minister Hamrokhon Zarifi, who emphasized that increased attention is being given to the joint struggle against new challenges and threats, illicit circulation of drugs and weapons, and cooperation in the law-enforcement and defense spheres.²⁸ In April 2008, more than 100 Tajik officers and border guards participated in courses on state border patrol, at which 15 U.S. marines acted as instructors. This again looks "symbolic" compared to the format of training in Russia.

After intensification of the economic crisis and change of administration in Washington, the United States attempted to sound out the possibility of further intensifying its influence in the region with respect to intensification of the Afghan factor in the U.S.'s foreign policy. In mid-November 2008, representative of the U.S. State Department John Krol visited Dushanbe, who said at a meeting with President Emomali Rakhmon that the change in the American administration would not affect Washington's policy regarding Central Asia, since the region is vitally important for stability throughout Asia. John Krol assured the president that the world crisis would not affect the amount of financial aid to the states of the region.²⁹

²⁵ See: "Granitsy Ameriki," Internet magazine *Oazis*, No. 4 (48), February 2007, p. 8.

²⁶ See: *Ibidem*.

²⁷ See: L. "Bondarets. Kogda poiaviatsia amerikanskie voennye bazy v Tadzhikestane?" *IA MiK*, 23 October, 2007, 10:28.

²⁸ See: "Tadzhikestan schitaet prioritnymi otnosheniia s Kitaem, Rossiei i SShA, Agentstvo Xinhua," 23 December, 2007, 16:29, available at [http://www.russian.xinhuanet.com/russian/2007-12/23/content_548513.htm].

²⁹ See: "Vashington ispol'zuet protivorechiia mezhdou Moskvoi i Dushanbe," *Nezavisimaa gazeta*, 13 November, 2008.

The economic crisis has indeed had a noticeable influence on the poorest country in Central Asia. Due to the severe energy crisis, devaluation of cotton, and corresponding decrease in budget allocations, President Emomali Rakhmon was forced to ask for help from the Eastern countries at the International Conference on Financing for Development held in the capital of Qatar, Doha, and ask Russia to increase its Tajik migrant worker quotas and amnesty those migrants who have violated the visa regime. This is also important since Tajik families depend on migrant earnings for their livelihood.

But there was no talk about opening a U.S. military base. When talking at the conference during his visit, John Krol concentrated on the U.S. government's assistance in strengthening the security of Tajikistan's borders and supporting the corresponding departments. He talked about how in 2008, within the framework of the Export Control and Related Border Security Program of the U.S. government, the embassy and military engineering corps provided the Tajik customs service with mobile, x-ray, and other equipment totaling 6,729,000 dollars.³⁰ Nor did John Krol forget that on 22 August, 2008, U.S. Ambassador Tracey Ann Jacobson and Tajik Minister of Foreign Affairs Hamrokhon Zarifi signed two cooperation documents that provide \$13.4 million of security and law enforcement assistance to the Government of Tajikistan.³¹ Moreover, at the beginning of May 2009, the sides signed addenda to the current Agreement between the governments of the United States and Tajikistan on Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement which envisage allotting additional means to strengthen security and the protection of law and order in Tajikistan.

It is possible that by taking advantage of the financial difficulties Dushanbe hoped to interest Washington in developing military cooperation. In an interview to *EurasiaNet*, an employee of the state scientific research center, who wished to remain anonymous, said that the Tajik authorities were ready to deploy foreign bases in the country. "Tajikistan can provide not only the technical possibilities, but also its territory for deploying bases. At present, the country is extremely interested in a peaceful neighborhood, but at the moment this can only be guaranteed by America's presence on the border (with Afghanistan.—*M.S.*). If the question arises of opening an American air-base in the country, the decision will doubtlessly be positive,"³² believes the specialist. The base is also very important for the republic's survival in conditions of the instable economic situation. The American base would be an additional source of money for the local economy, says senior economist of the Tajik Ministry of Economy and Trade Kh. Umarov. Today the situation "is not a viable economic model since it makes Tajikistan dependent on the Russian economy. Cooperation with the U.S., in addition to creating new jobs, will help to improve the information base of Tajik businessmen," believes Kh. Umarov.³³

But the U.S. is unlikely to want to spend the extra money that opening a new military base will entail. According to the U.S. ambassador to Tajikistan Tracy Ann Jacobson, the U.S. has no intention of opening a new base in Central Asia, including in Tajikistan." It is all the more impossible in the conditions of the financial crisis. Despite the fact that the world financial crisis is not seriously in-

³⁰ See: *U.S. Government Donation Strengthen Tajikistan's Border Security*, Press Release, 31 March, 2008; United States Hands over Nizhny Panj Border Facility to Government of Tajikistan. Press Release, 19 August, 2008, available at [<http://dushanbe.usembassy.gov/>].

³¹ These documents introduce addenda into the current Agreement between the governments of the United States and Tajikistan on Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement and order signed in 2003 (see: "United States provides more than \$13 million to enhance Tajikistan's security and rule of law," Press Release, 22 August, 2008, available at [http://dushanbe.usembassy.gov/pr_08222008.html]).

³² See: S. Magbatsho, "Tadzhikistan: vozmozhnost' rasshireniia svyazei s Vashingtonom v sfere bezopasnosti vyzyvaet v Dushanbe entuziazam," *EurasiaNet*, 29 January, 2009, available at [<http://www.eurasianet.org/russian/departments/insight/articles/eav012909aru.shtml>].

³³ See: *Ibidem*.

fluencing the level of American aid in the republic, “this (2009) fiscal year, there will be a slight decrease in the budget from 31 million dollars in 2008 to 29 million in 2009.”³⁴

In addition, in 2005 Russia reached an agreement with the CSTO member states, according to which the members of the organization are obligated to consult with each other in the event a third country asks to deploy military bases on the territory of the member states. Moscow is unlikely to consent to the presence of an American base in Tajikistan after the withdrawal of the U.S. military contingent from Kyrgyzstan. After it withdrew from Uzbekistan, Washington tried to take up residence at the aerodrome in Khorog on the border with the PRC, but nothing came of it.

Russia’s Reaction to American-Tajik Military-Technical Cooperation

After the revolutionary change of power in Kyrgyzstan and the Andijan events in Uzbekistan, official Dushanbe, wishing to retain power, recognized the need to maintain the combat-readiness of its armed forces. In April 2003, the heads of the CSTO countries adopted a decision on mutual deliveries of arms and military hardware on privileged conditions. Keeping this in mind and taking account of the fact that all types of the republic’s armaments are manufactured in Russia, the obvious decision was to rearm the army at the expense of the Russian side. Particularly since Dushanbe is also tied to Moscow by the agreement on cooperation in organizing the production, repair, and utilization of arms and military hardware.

In 2006, Russia gave the Tajik armed forces four helicopters—two attack Mi-24s and two transport combat Mi-8s. On the whole, Russian military-technical aid to Tajikistan amounted to 26 million dollars that year. In the fall of the following year, during his visit to the 201st military base, Russian Defense Minister A. Serdiukov said that rearming of the Tajik forces would be carried out by transferring them military technology and armaments from the Russian base.³⁵ The 201st base itself, according to the minister, will be fully rearmed and equipped with the latest armaments and technology. We will remind you that the cost of the armaments at the Russian military base was estimated at approximately 1 billion dollars, which is equal to almost one third of the Tajik GDP (3.5 billion dollars in 2008).

Keeping in mind that Tajikistan’s entire military budget in 2008 did not top 63 million dollars, and the goods turnover between the countries in 2007 amounted to only 771.4 million dollars, military cooperation with Tajikistan is a top priority for Russia. Moreover, in 2007 Russia gave Tajikistan four training combat airplanes L-39 (these planes are nicknamed Albatross). In doing, in 2007, Russian military aid to this republic increased to 30 million dollars.³⁶ Keeping in mind complete refurbishment of the 201st base, according to weapons expert V. Koziulin, Tajikistan could catch up with its neighbors in terms of the combat potential of the military contingents present on its territory.³⁷

³⁴ “SShA ne namereny otkryvat’ novuiu voennuiu bazu v Tsentral’noi Azii – posol SShA,” Iuzhniy Kavkaz Research Center, available at [http://www.analitika.az/articles.php?item_id=20090304111437201&sec_id=8].

³⁵ See: “Tadzhikistan: Rossiiskoe oruzhie sdelaet rezhim Rakhmona bolee deesposobnym,” IA Fergana.ru, 11 October, 2007.

³⁶ See: E. Baikova, V. Mukhin, “Tretiy srok dlia prezidenta Tadzhikistana,” *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 7 November, 2006.

³⁷ See: V. Koziulin, “Gosudarstva Tsentral’noi Azii: razvitie vooruzhennykh sil i perspektivy voenno-tekhnicheskogo sotrudichestva s Rossiei,” *Indeks bezopasnosti*, No. 3 (83), 2007.

The military-technical assistance process is increasing the importance of the 201st base and Russia's role as a whole as a guarantor of security and stability in Tajikistan and throughout Central Asia. Russia, in turn, is continuing to keep the Tajik armed forces dependent on Russian armaments, and this means on obtaining a military education in Russia in order to ensure high-quality servicing and operation of the hardware received.

There is a united sub-commission for military-technical interaction between Russia and Tajikistan under the intergovernmental commission on economic cooperation. On 12 November, 2008, a regular session of the sub-commission was held at which, according to head of the press center of the Tajik Ministry of Energy and Industry T. Azizova, the draft of an agreement between the countries was examined on cooperation in exporting military production to third countries and joint use of production units of the Zavod Zaria Vostoka state unitary enterprise for manufacturing defense production. "The meeting agenda also included questions regarding the improvement of the regulatory-legal base of military-technical cooperation, settling the debt for training of military personnel and technical personnel for Tajikistan at military educational institutions of the Russian Defense Ministry, organizing the repair of and modernizing armored technology and missile-artillery armaments of Russian manufacture by attracting Tajik enterprises," said T. Azizova. In addition, the implementation of the agreement on cooperation in safe utilization of the products and wastes of hard missile fuel was discussed, as well as the implementation of the agreement on mutual protection of rights to the results of intellectual activity obtained during bilateral military-technical cooperation.³⁸ It is obvious that Russia is trying to take control over the Tajik defense industry, and Dushanbe wants to settle its debt on servicemen training and obtain the opportunity to load its factories with contracts for arms modernization.

By way of implementing the decisions of the sub-commission session, at the beginning of December 2008, Russia gave the Tajik air defense forces a Pechora 2M air defense missile system. According to head of the press service of the Tajik Ministry of Defense F. Makhmaliev, "the complex will be serviced by Tajik specialists who have been through a Russian air defense system training course. According to his data, only Moscow and Dushanbe have such missile systems at present. In December 2006, Russia transferred the latest set of equipment of aero-navigation instruments, communication means, and air defense automated control systems for the commander of the air force and Tajik defense minister. The installation and tuning of the new equipment was carried out with the participation of Russian specialists.

Of course, such deliveries of arms are very important for Tajikistan and it understands that Moscow is largely compelled to carry them out. Russia is extremely interested in further acting as a guarantor of security not only for the republic, but for the region as a whole, and under the conditions of the U.S. regional activation, will do as much as it can to ensure that Tajikistan becomes more dependent on it.

However, American publications are expressing misunderstanding about the deployment of Russia's air defense forces in Tajikistan, if the main threats to the republic's security come from Afghanistan, which is clearly incapable of threatening with missiles.³⁹ It is obvious that Moscow is striving not so much to increase its influence in the republic, which is sufficiently strong as it is, as to prevent other players from deploying their bases in the country, which could happen should Russian-Tajik relations deteriorate. At the same time, we forget that Tajikistan is a member of the CIS and partici-

³⁸ See: "V Dushanbe prokhorit zasedanie po voenno-tekhicheskomu sotrudnichestvu mezhdru Tadzhiestanom i Rossiej," IA "Kazakhstan Segodnia," 12 November, 2008.

³⁹ See: R. McDermott, "Tajikistan Claims Border Security Improving," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 6, Issue 7, 13 January, 2009.

pates in the Joint Air Defense System being created among the Commonwealth states. The air force and air defense system of this republic could obtain all the information on the air situation over CIS territory, similar to that available at the Russian Central Air Force Command Center. Correspondingly, refurbishment of the Tajik air force by means of air defense systems is called upon to strengthen the position of the CIS, and Russia in particular.

It should also be noted that at the beginning of 2009, deputies of the Russian State Duma voted for ratification of the Protocol on the Mechanism for Rendering Military-Technical Assistance to the CSTO members in the event of a threat of aggression or commitment of such an act. As first Russian deputy defense minister A. Kolmakov said, under this protocol gratuitous military-technical aid from Russia to Tajikistan amounts to 315.5 million rubles.⁴⁰

The Ayni-Gissar Issue and Intensification of Russia's Role in the Military-Political Sphere

Since 2002, the aerodrome in Ayni has been under reconstruction with India's participation, which invested approximately 20 million dollars in this project. This work was carried out by approximately 150 Indian military specialists, mainly service engineers of the troops and auxiliary contingents. In December 2005, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov stated that at the trilateral Russia-Indian-Tajik talks held at that time, the question was discussed of creating a Russian-Indian air base in Tajikistan where India intended to deploy 12 MiG-29 fighter bombers. According to S. Blank, a professor at the U.S. Army Military College, by inviting India to participate in this organization, Moscow was clearly trying to stop China's influence from increasing in Central Asia,⁴¹ and also possibly to increase the military component in the SCO, where India became an observer.

But the situation dramatically changed—India stepped up its rather sluggish military relations with the U.S. After this, Indian airplanes in Tajikistan became an undesirable prospect for Moscow. According to S. Blank, Moscow began putting pressure on Dushanbe in order to get the Rakhmon administration to annul the contract with India.

The formation of the first foreign airbase of the Indian armed forces has indeed been delayed by the Tajik side since 2006, which possibly does not wish to see Indian air forces on its territory. Official representative of the republic's Ministry of Defense M. Makhmaliev said that the Indian side's participation in reconstructing the military aerodrome at Ayni near Dushanbe does not mean the creation of an Indian military airbase there. In so doing, Makhmaliev referred to the "repeated statements" by President Emomali Rakhmon to the effect that in Tajikistan "there were no, are no, and will never be any foreign military bases, apart from the Russian one that already exists."⁴² Moreover, Tajikistan does not want to spoil its relations with Pakistan, a country that supports the NATO troops and anti-Taliban coalition in Afghanistan.

⁴⁰ See: A. Korbut, "Etot khitryy, nesgovorchivyy Rakhmon," *Voенно-promyshlennyy kurier*, No. 8 (274), 4-10 March, 2009.

⁴¹ See: "Emomali Rakhmon rasshiriaet sotrudnichestvo s Evropeiskim soiuзом," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 18 February, 2008.

⁴² See: "Rossiia prirastaet bazoi v Ayni," *Voенно-promyshlennyy kurier*, No. 36 (252), 10-16 September, 2008.

We will remind you that in 2007, Russia began relocating from the airport in Dushanbe to Ayni, as envisaged by a basic agreement between the two countries on the status and conditions of the presence of the Russian military base in Tajikistan. In addition to Russian air technology, according to the agreement, Tajik air forces will be deployed at Ayni.⁴³ But Delhi is continuing to lobby its presence at the airbase in Ayni to this day.

Moscow, in turn, wanted to ensure its sole presence at Ayni. According to official data, Russia will deploy six Su-25 attack aircraft and 12 Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters at this base, as well as 30 vehicles and aviation technology. Moscow was willing to pay 5 million dollars to complete reconstruction of the aerodrome in order to ensure that it would be the only force present at the airbase.

Since international structures and other countries were failing to supply the country with enough financing, Tajikistan decided to obtain the necessary monetary funds another way by confirming its strategic orientation toward Russia and dashing the U.S.'s hopes of having any presence on its territory. But Moscow was unable to insist on its conditions; at the end of August 2008, the agreement on expanding military and military-technical cooperation was signed. According to it, Russia and the Tajik army will use the Gissar airport for military purposes.⁴⁴ During the talks, Tajik Foreign Minister H. Zarifi said that the republic would uphold its interests in this issue.⁴⁵

And indeed, Moscow had to pay dearly for its presence at Gissar. It said it was willing to finish building the aerodrome and renew construction of the Rogun GES (which Russia was asked to do as early as the beginning of June 2008) and transfer the 201st base's armaments to the Tajik armed forces. By refusing to grant Russia sole ownership of the base, Dushanbe possibly hoped to provide itself with some room for maneuver. And, if problems arose, put pressure on Moscow by letting it understand that Tajikistan could invite other contenders and their military to come to Gissar. Nevertheless, it is Russia that has taken up residence at Gissar and this means that it has increased its influence in the region and retained control over further development of events.

But several months have passed and the questions regarding the basing of Russian military air technology in Tajikistan, as it turns out, have not been resolved. Military transport flights to this country have been cancelled, since Dushanbe is charging the Russian air force international fees for the takeoff and landing of military transport planes.⁴⁶ Indeed, according to H. Zarifi, the sides are holding talks about the further status and conditions for the military base's presence in the country.

During Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's official visit to Tajikistan in August 2008, verbal agreements were reached between the heads of state about further functioning of the 201st military base. Experts from the two countries are currently working on these issues.⁴⁷ One of Dushanbe's demands in return for gratuitous basing of the Russian armed forces in Gissar was for Russia to build a medium-capacity hydropower plant (approximately 600 MW). This project, according to experts, costs about 0.8 billion dollars. For comparison, the country's entire GDP for 2009 is estimated at 6 billion dollars. That is, the Russian Federation should be providing almost 10 percent of the growth in the Tajik GDP out of its own pocket. Of course Moscow will not go for this. And if construction of the hydropower plant is organized, it will be on commercial mutually advantageous conditions.⁴⁸

⁴³ See: V. Mukhin, "NATO okkupiruet rossiyskuiu bazu," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 12 September, 2007.

⁴⁴ This is what the aerodrome in Ayni began being called.

⁴⁵ See: "Rossiia i Tadjikistan vedut peregovory ob ispol'zovanii aerodroma pod Dushanbe," *IA Fergana.Ru*, 24 October, 2008.

⁴⁶ See: A. Korbut, *op. cit.*

⁴⁷ See: *ShOS-2009. Novyy shag v strategicheskoy partnerstve.*

⁴⁸ See: A. Korbut, *op. cit.*

The Year 2009—Problems of Military-Political Cooperation between Russia and Tajikistan

The fact that during his visit to Tashkent at the beginning of 2009, President Dmitry Medvedev publicly expressed his solidarity with the Uzbek side's concern regarding construction of hydropower plants in neighboring countries could have aggravated relations with Tajikistan. According to Tashkent, such construction threatens catastrophic consequences for the territories of Uzbekistan located downstream. Of course, this implied the Rogun GES being built with Russia's participation. The Tajik Foreign Ministry replied with a note in which it expressed its perplexity about the Russian president's statement on the conditions for building the hydropower plant, while Emomali Rakhmon even threatened to cancel his trip to Moscow for a bilateral meeting and participation in the CSTO-EurAsEC summit. Domestic socioeconomic problems nevertheless forced Emomali Rakhmon to pay his visit to Moscow.

But the number of jobs in Russia is steadily declining and it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep the army of Tajik work migrants on its territory. These problems, as well as the severe energy crisis Tajikistan experienced, made it necessary for Emomali Rakhmon to seek help abroad himself.

In February 2009, he visited NATO headquarters in Brussels, making a statement there that "NATO, as one of the important components in ensuring security in Afghanistan, should establish active cooperation primarily with neighboring countries, Iran, and in particular Tajikistan, which has a long border with Afghanistan." But the president only meant by this that Tajikistan was consenting to the use of its railroads and roads for the transit of non-military freight to Afghanistan. That is, Emomali Rakhmon was simply offering the possibility of transit in exchange for more investments in the republic's economy, which was feeling the pinch of the world crisis. The severe situation in the country does not allow Emomali Rakhmon to demand anything but instead seek compromises.

Indeed, when he visited Moscow later, the Tajik president did not raise the question of charging rent for the Russian base, and Moscow did not toughen up its migration policy, keeping in mind the importance of this question for Tajik citizens working in Russia. Also sources in the Russian presidential administration assert that Emomali Rakhmon stated again that there would be no deployment of NATO and U.S. military bases in the country.

Activation of rivalry between Russia and the U.S. in Tajikistan is also confirmed by the fact that at the end of April 2009 a delegation of members of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly headed by Secretary General D. Hobbs visited the republic. This was the first interaction between the parliamentary deputies of Tajikistan and the Alliance countries. And two days later, CSTO Secretary General Nikolai Bordiuzha paid a visit to Dushanbe to discuss with the republic's leadership the most important issues of military-technical cooperation and training of military personnel for the Tajik armed forces.

Conclusion

Dushanbe is participating in all the Russian military programs and considers itself one of Russia's most devoted allies,⁴⁹ which has never deployed American military bases on its territory or accelerated military cooperation with NATO. Interaction in the military-political sphere with Russia, according to H. Zarifi, "is the key sphere of bilateral cooperation. Here we essentially have no prob-

⁴⁹ See: *ShOS-2009. Novyy shag v strategicheskoy partnerstve.*

lems, just as there are none in international and regional policy. The long-term and reliable nature of bilateral cooperation is determined by geopolitical factors and the continuing threats to security and stability in the region," says the Tajik foreign minister.⁵⁰

At the same time, according to some experts, Tajikistan is considered "the most pro-Western state of the region." The measures taken by President Emomali Rakhmon are evaluated positively: giving the security services special powers for opposing Islamic fundamentalists and undertaking repressive measures with respect to the instructors of underground madrasahs suspected of proselytism.⁵¹

But this is more likely an assessment of Dushanbe's ability to establish sufficiently mutually advantageous relations in order not to threaten relations with Moscow. Tajikistan depends on foreign assistance, including military. Resolving the country's security issues requires the active participation of the international community for forming and training the national army, police, and other security structures that in the future will form a bastion for ensuring peace, stability, and peace in the country," notes H. Zarifi.⁵²

For example, France is present at the military base, India is reconstructing the aerodrome, China is gratuitously allotting millions of dollars to material and technical equipping of the armed forces and providing practical training for Tajik servicemen at its military training institutions. Iran is helping Tajikistan to train military personnel. The Japanese government is allotting hundreds of thousands of dollars to clean up mine fields in the republic.

It is important for Russia to keep hold of Tajikistan, which means that Dushanbe's desire to make the resolution of economic problems dependent on the expansion of military cooperation and hints at the possibility of an American base appearing in the country will further compel Moscow to accept many of the conditions put forward by the Tajik authorities. So Russia, in the words of its former ambassador to the republic R. Abdulatipov, has already noted, "we are against any 'ours-yours' policy and support Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon, who after declaring 'an open doors policy,' is showing his willingness to cooperate with all countries. But we cannot allow the bloc policy instruments of the past, which NATO, the OSCE, and other players are trying to introduce here today, to predominate in Central Asia."⁵³

Russia is certainly winning the military rivalry with the U.S. and Western countries. Two possible military bases, full endowment with armaments, and training of the Tajik military confirm this. Russia is still a priority of Tajikistan's foreign policy and it is being offered many opportunities for cooperation. Although both sides are very well aware that the Kremlin does not have that many resources, nor does it always have the economic interest to respond positively to these offers. All of this again leads us to conclude that the U.S. and China with their multi-billion investments could become more important and Russia transformed into just another regional player. Nevertheless, Russia still has the historical *carte blanche* for increasing its influence in the republic, which still recalls the common past of the two countries and understands the role the Russian side played in halting the civil war in Tajikistan.

⁵⁰ See: *ShOS-2009. Novyy shag v strategicheskoy partnerstve.*

⁵¹ See: "Situatsiya v SNG zatragivaet bezopasnost' Zapada," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 12 March, 2008.

⁵² See: N. Mirsaidov, "Diversifikatsiya politiki. Tadjikistan idet na sotrudnichestvo s NATO, chtoby reshit' energeticheskie problemy," *TsentrAzia*, 18 February, 2009, available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1234907820>].

⁵³ Text of the speech of Russian ambassador to Tajikistan R. Abdulatipov at the international conference on Cooperation and Integration Projects for Central Asia: A Comparative Analysis, Possibilities, and Prospects." Khujand, 28 June, 2007, in: *Proekty sotrudnichestva i integratsii dlia Tsentral'noi Azii: sravnitel'nyy analiz, vosmozhnosti i perspektivy*, ed. by A.A. Kniazev, Bishkek, 2007, pp. 5-8.