



KYRGYZ-TURKISH COOPERATION IN THE MILITARY SPHERE

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► To cite this version:

Kanybek Kudayarov, Research Associate. KYRGYZ-TURKISH COOPERATION IN THE MILITARY SPHERE. 2023, pp.26-34. <10.31249/rmw/2023.02.03>. <hal-04175958>

HAL Id: hal-04175958

<https://hal.science/hal-04175958v1>

Submitted on 2 Aug 2023

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Received: 14.03.2023.

Accepted for publication: 29.03.2023.

KANYBEK KUDAYAROV. KYRGYZ-TURKISH COOPERATION IN THE MILITARY SPHERE

*Keywords: Kyrgyz-Turkish relations;
military cooperation; material and technical
assistance; weapons; UAVs.*

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Citation: Kudayarov K. Kyrgyz-Turkish Cooperation in the Military Sphere / Russia and the Moslem World: Science-Information Journal, 2023, № 2 (320), P. 26–34. DOI: 10.31249/rmw/2023.02.03

Abstract. The article is devoted to the review of the development of Kyrgyz-Turkish relations in the military sphere. Attention is paid to the nature of bilateral cooperation, mainly represented in the form of logistical and educational assistance from Turkey to the Kyrgyz Republic.

Diplomatic relations between the Kyrgyz Republic (KR) and Turkey were established on December 24, 1991. The Turkish Republic was one of the first states in the world to recognize the independence of Kyrgyzstan. Since then, political, economic, cultural and educational contacts between the two countries have been developing quite actively.

Despite periods of some turbulence in Kyrgyz-Turkish relations (2016-2017), the bilateral partnership over the past three decades has been characterized as progressive and beneficial for both states. At the same time, the Turkish side acts not only as a partner close in culture and language, but also as a major donor to Kyrgyzstan in the educational sphere, as well as in the field of military-technical cooperation.

Speaking about the military assistance provided by Turkey to Kyrgyzstan, it should be said that since at least the 2000s, its annual volume has been estimated at \$1 million on average.

Unlike the educational sphere, for projects in which (Manas University, Maarif Schools, etc.) Ankara annually allocates tens of millions of US dollars, military assistance does not look so significant. Nevertheless, cooperation in the military sphere also constitutes one of the important aspects of bilateral cooperation, which continues to develop today.

The fundamental documents defining cooperation between Bishkek and Ankara are: the Treaty "On Eternal Friendship and Cooperation between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Turkey" (1998)¹, the Joint Statement "Kyrgyzstan – Turkey: Together in the 21st Century" (1999) and the Joint Statement "On the creation of a high-level Strategic Cooperation Council between the Republic of Turkey and the Kyrgyz Republic" (2011).

At the moment, for a total more than 120 agreements, contracts and protocols have been signed^{2,3}.

Kyrgyz-Turkish cooperation in the military sphere began in 1993 with the signing of an agreement on military education⁴, and afterwards - international legal acts involving regular material and technical assistance⁵, training of members⁶ of the armed forces of Kyrgyzstan, as well as cooperation in other areas related to military affairs⁷. In general, military relations include military training, joint exercises, the supply of military equipment and materials, as well as some military vehicles and weapons from Turkey to Kyrgyzstan.

The intensification of bilateral relations has been observing only since the 2000s. A certain role in building more effective and dynamic cooperation was played by the "Batken events" (1999–2001), when a large group of terrorists of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) invaded Kyrgyz territory and didn't meet serious opposition from the military formations of the republic. It was then that all the weakness of the Kyrgyz army was revealed in the face of external aggression. After the IMU terrorists were squeezed out of Kyrgyzstan (thanks to military assistance from Russia, Uzbekistan and Turkey), the local authorities decided to reform seriously the armed forces of the republic.

Since Kyrgyzstan experienced an acute shortage of budget funds to support its armed forces, the republic almost never refused any type of military assistance offered by regional and global actors (Russia, the US, China, Turkey, etc.).

The events of September 11, 2001 in the United States, followed by the global fight against terrorism, also played an important role in the development of Kyrgyz-Turkish military cooperation. Since this period, the number of trainings and exercises conducted both bilaterally and within NATO programs has significantly increased. For two decades of gratuitous material and technical assistance provided to Kyrgyzstan by Turkey, the list of transferred property includes vehicles, heavy-duty refrigerators, manual fixed automobile central radio installations, switch units, generators and batteries, power plants,

loudspeakers, digital repeaters, night vision devices, laser sights, hand binoculars, signal pistols, metal detectors, utensils, camp kitchens, bunk beds and shoes.

Since 2005, cooperation has begun to develop in a completely new direction that did not previously exist in bilateral contacts - military medicine. The Turkish party began to provide all possible assistance in the training of medical specialists, the purchase of medical and technical equipment, medicines. Funds from the Turkish government are regularly allocated to support military medicine, purchase equipment for the Ministry of Defense and the National Guard of Kyrgyzstan⁸.

Unilateral military material and technical assistance in recent years has begun to alternate with the purchase of Turkish military products by the Kyrgyz authorities. Such changes are associated with tensions on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border, where armed clashes have been taking place between representatives of the law enforcement agencies of the two countries for several years. In particular, in 2021, the republic acquired several Bayraktar TB2 UAVs⁹, which were deployed at the Jalal-Abad airport¹⁰. Later, Bayraktar Akıncı and Aksungur UAVs were purchased¹¹. In order to operate unmanned aerial vehicles in Kyrgyzstan, a remotely piloted vehicle base was opened. In addition to UAVs, the Kyrgyz Republic purchased 40 armored vehicles and other equipment from Turkey to protect the state border with Tajikistan and repel possible aggression from the Tajik side, which took place several times in 2021 and 2022. The military budget of Kyrgyzstan is replenished with articles concerning the purchase of weapons, which was not observed in the republic in previous years.

After three decades of cooperation, the Kyrgyz and Turkish parties expressed a desire to expand and deepen bilateral contacts in the field of military education, defense industry and security by creating the necessary legal framework and promoting a common understanding of military training and security between the relevant institutions of the two countries¹². Perhaps bilateral relations will enter a new stage of cooperation in the military sphere.

One of the examples of the implementation of the above mentioned interaction in the current decade is the participation of the armed forces of Kyrgyzstan in the international military exercises in Turkey “Ephesus-2022”, in which servicemen from 37 states were involved. For 45 days, the military contingent of the Kyrgyz Republic worked out training issues using computer modeling and practically carried out activities as part of a multinational group of forces¹³.

Holding joint exercises is nothing new in bilateral Kyrgyz-Turkish relations. Exercises with the participation of the armed forces of two or more states were held periodically, also through NATO, since Turkey oversees the relationship of this organization with the Kyrgyz Republic. This contributes greatly to some Turkish military circles that have close ties with their colleagues from Central Asia¹⁴. It is also noteworthy that the military representative of Kyrgyzstan in Turkey works at NATO headquarters in Izmir¹⁵.

As for the interaction of the Ministry of Defense of Kyrgyzstan with NATO, as in the case of many states of the post-Soviet space, it is developing within the framework of the Partnership for Peace program (since 1994). This cooperation is realized in the form of joint military exercises, various conferences and seminars.

Over the past period, more than a thousand military personnel of the Ministry of Defense of Kyrgyzstan have taken part in events within the framework of this program, which includes training on topics such as peacekeeping, language training, the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking, the law of armed conflicts and much more¹⁶.

Since 2000, Turkey has been conducting 12-week courses annually within the framework of the Partnership for Peace program together with special units of the armed forces of Kyrgyzstan. In 2007, the Kyrgyz Republic joined the Planning and Review Process (PARP) program aimed at expanding further cooperation with NATO. Appropriate measures are being taken to bring the Kyrgyz armed forces into line with international standards. The program also provides for the involvement of certain

units of the power structures of the Kyrgyz Republic in peacekeeping operations. Funds are allocated for the participation of the Ministry of Defense of the Kyrgyz Republic in courses within the framework of the Partnership for Peace program and the Center for Improving Methods of Combating Terrorism, as well as for the cost of participating in other NATO Partnership for Peace events.

Every year, about 100 cadets from the Kyrgyz Republic receive education and military training in such military educational institutions of the Republic of Turkey as the Higher Military Academy, the Gulkhane Military Medical Academy, the Higher Military Academy, the Higher School of the Gendarmerie and the Military Lyceums¹⁷.

Taking into account the opportunities for obtaining military education provided to Kyrgyzstan by the states of the post-Soviet space, then Russia offers the largest number of universities – 15. Among other CIS countries – Kazakhstan, – 2 universities are ready to provide, Azerbaijan – 1¹⁸.

In addition to training army units, Turkey also trains the Kyrgyz police using methods of combating crime and conducting hostilities, with reference to the experience of the Turkish gendarmerie.

Also, 7-week courses are periodically organized to train military personnel of the internal troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Border Service of Kyrgyzstan. Every year, training in mountain, special and sniper training are carried out. This way, the Kyrgyz police and the army have significant opportunities to assimilate and use Turkish weapons and combat skills.

The development of bilateral contacts in the military sphere in the early years of Kyrgyzstan's independence was not very active. However, at the turn of the 20th–21st centuries, the situation begins to change towards strengthening and deepening cooperation, which was caused by the “Batken events” in Kyrgyzstan, which showed the complete failure of the state's defense capability and demanded immediate measures to reform the armed forces of the republic.

Another equally significant event that coincided with the first was the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States and the war on terrorism declared around the world, which intensified military cooperation with Turkey both bilaterally and through NATO.

The dynamics of Kyrgyz-Turkish relations in the military sphere has undergone some changes in recent years. First, the need for Kyrgyzstan to strengthen the defense capability of its southern borders, caused by repeated military aggression by Tajikistan, led to the purchase of Turkish military equipment, including UAVs. Thus, the traditional gratuitous assistance of Turkey to Kyrgyzstan began to be combined with military commercial transactions, which, definitely, contributes to strengthening of their cooperation. Secondly, despite the plans outlined at the beginning of the current decade to deepen military cooperation between the two states, they have not received proper development yet. Nevertheless, the implementation of these intentions may include the Ephesus-22 military exercises held on Turkish territory with the participation of NATO countries and other states, in which the Kyrgyz military also took active part.

At the moment, it is premature to talk about the development of a new stage of military cooperation between Turkey and Kyrgyzstan, announced in 2020 in Ankara. Time will show the way bilateral contacts will develop.

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Received: 26.12.2022.

Accepted for publication: 16.01.2023.

AZIZ NIYAZI. VORUKH – THE TERRITORY OF THE TAJIK-KYRGYZ DISCORD. ON THE ISSUE OF THE INITIAL DEMARCATION OF THE SOVIET PERIOD IN 1928–1941. (Part 2)

Keywords: interethnic conflicts; Central Asia; Ferghana Valley; Vorukh enclave; Kyrgyzstan; Tajikistan; national-territorial division.

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Citation: Niyazi A. Vorukh – the Territory of the Tajik-Kyrgyz Discord. On the Issue of the Initial Demarcation of the Soviet