

# U.S. Plans to Attack Iran from US base in Kyrgyzstan Denied

## Nuclear Weapons in Central Asia

By [Global Research](#)

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### U.S. PLANS TO ATTACK IRAN FROM MANAS DENIED

By [Roger McDermott](#)

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On May 3 Marie Yovanovitch, U.S. Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, denied reports that the Manas base near Bishkek is being used to store nuclear weapons for a possible attack on Iran. Yovanovitch commented on the “ridiculous” nature of these allegations, which suggested that the U.S. military could use low-yield nuclear weapons to attack Iranian nuclear facilities, should military action prove necessary. She reiterated that the base is used exclusively for transferring humanitarian supplies to Afghanistan.

Interestingly, it seems this speculation originated from within the Kyrgyz intelligence services. Interfax reported that a Kyrgyz intelligence officer had anonymously said, “It is currently impossible to rule out the possibility of such nuclear weapons being stored there, because Kyrgyz customs bodies do not check the goods arriving at the Manas air base today. If nuclear weapons are brought to Manas along with other goods, customs officers do not know about this” (Interfax, Moscow, May 3).

The Manas base remains a sensitive issue, within both Kyrgyzstan and Russia, partly due to Russian President Vladimir Putin’s opposition to U.S. plans to deploy elements of its ballistic missile shield in the Czech Republic and Poland. Equally, on May 3, Zachary Hatfield, the U.S. air force serviceman accused of killing a Kyrgyz citizen at Manas last year was sent back to the United States (see EDM, May 3). Yovanovitch confirmed that the Kyrgyz investigation has been completed, and the case will now pass to U.S. authorities (Itar-Tass, May 3).

Bishkek is also moving closer to Iran by developing bilateral relations. On May 3 Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Ednan Karabayev met Mohammad Reza-Saburi, the Iranian ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, and his predecessor, Morteza Safari-Natanzi, now a special representative of the Iranian Foreign Ministry. Both sides discussed the current level of cooperation and considered how this may be deepened in the future. Although restricted to political, economic, cultural, and humanitarian issues, Bishkek is aware of its neighbors’ growing defense ties with Tehran. However, Karabayev also expressed interest in intensifying

existing bilateral cooperation with Iran (Akipress, May 3).

Iranian Minister of Defense Major-General Mostafa Mohammad-Najjar concluded a three-day visit to Tajikistan last week, signing a defense agreement with his counterpart, Colonel-General Sherali Khayrulloev. The memorandum of understanding on future defense and military-technical cooperation between Tajikistan and Iran envisages cooperation in providing Dushanbe with technical assistance, training specialists, and assisting in their education. "During the talks on defense and military cooperation, we discussed educational, technical, and engineering issues and other issues relating to the defense and military fields, as well as ways to strengthen peace, security, and stability in the region. We also discussed measures that could, God willing, help promote security and peace in the two states, as well as peace and stability in Central Asia," according to Mohammad-Najjar.

Khayrulloev hailed the agreement with Tehran as significant for Tajikistan's military. Yet, he used the occasion to describe the escalation of the war of words against Iran as a senseless commotion. "We can say that this may greatly affect peace and stability. We know what is being said about and what is being done to Iran today. These all are empty words or word play. As Mr. Minister said today, Iran's armed forces are prepared to repel any enemy that wants to attack Iran," he affirmed (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran External Service, Mashhad, May 2).

"Bilateral relations in the military and technical sphere between Tajikistan and Iran were established in 1997. Over this period of time, 10 military agreements have been signed and technical assistance worth about \$6 million has been provided to Tajikistan. Iran also assists Tajikistan in providing with military outfits, particularly in sewing military uniforms and training the personnel," a source within the Tajik Ministry of Defense clarified (Asia-Plus, May 2).

Suggesting a potential threat posed to Iran from the U.S. base at Manas, even referring to far-fetched plans to attack it from Kyrgyzstan, brings yet more pressure on the U.S. military presence there. This poses problems for U.S. planning staffs, should the stay at Manas become untenable, since there are limited re-basing options within the region. It appears that Iranian defense diplomacy is being conducted on the basis of squeezing Tajikistan, making it less politically viable for the Tajik authorities to agree to a future relocation of the Manas base into Tajikistan. However, the Kyrgyz authorities are evidently concerned enough about the possibility of a future attack on Iran from Manas that they failed to prevent the intelligence officer in question from leaking details of the transit of goods into and out of the base, as well as his wild speculation about nuclear weapons.

Such controversy surrounding Manas intermittently surfaces, but it also serves Russia's interests, since the Russian defense community is increasingly hostile toward any U.S. military presence in the vicinity of Russia's borders. Iran offers another way for Moscow to exert pressure on Washington to withdraw its forces from Central Asia.

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