

Conflict Studies Research Centre

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After the shock of bandits entering Kyrgyzstan from Tajikistan in August 1999, the Kyrgyz authorities, who in the beginning had obviously been bewildered, first of all because of the "damage inflicted on the international prestige of Kyrgyzstan", started gradually to regain consciousness and, leaning on Tashkent and Moscow support, began to collect a war band against the interlopers. There was no point in expecting that someone could "persuade" the militants voluntarily to leave the Kyrgyz mountains, opening directly on to the Fergana Valley. In these places already, according to reliable data, about 30 warm stone houses have been built, which are to be a transfer base for Islamists. Throughout the last few months stores of provisions and weapons have been accumulated. "Warriors of Jihad" were concentrated there, to penetrate further into Uzbekistan.

The separating of different areas of the Fergana Valley in the 1930s initially caused two threats of conflict. On the one hand, with the disintegration of the USSR immediately appeared frontier claims between three republics that could bring about ethnic conflicts. On the other hand full-scale actions were conducted for years by the soviet authorities to extirpate all signs of traditional national and political culture, which brought about its virtual annihilation. At the end of the soviet regime, due to the large scale propagandistic actions conducted by the Kremlin powers to discover those "breaking socialist legality", management in the Fergana Valley was in the hands of criminal structures, which had become "party authorities". The absence of full rights and estrangement from any civilised rule of law possibly explain the native population's devotedness to Muslim traditions and to the external form of these traditions, which are Islam and Shariah, that gave ordinary people a sensation of a life "under the law", of conscience and of fairness.

The source of the present march should be sought in Tajikistan. In November 1998 Colonel Khudoiberdiev raised a revolt in Khujand region, which the Tajik authorities accused Uzbekistan of abetting. On the initiative of the Tajik government a Council had been established, where the only question discussed was: what reprisals to undertake against their western neighbour, Uzbekistan. Very different proposals were brought forth: to drain off in winter the water stored in Kayrakum reservoir for supplying Uzbek regions (by the summer they usually lose any irrigation); to buy a house in Dushanbe for the former Uzbek mufti Mukhammad Sodik and to encourage him in leading the opposition to official Tashkent (Sodik has already lived in Libya for several years); finally, to gather all enemies of the Uzbek regime in Tajikistan. The last one was adopted...

At the same time a steep drop in the prestige of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) appeared obvious amongst the former modjahedin. The majority of them gained too little from the peace agreements between UTO and Dushanbe: there were not enough powerful positions for everybody, and their families still needed to be fed. After the end of the civil war the leader of UTO, Said Abdullo Nuri, began having difficulties in obtaining financial help from foreign sponsors. Preparation of a new Jihad opened new prospects for financial transfusions. But as all contacts with sponsors were secret and available solely to UTO leaders, the Uzbek "march" presented to certain circles of the Tajik opposition an exclusive chance to stay afloat. Uzbek field commander Juma Namanganie was then called from oblivion.



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Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.

He had waged war for UTO; however during "the peace process" in Tajikistan he stayed "beside deals" and vegetated in opposition encampments in Talvildar.

That very area had for many years been under the control of Tajik field commander Mirzo Ziyoev, who had been claiming to be Secretary of Defence of Tajikistan, but after long negotiations with official Dushanbe was awarded the Ministry for Emergencies. Juma Namanganie, who had never been to the Tajik capital, turned up in Dushanbe, where he was received by Mr Nuri. Mirzo Ziyoev left for the north of the republic, Khujand. There, on information from UTO sources, he met the representatives of the Uzbek Islamic Resistance (UIR). To help Juma, Ziyoev sent his nearest partner, a field commander Abdullo, who with the raising of his patron to ministerial level hoped also for a government post in Dushanbe.

However Ziyoev suggested that Abdullo as a beginning help his "Uzbek brothers". Together with him one hundred and fifty Tajik modjaheds left for Kyrgyzstan. It was Abdullo and his people who at the end of August "took" the glaciology station "Glacier of Abramov". Juma Namanganie himself was operating in the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan. Another leader of the "Uzbek Jihad", Takhir Yuldoshev, concerns himself with external relationships. In constant movement around Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Arabic countries of the Persian Gulf he deals with provision of military and financial support.

Curiously enough, the former office of the UTO in Mashad (in the south of Iran) was put at the disposal of the Uzbek resistance: from there information support to the Jihad was ensured by the radio station "The Voice of Horasan", which earlier had also worked for UTO.

Nevertheless, probably the most unexpected aspect of the latest events is a change in the "military-ideological" orientation on the part of UTO management. Its modjaheds had trained and fought in Afghanistan in the troops of the famous general Ahmad Shah Ma'sood, the leader of ethnic Afghanistani Tajiks. Then they "got adjusted" to the Islamic movement "Taleban". Moreover, according to "Vremya" newspaper, some leaders of UTO worked hard to orient towards the Taleban the sympathy of the official Tajik government, and even of foreign diplomats working in Dushanbe. Kandahar and Kabul became the main supporting points for the "Uzbek Jihad". It is understandable why: after all, for many years Uzbekistan had been one of the most serious enemies to the Taleban, both when they withstood the leader of ethnic Uzbeks of Afghanistan General Dustum, and later.

Presently, the so-called Uzbek opposition is busy searching for a political figure capable of adding to their community the look of a political movement. The former mufti Sodik refused the offer, having declared that he does not want to deal with anyone who had not supported him while he was Head of the Muftiyat. Muhammad Solikh is no longer considered as a possible candidate.

The Foreign Secretary of Uzbekistan, Abdulaziz Kamilov, has repeatedly declared to official Dushanbe the inadmissibility of politicians who practically pander to bandits. Government troops of Tajikistan had not been able to secure the border with Kyrgyzstan. What is more, former field commander of Tajik opposition Mirzo Ziyoev, leading the Ministry for Emergencies, was in direct contact with the militants, helping to take out the wounded on helicopters. From storehouses in Hait in the mountains, provisions, tents and ammunition were steadily entering for the bandits. Abdulaziz Kamilov made a statement, in which he blamed the management of UTO for events, and in particular the Chairman of the Commission

for National Reconciliation Said Abdullo Nurie. Nurie's attempt to emerge as a pacifier and to separate himself from the bands around Kyrgyzstan, minister Kamilov called "a smoke curtain" and simply a lie.

It is necessary to say that in the light of recent events S À Nurie has taken some steps to support his image as a pacifier. He undertook measures to ensure safety for the Deputy of Jokorgu Kenghesh (Kyrgyz Parliament) Tursunbay Bakirov at the request of Mr Bakirov during his trip to Hait for the negotiations on the liberation of hostages. However, there was no need to do this, in as far as the leaders of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) T Yuldoshev and Ì Îmar did not expect and wish Nuri's participation in this matter. On the whole, relations between the leaders of IMU, UTO and official representatives of Kyrgyzstan are of an occasional and unexpected nature.

"We have every reason to consider that the bands in Kyrgyzstan are backed both by UTO and the "Taleban" movement", declared the Head of the Foreign Department of Uzbekistan Abdulaziz Kamilov. Well supplied with satellite communication equipment, the bandits receive support and instruction from their own bases, situated on the territory of Tajikistan. As to field Commander Juma Khojiev (Namanganie), on available data he takes orders just from Kabul and Kandahar.

Besides, the Kyrgyz government, following Dushanbe, appeared with their own claims to the Uzbekistan government. It required from Tashkent compensation of 250,000 dollars for the mistake during the raid on the positions of extremists by Uzbek aviation, when several people perished and a group of ten houses was estimated to be destroyed. Questions relating to bomb strikes on encampments of the bandits and participation in them of Uzbek military aviation had been raised several times at the level of Foreign Ministers. Kyrgyzstan for a long time had not its own combat aviation. Ground troops of Kyrgyzstan were in the same way incapable of leading efficient combat actions. However, the most important detail is that Uzbekistan's air strikes were guided by Kyrgyzstan's ground controllers.

"The events in Batken region have shown the need for reshaping the armed forces of Kyrgyzstan," declared the Head of the presidential administration Madet Sadyrkulov, returning from the region of combat actions. According to him, the President of Kyrgyzstan, having concentrated on market transformations, postponed the problems of army reform, constantly skimping on it, using the army facilities for other purposes.

These confessions exactly reflect the particularities of the defence policies of practically all the independent states which have emerged on the postsoviet space. It is enough to remember how several years ago in Russia young reformers were repeating like an incantation: "Our country is not threatened anymore by anybody". They redistributed the military budget not in favour of the army. Only Chechnya, into which the nearly collapsing Russian army was thrown, made them sober up. Now Kyrgyzstan seems to be passing through its own severe lesson.

The position of President Askar Akaev throughout all the war was diplomatic: wait-and-see, rather than resolute. It is possible that the reason for this was Kyrgyzstan's incapacity in financial, technical and human resources for quick reactions and successful combat operations. Under these conditions the President of Kyrgyzstan could rely only on diplomacy. The Kyrgyz President did not exclude that China would also join the struggle against attempts to destabilise the situation in Central Asia as a member of the "Shanghai Five". In the Bishkek Declarations,

he reminded an audience, the heads of the states expressed their stern will to unite forces in the struggle with international terrorism. "I am convinced that this will give its fruit". The official diplomacy of Bishkek gradually became merged with the public diplomacy.

Since official Bishkek refused even to enter into contact with the Islamists, negotiations on the liberation of hostages continued through public diplomacy. Deputy of Parliament of Kyrgyzstan Tursunbay Bakirov, entrusted with the sovereign authority of Kyrgyzstan, visited the Headquarters of the Islamic Party of Uzbekistan (IPU) in the Afghani city of Kandahar, and conducted negotiations with the Islamist leaders. Generally he declared that he managed to agree on "step-by-step liberation of the hostages". It is important to say that these negotiations were crowned with success: a number of hostages were rescued. Yet this success, frankly speaking, has also another interpretation. T Bakirov, being close to the leader of IMU Tokhir Yuldosh, lobbied the interests of Tokhir Yuldosh in the Kyrgyzstan Parliament. To support the political positions of his Kyrgyz patron, Tokhir Yuldosh insisted on liberation of the hostages for which Tursunbay Bakirov had negotiated.

Another government envoy was human rights defender Tursunbek Akunov. Through him terrorists sent their own ultimatums not only to the Kyrgyzstan government, but also to Uzbekistan. "There is no need to expel the militants from Kyrgyzstan", he declared. "They do not want to fight against Kyrgyz people. They have another enemy: the Uzbek state... But if we conduct negotiations well, if we convince the militants, they will simply leave". The answer to a natural question "where to?" was: to Uzbekistan. Militants did not hide this. The answer to the question of how they were going to continue their struggle there, the militants obviously did not entrust to the human rights defender Tursunbek Akunov. The answer came from the sources of "Vremya" newspaper, from the circles of the Tajik opposition, and from Kyrgyz military structures.

The unofficial diplomacy of Bishkek, thereby, has more than once led the government of Akaev to that point when it becomes indistinguishable whether their policy is driven by its concern for hostages or collusion with the enemy. Did Akaev consciously adopt this policy? This is not a matter for serious analysis. It is definitely possible to say only one thing: Akaev could not be unaware of this and probably had no choice, because his army had been rendered lifeless during the years of his rule.

Emomalie Rakhmonov, meantime, gave his promise that he would not let the Islamic militants back into Tajikistan. However, because of the evident inability of the Tajik leader to cope with the strategic problem, the armed forces of Uzbekistan had to undertake their own steps to suppress the bandits in their own encampments. Tajik and later Kyrgyz diplomacy tried to present this circumstance as an encroachment on the sovereignty of their states.

On this background, on the eve of a presidential election, for people who were living with the only thought: may there not be war, Askar Akaev, with his policy of inaction which possibly had deepened the crisis in south Kyrgyzstan was able to appear as the national hero. His position is really risk-free: if the confrontation drags on, Akaev's government will be able to write off all the economic muddles in the country as the result of the troubles which came from the mountains.

At the same time, President of Uzbekistan Islam an Karimov, appearing before foreign diplomats, in his own words with "a cry of the soul", expressed his indignation at the indifference of the West to the threat of Shariah law in all regions of Central Asia: "I do not see this worry on the pages of the democratic press... Where are these democrats, why are they silent, why is CNN silent, why is the BBC silent?"

The latest sallies of Wahhabi militants in Osh region of Kyrgyzstan showed that the spread of militant Islam all over Central Asia has become incontrovertible. Moreover, some factors create fertile conditions for the development of Islamic extremism. First, for many years a steady stream of Muslim emissaries from Saudi Arabia and Iran have been entering the republics of Central Asia. These emissaries and their protectors, meeting no serious obstacles on the part of the power structures, successfully spread different sectarian ideologies, particularly the Wahhabi version, and extremist religious literature, calling for the dethronement of existing authorities and the establishment of an Islamic State, generously funding construction of new mosques and religious schools, suborning well known religious figures.

Secondly, during the decay of USSR the United Spiritual Management of Central Asian Muslims in Tashkent was dismissed, and consequently the relationships between the spiritual governance of the Central Asian republics was considerably weakened. This obstructs the co-ordination of actions of the Muslim spiritual management of these countries towards a successful struggle with Wahhabi sectarianism that creates threats not only for existing constitutional regimes, but also for ones confessing traditional Islam. Recent events in Dagestan showed that Wahhabi militants are ready to wage war not only with the representatives of other confessions, but also with their own Muslim coreligionists.

Third, transparency of borders between republics of Central Asia creates happy circumstances for the movement of Islamic emissaries and extremists around the territory of these countries. Fourth, there is not sufficient co-ordination between the power structures of the states in this region in the struggle with religious extremism. Only in an emergency, as in Batken region, when the Wahhabi seized a number of villages and several hostages, did the enforcement structures of several countries unite, but as soon as this case was dealt with, they immediately forgot the need for joint actions in the total struggle with international extremism.

Fifth, Islamic extremists in these countries have strengthened themselves so far that they already openly use religion for their own political purposes with the intention to subvert constitutional formations and create an Islamic state. Because of the irresponsibility of the law enforcement ministries of some Central Asian republics it is becoming harder to fight against Islamic extremists. In these countries they for long periods were looking "through fingers" on the tempestuous development of religious extremism, and consequently Islamists are transformed into a real threat to the security of the whole region.

According to the State Committee of Religious Affairs of Uzbekistan, by the end of August 1999 on the territory of this republic 1710 religious organisations were registered. 1,566 of these are Muslim. 136 organisations are of other religious confessions, among them the Russian Orthodox Church (30 organisations), the Korean Protestant Church (44), and the Baptist Church(16). In the republic nine medium-level spiritual schools are active, in which about 1,200 students are educated. In Tashkent there is also the Higher Institute of Islam, which is under

the Uzbekistan Management of Muslims, and educates 750 students. Besides, in September 1999 Tashkent Islamic University was opened, created in accordance with the edict of President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov.

Nevertheless, in Kyrgyzstan Islamic extremists are already sufficiently powerful. After Kyrgyzstan had gained independence more than 1,200 new mosques appeared in the republic, the majority of which were paid for by foreign sponsors. As "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" wrote, in the south of the republic there is much activity by local Wahhabi preachers from Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and other Muslim states. The main aim of the Kyrgyz and Uzbek Wahhabi is to destabilise the situation in the region and to create an Islamic state in the Fergana Valley. Groups of Islamic militants are sufficiently well armed, have modern means of communication and have been trained in radical Islam centres situated on basically Pakistani territory. In the capitals of Central Asian republics they well understand that the struggle with radical Islam requires joint efforts in the region. Between Russia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan ("triple alliance") agreements exist on the joint struggle against Islamic Fundamentalism. But Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan did not join this alliance.

In addition to associations of common efforts, the leaders of Central Asian republics should seek support also amongst non-extremist religious organisations in their own countries, because radical Islam creates serious threats not only to the regimes in the region, but also to the Muslim organisations themselves which adhere to traditional Islam. They do understand that the Wahhabi, as soon as they succeed in deposing the present regimes in these republics, will attack also those Muslims who support traditional Islam. Wahhabism, in its essence, is a new religion, created on the base of early Islam and the initial editions of the Koran, set by the prophet Muhammad and his followers and directed against all innovations. The Civil War in Afghanistan shows that each armed group, attempting to create an Islamic state in this country, has its own understanding of what Islam is. The Spiritual Management of Kyrgyz and Uzbek Muslims appears to be strictly against Wahhabi ideas and the creation of an Islamic state on the principles of Wahhabism. In the middle of September 1999 the Uzbekistan Council of Ulems in Muslim Management accepted an address to the Muslims of the republic concerning the actions of religious extremists in the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan. Deep regret was expressed that recently "attempts had been made to use for mercenary purposes the sacred and clean religion of Islam". "The actions of militants, committed under the flag of the Islamic religion, completely contradict its basic canons", emphasised the document. In the address it was also declared: "We do not need emissaries whose purpose is to create an Islamic State at our place, who want to teach us how to perform our religious rites, to introduce traditions which are alien to us".

However, all this was in Uzbekistan: a normal state, which respects religions, despite accusations that the Uzbek government is undemocratic. Nevertheless in Kyrgyzstan, the pet of the West, events ran in their order.

According to the head of press services of the United Troops, on 7 October in the south of the republic Colonel G Omorov, commanding the troops, received a fax message from one of the leaders of the militants Zubair ibn Abdurahman and the Deputy of Jokorgu Kengesh Tursunbay Bakir Ulu (another, traditionally Turkish/Arabic pronunciation of "Tursunbay Bakirov"). In the message there were stated number of offers and conditions for normalising the situation. Obviously, the Kyrgyz parliament member, empowered by governmental authorities to conduct negotiations with field commanders, felt the camp of enemies was just like home.

At the same time the authority of the high messenger from Bishkek caused a thrill in the local district administration. During the Batken events Bakirov made a decision to rest in the hot springs right in the district of combat actions. A member to the district administration asked the commander of the IMU militants D Khojiev to take his people from that terrain so as not to create trouble for an important guest. And Khojiev agreed! Therefore a question appears: who controlled the districts of the Osh region – the presidential structures, Bakirov or Tokhir Yuldosh, who is a friend of Bakirov? Another question: what mysterious power makes Mr Bakirov so demonically influential a person?

On 2-3 October Kyrgyz and Uzbek troops had started joint operations for liquidation of the bands. On 4 October in the bomb strikes on the bands' positions for the first time five Czech L-39 planes were used, delivered to Kyrgyzstan with the consent of NATO Command. L-39 is a training-combat jet plane, which was used together with a plane of same class, L-29, in Soviet Military Aviation as a training machine. It is easy to pilot and was quickly mastered by Kyrgyz pilots, who cannot yet fly "SU" type aircraft, which are used by Uzbek Military Aviation and which Russia offered to deliver to Kyrgyzstan. Additionally this plane is said to be very effective in mountains, in as far as under low speed it possesses excellent manoeuvrability. Before this time the raids on the bands' positions had been carried out by Uzbek aviation.

This occurred after Kyrgyz troops took by assault the mountain villages of Zardaly and Korgon in Batken district, which had been held by bandits since 23 August. Then the bands were held in the Khojie-Achkan gorge. According to the Uzbek special services, the leaders of the Islamists had ordered barrage detachments to be placed on the paths leading from there to Tajikistan and Afghanistan, which were ordered to open fire on retreating people. Leader of the Islamists Juma Namanganie required from his own followers to break into Uzbekistan's Fergana Valley before the cold weather arrived. To assist, the troop of the field commander Alie-Boxer (nickname "Sheikh") was moved quickly from the encampment of Hait in Tajikistan, since it possessed anti-aircraft guns.

The Islamists tried to open in Kyrgyzstan a second front in Kyzil-Kiya district, situated 200 km from the Uzbek enclave of Sokh. From the new theatre of operations it would be only 100 km to Fergana, and this seriously alarmed the Uzbek authorities. Islamists had broken the Kyrgyz barrage line and attacked Uzbek frontiersmen. The fighting lasted for about five hours. Fire was opened on the violators from D-30 guns and from BM-21 "GRAD" salvo fire rocket launchers. After the five-hour fight the bandits were ejected 2-3 km inside Kyrgyz territory.

According to Uzbekistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdulaziz Kamilov, the purpose of the extremists was "cutting off the south of Kyrgyzstan to consolidate themselves there firmly and to create an Islamic state of a Chechen type". According to Uzbek military sources, the Islamists in south Kyrgyzstan were receiving direct support "from UTO military subdivisions". However, as of 17 June 95% of UTO soldiers had been integrated into Tajikistan government forces. The leaders of UTO got into the government: Said Abdullo Nurie became the First Vice Prime Minister. The position of Minister for Emergency was also taken by a representative of UTO. Nevertheless, the soldiers of Juma Namanganie and of other field commanders, who had many ethnic Uzbeks and Afghans in their subdivisions, did not join the government. However, they seem not to have broken off relations with their combat friends, who now formed part of the government troops of Tajikistan.

Uzbek special services declared that the statement of Said Abdullo Nurie on the Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan border being crossed was a lie. Caravans with winter uniform and ammunition regularly run between Tajikistan and south Kyrgyzstan. The militants send "Demands" for provisions to the bases in Tajikistan not only by radio, but also through satellite communication. The head of Uzbekistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported to "Ú" journal that thanks to interception, preparation for new operations against the Kyrgyz army and Russian and Uzbek troops helping it became known.

The Kyrgyz army obviously had no successes on the battlefield: their artillery bombed encampments, which had been abandoned for an hour or two before the fire, the raids of Uzbek aviation also did not bring results: bombs fell on the countryside which had already been abandoned by bandits. At the same time the night raids of Islamists beat on the most important areas in the deployment of Kyrgyz troops. Uzbek officers intimated that information was being leaked from the Staff, where Tajik militants were working together with Russian and Uzbek officers.

The events in Kyrgyzstan caused deep concern in Uzbekistan, which had to consolidate its own borders. On the places of the most probable breakthrough the defence line was much deepened. Armoured subdivisions, subdivisions of the Ministry of Defence, the National Security Service, and of the Ministry of Internal Affairs were gathered there. This was done on the Uzbek-Kyrgyz, as well as on the Uzbek-Tajik borders.

The operation for cleansing Batken district confirmed that all main supporting bases of the terrorists were situated on the territory of Tajikistan in the "triangle" Gharm-Jirgatal-Talvirda. It was there that several hundred religious extremists escaped air strikes and ground attacks. It was regrettable that on the border of this republic the pursuit had to be stopped, for it would mean violation of Tajikistan's sovereignty to invade the territory of Jirgatal district.

The situation was really difficult also because UTO, headed by Said Abdullo Nurie, officially was not only in peaceful relations with the Tajik government but even had in the government a number of its own representatives. When a question arose that Juma Namanganie had either to lay down his arms, or to leave the territory of Tajikistan, he preferred the second option. However, it was possible to leave either to Afghanistan, or to Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan was chosen. Later, when the bands of terrorists had to escape from the Batken district of Kyrgyzstan, their only way was to Tajikistan, and in fact to Jirgatal district.

The group of Uzbek climbers who had been in bandit captivity for nine days witnessed this. They were being moved from one base to another, all on the territory of Jirgatal district. The climbers were able to pinpoint on the map where they had been kept. Other witnesses are the refugees from that district arriving in Fergana Valley. They also confirmed that bandits in Kyrgyzstan constantly received reinforcement and ammunition from there and when they were forced out it was Jirgatal to that they returned.

It would be naive to hope for a quick solution of this problem. Above all, Afghanistan, where weapons, facilities and living power are culled from, is just next door. Therefore, the losses which the gangs suffered in Kyrgyzstan are of moral-political value, rather than strategic.

It is obvious that Kyrgyzstan itself is unable to cope with a gang of 1,000 persons, who use the tactics of guerrilla war. Its army and High Command are not ready to meet such events on their own southern borders. The adjacent states and Russia came to the aid of this republic. They had already started supply of equipment, ammunition and uniforms to CIS partners (Uzbekistan, although it had come out of the Commonwealth defensive alliance, continues with its agreement on friendship and cooperation with Moscow).

Foreign Secretary of Uzbekistan A Kamilov declared that Islamic terrorists dug in around southern Kyrgyzstan are the armed wing of UTO. Amongst the Islamic militants, according to intelligence data, there are two generals from the "Taleban" movement. Finally, there was information that in the Pamir region recruitment was in full swing of cut-throats for Chechnya and Dagestan. Promises were generous: 2000 US dollars for a trip, additionally 800 USD for each week of fighting. Whence such money? No particular secret: narcotics, the "funds" of Saudi millionaire Ben Laden. In the opinion of former employee of GRU Avazbek Atakhanov, if emergency measures are not taken now, tomorrow it will be too late for Jirgatal.

Essentially, in reality there were no serious combat actions, of those reported by official sources of Kyrgyzstan. There was information that Kyrgyz military units did not even have properly working night vision instruments, without which it is senseless to conduct operations in mountains. The number of refugees from the villages of Batken and the neighbouring districts reached 5,000. The "Soros-Kyrgyzstan" Foundation made 3,500 ration packs for the soldiers and officers of the national army in Osh region. Recognition of these facts forced the Bishkek bureaucrats to forbid local journalists to visit Batken district. During those five weeks of confrontation the main fact, which they were trying to hide, was discovered: in Kyrgyzstan there is no battle worthy army, no special detachments to fight against terrorists, no indigenous aviation, no elementary grenade launchers, without which it is difficult to fight in mountains.

Instead of Conclusions

According to a source from the Uzbekistan government, Uzbek Security officers recently arrested two Wahhabi, who are suspected of attacks upon Yanghiabad city. The surnames of the arrested persons and the place where National Security conducted the operation are confidential. On 15 November a Wahhabi troop of 20 persons rushed into the tourist rest base on the fringe of Yanghiabad that is only 80 kilometres from Tashkent. Bandits shot three police officers, who had arrived on being called by the local inhabitants. Supposedly, the troop of Wahhabi was under command of Vyatcheslav Kim, who was wanted for a crime in Khiva. He also participated in the extremist operations of Islamists in south Kyrgyzstan in August. It was the people of Vyatcheslav Kim who seized four Japanese geologists as hostages. After its escape from Kyrgyzstan this band hid itself in Tajikistan. There were even reports in the press that Vyatcheslav Kim was based in Afghanistan. This makes the bandits' appearance in Yanghiabad even more unexpected. To reach this place from Osh Region of Kyrgyzstan, whence at the end of September Wahhabis were displaced, one must cover more than 1000 kilometres in mountains. According to Uzbek special services, presently the terrorists are hiding themselves in the abandoned uranium mines near Yanghiabad. The district was blocked by special detachments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Two army helicopters are constantly airborne there. Border protection is enforced with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. AVN (Military News Agency) confirms that the raid of Vyatcheslav Kim's

troop is an exploring of possible directions for the next spring attack of Islamic extremists.

The threat of spreading of religious extremism on the postsoviet space compels Russia and the CIS Central Asian States to pay more attention to the struggle with terrorism. This was the main idea of Uzbekistan President I Karimov in his interview to Uzbek Television.

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This further analysis from S Monitor in Uzbekistan is based on press and witness sources. It illustrates the potential for religion-based conflict in Central Asia.

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