

# Red Shadow over Central Asia

by Paul Wolf, 25 September 2003

Date: Thu, 25 Sep 2003 13:14:50 -0400  
From: Paul Wolf <paulwolf@icdc.com>  
Subject: Red Shadow over Central Asia



1. Shanghai Six Set Sights on Terror (9/24/03)
2. Central Asia Moves To Counter Terrorism (9/23/03)
3. Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Progress (9/25/03)
4. The shadows over Central Asia (9/24/03)
5. Moscow marches into Kyrgyzstan (9/24/03)
6. Dushanbe Considering Guarding Border With Afghanistan (9/24/03)
7. The downside to India's Kashmir 'friendlies' (9/26/03)

---

## Shanghai Six Set Sights on Terror

By Christopher Bodeen, *The Associated Press*, Sept. 24, 2003

BEIJING -- Adding economics to their political portfolio, prime ministers from China, Russia and four Central Asian nations agreed Tuesday to increased security cooperation and closer trade ties across their seven-year-old regional grouping.

The agreements mark what the leaders called a coming of age for the six-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organization, establishing its headquarters and a regional anti-terrorism center to fight extremism and separatism.

The countries also signed an outline for greater cooperation between their economies and said they pledged further discussions on trade, health care and cultural exchanges. "These actions show that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has entered the stage of overall development," Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao said at a signing ceremony.

The steps would give structure to an alliance that was founded in 1996 but did little until the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

China, the main sponsor and driving force behind the group, has increasingly focused on the strategically important oil- and gas-rich region, particularly as the United States shores up its presence to help in the fight against terrorist groups based in Afghanistan. Other members of the group are Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan.

"You can see that it's a very important international organization. It is also a concrete step toward more economic and trade cooperation -- and the fight against terrorism," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan said.

The grouping was formed to bolster security along China's border with Central Asia and act as a counterweight to U.S. influence in the region. Although Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan now host U.S. forces, the organization has provided a framework for cooperation against groups Beijing labels as terrorists, extremists and separatists -- including Islamic Uighur separatists fighting for an independent homeland in China's western region of Xinjiang.

Troops or observers from the five member nations joined in military exercises last month. Details of the budget and other agreements were not immediately released. However, China is believed to be providing the bulk of its budget and will host the headquarters in Beijing.

"Apart from our political cooperation of recent years, today we now undertake the signing of a multilateral economic cooperation framework to give new momentum to efforts to boost our economic and trade ties," Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov said.

The anti-terrorism office will be located in Tashkent, the Uzbek capital.

Copyright © 2003 *The Associated Press*

---

### **Central Asia Moves To Counter Terrorism**

*Radio Singapore International*, September 23, 2003

China, Russia and four Central Asian countries agreed today to set in motion plans for a counter terrorism centre in Uzbekistan.

The six-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organization, or SCO, also took a step towards economic integration.

The prime ministers of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan signed agreements today with the intention to give the SCO a leading role in boosting economic ties among its members, hopefully creating a free trade zone in future.

The SCO alliance was formed in 1996 and later focused on combating Islamic militants. A Western diplomat has said that the SCO has not achieved much so far.

Earlier, Ariel Wee spoke to Dr. Andrew Tan from Singapore's Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies who disagreed with that statement.

AT: "Well, I don't think so because when it was set up about seven years ago, it was in response to a very clear set of challenges from the rise of radical Islam in places like the Central Asian republics and also in the Xinjiang province in China itself. So, there was a very clear security threat emanating from those areas. And that threat came from the Taleban regime from Afghanistan which trained a number of those radicals. And these radicals having gone back, had carried on terrorist activities and they were carrying out bombings and politically destabilising activities. So, after the SCO was set up, they've agreed on certain measures, to cut off terrorism financing and also to coordinate counter-terrorism operations and all that. And they have carried out those exercises quite recently. They've carried out joint exercises along the border areas, recognising the trans-national nature of the Central Asia radical terrorists. And the SCO seems to be more institutionalised compared to efforts here in Southeast Asia. Not only do the member countries meet regularly, they also have an organisational structure, and the headquarters of the SCO has actually been set up and there are other plans to set up counter-terrorism centres and all that. So I think, more has somewhat been done in comparison to Southeast Asia."

The prime ministers of China, Russia and the four Central Asian countries have also agreed to give the SCO a leading role in boosting economic ties between them with the hope of eventually creating a free trade zone. With this new economic role, do you think the focus of the SCO is starting to change?

AT: "I think the priority still remains on counter-terrorism. The reason why they've decided to go into economic cooperation is to try to raise the living standards of those Central Asian republics where there's a great deal of poverty and socio-economic disparities. I think they recognise that military measures alone will not solve the terrorism problem. They need to bring development to those Central Asian republics and also to Xinjiang province. And if they're able to bring development on the economic end and narrow the socio-economic gaps and reduce the problem of unemployment and poverty which seems to be driving militancy in those provinces and in those areas, then it would be at least possible to contain the problem. So, the economic strategy is in line with the counter-terrorism focus of the SCO."

How much do you think the 9/11 attacks have helped to push the SCO in gaining the momentum that's seen now?

AT: "Well, 9/11 clearly jolted everyone, although the SCO existed before the 9/11 attacks. The attacks really showed the power and the reach of al-Qaeda and also of the radical Islamists. So, that has had the effect of galvanising the SCO into even greater action because of the enhanced threat from terrorism which 9/11 demonstrated."

Do you see the Western leaders, getting more involved, being more interested in what the SCO is doing considering that their focus is also on combating Islamic militants?

AT: "Well, to some extent they would. But let's not forget that the key players here, China and Russia, would like to keep the United States out of Central Asia. So, for strategic reasons and for other political reasons, China and Russia would like to minimise the role of the US in Central Asia which they see as their own preserve, as their own backyards. So, there are political obstacles to America playing a more active role in Central Asia through the SCO."

Dr. Andrew Tan from the IDSS, speaking with Ariel Wee.

Copyright © 2003 *Radio Singapore International*

---

## **Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Progress**

*The People's Daily*, September 25, 2003

On September 23, Prime ministers of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) held talks in Beijing. The talks have attained substantial achievements, symbolizing that the SCO has put an end to its initial stage of work and is now entering into a new era for an all-round, stable development and will play independently a role in the international community.

On September 23, Prime ministers of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) held talks in Beijing. Prime ministers of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan focused their discussion on the economic and trade cooperation within the framework of SCO and exchanged views on improving organization mechanism and promoting concrete cooperation. The talks have attained substantial achievements, symbolizing that the SCO, established in Shanghai, China, has put an end to its initial stage of work and is now entering into a new era for an all-round, stable development and will play independently a role in the international community.

In last May, summit meeting was held in Moscow during President Hu Jintao's visit to Russia. The main purpose of the Prime ministers' meeting this time is to discuss and find out how to put into effect the essentials of the Moscow summit meeting, namely to push forward SCO cooperation at various levels in all fields so as to ensure a vigorous momentum in its development. Economic cooperation is a key area of the SCO, an integrated indication of the SCO to strengthen and deepen the collaboration for mutual benefits in the new era, corresponding to the trend of economic globalization and regional integration.

At the first SCO Prime ministers' meeting in Alma-ata two years ago, the six-countries officially kicked off the multilateral cooperation process. Since then, a mechanism of trade and transportation ministers' meeting of the six countries has been established with the trade and investment facilitation process launched. In addition, they've begun to discuss ways and means for developing substantial cooperation in fields of economy and trade with basic thoughts and common views in regard to developing regional economic cooperation in the shaping. It was just on this basis that Prime ministers of the six countries approved the "Compendium for Multilateral Economic and Trade Cooperation of SCO Members" at this meeting. The compendium clearly defines the prior fields in regional cooperation, the current main tasks and long-range strategic goals. This document is of long-term, substantial guiding significance to the regional economic cooperation among the six countries. It

indicates that SCO regional economic cooperation has begun to go into the right track, one of the pleasing achievements of the meeting.

At the meeting the Prime ministers found with satisfaction that a mechanism of multi-level, multi-field meeting within the SCO framework has been established with relevant legal foundations laid down. The Prime ministers came to the consensus that the SCO should take the common view and resolutions reached at Moscow summit meeting as an important guidance for the work to follow and should fulfill the decision made at Moscow. It has been decided that the two permanent bodies of the SCO, a secretariat based in Beijing and an anti-terrorist setup in Tashkent should be put into full operation no later than January 1, 2004. This indicates that substantial progress has been made in an all-around way for the SCO operation, a progress of profound significance. To achieve this, the six countries signed or approved important documents such as "SCO Anti-terrorism Setup and Personnel Arrangement" and "Memorandum for Technical Launching SCO Permanent Body"

The Prime ministers' meeting this time created brand-new conditions for further expanding and deepening the mutually beneficial cooperation and further strengthening the SCO construction. It is believed that the SCO is becoming a link of importance for intimating the good neighborliness, mutual trust and ties for friendly cooperation among the member states and is turning into an effective mechanism in promoting regional security and stability. As an active force in promoting world peace and development, the SCO will surely bring substantial benefits to the people of the member countries.

This is an article on the third page of People's Daily, September 24, by Li Wenyun and Ma Jian; translated by PD Online Staff Gao Lanrong

Copyright © 2003 *The People's Daily*

---

### **The shadows over Central Asia**

By M K Bhadrakumar, *The Asia Times*, September 24, 2003

Two years ago, on September 22, the first contingent of American forces landed at the Khanabad military base in Uzbekistan. In the period since then, lines have appeared on the face of the "newly independent states" of Central Asia, which might seem from a distance as lines of disquiet and anxiety, but, on closer look, they indicate signs of a new maturity, of quick learning and adaptive skills that are requisites for surviving in a difficult world.

Two years ago, a new uncertain war was impending in Afghanistan, to which the landing of American troops on Central Asian soil appeared related. Central Asia and Afghanistan seemed as arm locked as regards common security concerns; a regional and international consensus seemed, at that point of time, so vital to the winning of the Afghan war. The anguish over September 11 silenced any doubts or suspicions about the logic and hidden meanings of the war about to be launched in Afghanistan. But, during the two years since then, Central Asia has been disengaging and assumed a habitation and name of its own. Compelling realities emerged during this period.

The Central Asian states realized that regardless of the vicissitudes of the Afghan war, American forces had come to stay in their region. They are no longer consigned to the

languid backwaters of geopolitics. The American troop presence emanated out of their bilateral dealings with Washington. Moscow merely acquiesced. For the first time as "newly independent states", Central Asian leaderships took a strategic decision.

They realized as months passed that by their decision they created more space and time to preserve their centralized governments and regimes. No contending power competing for influence in their midst today wants to risk annoying them by making intrusive prescriptions.

Since countering terrorism was the core issue in the geopolitics of the region, Central Asian states became well placed to raise the specter of "terrorism" on issues of their choice, even for squashing domestic political opposition. Since terrorism in the regional context had come to be identified with Islamic militancy, they abandoned altogether their tentative reconciliation with the 70 years of enforced atheism. Tajikistan, too, seems to be turning away from its experimentation with defining the co-relation between the state and religion. A curious dialectic may thereby unfold - political Islam as the locomotive of democratic opposition - which only time can tell.

Great powers have brought into the region an array of organizations as instruments of policy - the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the International Monetary Fund, the Collective Security Treaty (within the auspices of the Commonwealth of Independent States ), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and dozens of "human rights watchdogs" and non-government agencies. Central Asian leaderships would look back with satisfaction that they have largely received this formidable battery of collective wisdom to bend according to their needs and wishes.

The US forces use Manas air base in Kyrgyzstan, yet, hardly 30 kilometers away, Russia has been permitted to use Kant airbase (the two bases may have to coordinate the take-off and landing of their "fourth generation" aircraft!); Uzbekistan, which the US all but concluded to be its "proxy" in the region, has just sought and obtained the privilege of hosting SCO's "counter-terrorism" center; the US is the single biggest investor in Kazakhstan's oil fields, yet Russia has just entered into a far-reaching agreement with Kazakhstan on "common economic space" with a common currency (probably, rouble); Tajikistan was branded as Russia's "proxy" in the region, yet it is in Dushanbe that Russia encounters dogged resistance to its request to allow a military base unless Moscow reciprocates on a variety of extraneous issues.

Central Asian states draw comfort that the presence of powerful foreign powers shelter them from fears of outbreaks of strife, which their inexperienced national security bodies were previously hard-pressed to counter. The closure of the bases of militant Islamic groups in Afghanistan has indeed provided a rather peaceful period. But, more enduringly, the accent on security concerns has prompted strong border controls in the region. Central Asian states, thereby, step out of the residual Soviet-era legacy of "Turkestan" to become hard-nosed nation states.

In these two years, the Central Asian states preferred bilateralism in addressing their intra-regional issues, be it border disputes, natural resources of the region, ecological calamities, transportation, tariff and trade. Russia can no longer recapture the role of an

arbiter, but nor can the US pretend to be a new mediator in Russia's place. More importantly, Central Asian states seem to grasp, despite all their mutual suspicions and vexatious vanities, that outside involvement in their intra-regional disputes could lead to manipulation by the outsiders and would place them ultimately at a disadvantage.

But bilateral dealings have not led to the resolution of disputes either. In fact, intra-regional tensions touch new levels. Turkmenistan alleged an Uzbek hand in an abortive coup attempt in Ashgabat last November; violence erupts frequently involving border guards; ill-defined border regions are planted with landmines - the list is lengthening.

Central Asian states continue to battle with their weak economies. Great powers have not shown willingness or interest in the past two years in making a difference to the grinding poverty in the region, despite the region's critical need of international assistance. Only China has ventured into the building up of the manufacturing sector of their economies in the critically important small and medium sectors that have huge potential to create employment. The US justifies inaction by blaming political corruption, command economy structures and conditions hampering investor confidence. Yet it eagerly invests in the region's natural resources. It fights pitched battles (as in Turkmenistan) for gaining control over oil and gas. It meanly negotiates trade concessions for marketing gold or cotton.

In these two years, the geopolitics of the region has, ironically, gained clarity. Three great powers - the US, Russia and China - asserted their strategic presence while an assortment of minor powers - Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, India, European Union member countries - have been consigned to the backstage as "pretenders" who do not have an intrinsic role to play in the region, except in collaboration with the great powers. The US estimated that Russia's influence in the region was waning. But Russia negotiated access to the gas supplies of Turkmenistan and its evacuation, so much so that the trans-Afghan pipeline might now lack viability; moreover, Russia has assumed the responsibility for the energy needs of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and will handle the marketing of Uzbekistan's gas supplies. China's brooding aloofness of the 1990s has given way to a purposive initiative towards the region and a constructive engagement, which it advanced very considerably even within the short frame of the past two-year period, despite all the adverse propaganda of a "yellow peril". The Central Asian states, ultimately, seem to discern what is in their best interests and to pick and choose from the great powers.

Under the auspices of great powers, three security alliances have cast their net on the region - NATO, the Collective Security Treaty and SCO. Central Asian states (except Turkmenistan) allowed themselves with these multilateral trappings to look for any tangential advantages of the "militarization" of the region for their national armies, but without committing to larger obligations. The interplay of the three security alliances will be keenly watched. None of them has been tested on the ground.

None of the alliances has aspired to gain exclusivity in Central Asia. This left the Central Asian states from having to make hard choices. Even when push came to the shove on Iraq and international support was lacking, the US refrained from pressuring Central Asian capitals, mindful that after two years of military presence in the region it still has to compete for influence.

The paradox lies in that no great power can really substantially affect the security equation in the region. As outside powers, they have their own interests, which complicate their involvement. They must constantly dovetail their Central Asian engagement with the overall climate of their far more important mutual relations, which are evolving in diverse theaters - Chechnya, North Korea and Iran. More fundamentally, they also have only limited capacity to commit. Central Asia's needs - as nation states in the making, the subsistence economies, the deep-seated roots of the region's volatility, regional imbalances, civilizational fault lines, claims by Islam to be an appropriate participant in the political arena, a Pandora's box full of intra-regional discords - are so daunting as to make it impossible for any outside power to claim the prerogatives of a sole benefactor or to assume the phenomenal obligations of a provider.

Conversely, from the perspective of the great powers, since exclusive dominance is unwise to aspire to and hard to achieve in the Central Asian region, significant economic and security assistance by any of them individually for meeting the needs of the region became doubtful in these two years. The "Cold Warriors" dilating on the great game in Central Asia would do well to remember President Harry Truman's words, "There is nothing new in the world except the history you do not know."

M K Bhadrakumar is a former diplomat who served as India's ambassador to Uzbekistan and Turkey.

Copyright © 2003 *The Asia Times*

---

### **Moscow marches into Kyrgyzstan**

By Sergei Blagov, *The Asia Times*, September 24, 2003

MOSCOW - Following countless delays, Russia and Kyrgyzstan have finally clinched an unprecedented airbase deal. Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Kyrgyz counterpart Askar Akayev witnessed their respective defense ministers, Sergei Ivanov and Esen Topoyev, signing the agreement on Kant base on Monday in Moscow. The Russian air force can now move into the military airfield in Kant, about 20 kilometers east of the capital Bishkek. The deployment, say commentators, comes as the most significant outside Russia's borders since the Soviet collapse in 1991.

No big wonder that Ivanov hailed the deal as "the first and the only purely Russian military base that we have opened in the 13 years of the existence of the Russian Federation". He added that although the Russian military was present in all Commonwealth of Independent States, except Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, formal arrangements to set up a new base come as a novelty.

The move is presumably designed to reassert Russia's military influence in a region where the United States has its own semi-permanent military presence, with bases also in Kyrgyzstan (Manas) as well as Uzbekistan.

The Russian force at Kant is ultimately due to include more than 20 Russian aircraft and more than 300 troops. In all, Russia is expected to deploy five Su-25 attack jets, five Su-27 fighters, two An-26 transports, two Il-76 transports, five L-39 training jets and two Mi-8 helicopters.



A task force will provide the air power for a contingent of ground forces. Known as a rapid reaction force, this group could total more than 5,000, with troops from Russia as well as from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, members of an alliance of former Soviet republics known as the Collective Security Treaty Organization, or CSTO.

Kyrgyz defense minister Topoyev had earlier stated that the Kant base would not be "purely Russian". It will operate under Russian jurisdiction, but will be under the tactical control of the CSTO rapid reaction force's commander, Topoyev said.

During a brief stopover in Bishkek in December 2002, Putin endorsed Russian deployment of fighter jets, bombers and other aircraft in that country. He stated that Russian air force deployment was very important and brought "a new quality" to security arrangements in the region. At the same time, Akayev urged Russia to become a "main strategic cornerstone of Central Asia".

At this time Russian and Kyrgyz officials also signed the Bishkek Declaration, pledging closer security and economic ties. This agreement is not directed against third countries, Putin stated. A deal to write off some US\$40 million of Kyrgyz debt to Moscow was also agreed.

The Russian deployment now means that Kyrgyzstan is formally host to two foreign air bases, the other being the US facility at Manas, a Bishkek suburb, just 30 kilometers from Kant. The US base, which was established in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, is designed to provide air support for regional operations by the anti-terrorism coalition in Afghanistan. Some 2,000 American personnel are now based at Manas. The US forces also use former Soviet bases in neighboring Uzbekistan.

Russia and Kyrgyzstan have maintained close political and military ties, and Akayev has tended to support the Kremlin's policies in the region. Akayev came to power as president of Soviet Kyrgyzstan in 1990. A year later, he was elected president of independent Kyrgyzstan as the sole candidate on the ballot. In 1993, Kyrgyzstan introduced its first post-Soviet constitution. In 1995, Akayev was elected for another term. According to the constitution, a person can only run twice for the presidency, for two five-year terms. However, in 1999 the Constitutional Court paved Akayev's way for a further term, ruling that after the adoption of the new constitution, Akayev had sought office only once. In 2000, Akayev won a new term.

Moscow has backed Akayev's regime and warned against interference in Kyrgyz internal affairs. The security deal over Kant air base arguably indicates that Akayev's regime still depends on Russian backing.

However, political implications of the base deal were kept low profile. "The Russian military personnel will not interfere in Kyrgyz internal affairs," Russian General Oleg Latypov said on Monday. He added that the Kant base agreement included clauses stipulating - in case of need - Russia's reimbursement of environmental and other damages to Kyrgyzstan.

Russia has reportedly spent more than \$2 million to upgrade the Kant base. Kyrgyz Finance Minister Bolot Abildayev has stated that Kyrgyzstan was not going to fund the air base. On Monday, Latypov confirmed that Russia would be financing the base in full.

However, the total bill is yet to be revealed. Last December, Ivanov dismissed rumors that Russian deployment at Kant would cost up to \$300 million a year.

Incidentally, the Russian officials conceded that the country did not really need its more famous overseas military bases. On Monday, Ivanov stated that the liquidation process of Cam Ranh base in Vietnam and Lourdes facility in Cuba "had been completed". "General efficiency of these two bases raised serious doubts," Ivanov commented.

Copyright © 2003 *The Asia Times*

---

### **Tajikistan: Dushanbe Considering Guarding Its Own Border With Afghanistan**

By Bruce Pannier, *Radio Free Europe* (US Govt source), Sept 24, 2003

Tajikistan is considering assuming responsibility for security along its border with Afghanistan. Russian border guards have been keeping watch there for more than 10 years -- during Tajikistan's civil war and as the Taliban ruled the far bank of the Pyanj River -- all the while trying to keep out militants and narcotics traffickers. Tajik officials have sound reasons for stationing their own border guards on the frontier with Afghanistan, but there are also reasons why now may not be the right time.

Prague, 23 September 2003 (RFE/RL) -- Tajikistan is talking about taking over control of its border with Afghanistan from Russian border guards who have kept watch there since Tajikistan achieved its independence.

For the past 10 years, the cash-strapped Tajik government has been content to allow the Russian guards to maintain responsibility for border security. But some in the Tajik government are now questioning how necessary, or effective, that security is.

Tajik General Nuralishoh Nazarov tells RFE/RL that his country is ready to take up duties along its borders with Afghanistan: "There are two powers along the [Tajik-Afghan] border. There are the Russian border guards and the Tajik border guards. I am 100 percent sure that [the Tajiks] are ready to guard the front line of this border [alone]."

Nazarov believes Tajik border guards could soon take over at least two of the border posts currently manned by the Russian force. Officially, Russian border guards have been in control of the Tajik-Afghan border since 1993, although, in fact, they never left after the Soviet Union collapsed in late 1991. Civil war broke out in Tajikistan in the spring of 1992, and Russia's 201st Division and its border guards, still based in Tajikistan, took control of the country's key facilities, such as power stations, and strategic regions, such as its borders with non-CIS states China and Afghanistan.

There never was any threat along the Tajik-Chinese border, and Russian border guards turned over duties to Tajik forces there last year. The Afghan-Tajik border, however, has rarely known peace.

During the Tajik civil war, Russian border guards tried to keep members of the mainly

Islamic United Tajik Opposition from crossing back into Tajikistan from their bases in northern Afghanistan. After the Tajik peace accord was signed in June 1997, Russian border guards turned their attentions to Afghanistan's Taliban movement, which had begun launching attacks on opponents near the Tajik border.

Now, with the Taliban ousted from Kabul, there are those who feel the time is right for Tajikistan to assume control over its border with Afghanistan, just as Tajikistan's Central Asian neighbors have taken control of their own borders with Afghanistan.

Tajik political analyst Nurali Davlatov says, "The danger of invasion by the Taliban no longer exists, and [the Tajik border guards] are now looking at the situation with their country's border guards. They are looking at the Afghan borders with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. [These] independent governments have come to the opinion that they should be guarding their own borders."

Turkmenistan, with its UN-recognized status as a neutral country, has maintained good relations with all Afghan factions, even the Taliban when they were a force to be reckoned with.

Uzbekistan's border with Afghanistan is less than 150 kilometers long, and most of that is on relatively flat ground, with a river, the Amu-Darya, dividing the two countries.

Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan, however, is mountainous and in the east runs through areas with sparse habitation. The Tajik-Afghan border remains so porous that it is a favorite route for narcotics traffickers smuggling heroin and opium out of Afghanistan. Russian border guards routinely clash with these well-armed traffickers.

Another Tajik political analyst, Rashid Ghanum, said he does not believe Tajikistan is prepared at this time to take over duties performed by Russian border guards. "The length of the Tajik-Afghan border is very great and [the terrain] rugged. We need time before Tajikistan is in the position in terms of equipment and finances to take control of the border because protection of the border requires a great deal from [Tajikistan]. Tajikistan will reach this point gradually. To take this over now would be complicated. Guarding the border requires power and experience. In just a couple of days, we cannot do it," Ghanum said.

Dissatisfaction with the performance of the Russian border guards may be why some Tajik military and border security officials are talking about doing the job themselves. Tajik border guards are already positioned along what is referred to as the "second line," behind the Russian border guards. The strategy is that any intruders who make it past the Russian guards will run into the Tajik guards behind them.

This has been happening more frequently lately, while reports of kidnappings of Tajik citizens living in border regions is also increasing. These citizens are kidnapped by narcotics smugglers from Afghanistan and used as ransom to force their relatives to perform duties as drug couriers.

One of the most logical arguments in favor of Tajik border guards assuming responsibility is that Tajiks are actually defending the border already. Of the roughly 14,000 Russian border

guards in Tajikistan, 11,000 are Tajik citizens who are serving in the Russian force on a contract basis. The pay, clothing, and housing are better in the Russian border guards, and Tajik contract soldiers are eligible for Russian citizenship at the end of their tours of duty.

In addition, the Tajik government is responsible for some of the expenses incurred by the Russian border guards.

(Saidkosim Djalolov and Soldjida Djakhfarova of RFE/RL's Tajik Service contributed to this report.)  
Copyright © 2003 *Radio Free Europe*

---

[an unrelated matter but I needed to fit it in somewhere. - Paul]

### **The downside to India's Kashmir 'friendlies'**

By Sudha Ramachandran, *The Asia Times*, Sept 26, 2003

BANGALORE - Militants scored a major victory last week in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) with the gunning-down of Muhammad Yussuf Parrey, aka Kuka Parrey. A former militant who later joined hands with the Indian security forces in their operations against the militants, Parrey's killing has drawn attention not only to the fate of the pro-government militants in the Kashmir conflict but also has revived debate on the wisdom of India using ex-militants to fight militants.

Parrey, known as the "king of counter-insurgency" operations in the Kashmir Valley, was credited with having broken the back of the militancy in the Valley in the mid-1990s. A militant who received training in Pakistan, Parrey surrendered to the Indian security forces in 1993. Along with some other surrendered militants, he then formed a pro-government militia - the Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen - with the blessings of the Indian government. "Friendlies", as the Indian soldiers called these "pro-India militants", gave the intelligence network and the counter-insurgency operation in the Valley a big boost.

"It was the logic of setting a thief to catch a thief that lay behind the Indian army's strategy of using the surrendered militants" to fight the Hizbul Mujahideen and other Pakistan-supported militant groups in the Valley, a senior army officer told this correspondent some months back. After all, these were once militants, many of them armed and trained in Pakistan. "They knew who was who in the various militant groups and understood the mind of the militant far better than the armed forces did."

The Ikhwanis are mainly ethnic Kashmiris with a deep hatred for the Islamist militants and their political backers, the Jamaat-e-Islami. In the early 1990s, militant groups such as the pro-Pakistan and Islamist Hizbul Mujahideen had trained their guns on such groups as the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and al-Jehad. Scores of militants from these groups were killed not by guns held by the Indian security forces but by weapons wielded by fraternal militant groups. Many of the Ikhwanis were those who had been at the receiving end of the fratricidal fighting.

Now with backing from the Indian forces, they went after the Hizbul Mujahideen and the other militants. The Ikhwanis were particularly successful in marginalizing the Hizbul in northern Kashmir. Several surrendered militants have also been absorbed into the police as well as units that were specifically fighting militancy in J&K.

It was to the credit of the Ikhwanis led by Parrey that militancy declined in the mid-1990s, enabling India to hold elections to the J&K state assembly in 1996. Parrey formed a political party, the Awami League, contested the election and won, becoming a legislator in the state assembly.

Parrey inspired many militants to switch sides and cooperate with the security forces. "The power that Parrey and his boys came to wield and the new-found legitimacy they got by strutting around with the Indian forces and flaunting their weapons in the open was undoubtedly a big attraction for several militants who were fed up with life underground and disillusioned with 'the cause'," a Kashmiri police officer pointed out. Consequently, hundreds of militants surrendered to the Indian forces.

The Indian forces have used the Ikhwanis for information about the militants and their movements as well as to carry out counter-insurgency operations. What is more, they used them to terrorize the local population as well. A mid-level army officer admitted to this correspondent that he had used the Ikhwanis to persuade "locals who had filed baseless complaints and cases against his men to withdraw their charges". The officer said he was "not alone in using the Ikhwanis in this manner ... This is a dirty war. The enemy is not fighting according to civilized rules of armed conflict. The surrendered militants were willing and able to give as dirtily as they got from their erstwhile comrades," he added.

But while the Ikhwanis proved useful in killing hundreds of militants, their use came with a very high price. They added a new, complicating dimension to the militancy. They unleashed a new wave of terror on the Kashmiri people.

Not only did they train their guns on militants but they did so against unarmed civilians as well. They were brutal in their methods to elicit information from the locals. They used their weapons to fight the militancy but gradually they used it to settle personal scores, to extort and to further their individual interests. "And since they were fighting militancy, they would get away with anything," said the police officer. Several killings, where the identity of the killers was not clear or where the motive for a massacre was hard to explain, came to be blamed on the Ikhwanis. The terror unleashed by the Ikhwanis has been so serious that many Kashmiris say they fear them more than they do the militants or the security forces.

"Undermined both by public dislike of their ruthless tactics as well as Islamist propaganda campaigns, they found the political establishment arrayed against them," wrote Praveen Swami in *The Hindu*. They were stripped of official cover in 1998.

That led to another spate of bloodletting, with the militants gunning Ikhwanis down for cooperating with the Indian forces. Hundreds of Ikhwanis are said to have been killed by militants since 1998.

The role of the Ikhwanis in turning the tide against militancy was substantial. But their contribution has not been acknowledged enough by Delhi, prompting some to accuse India of not doing enough to protect its own in the Valley.

All the men of a village in Ganderbal near Srinagar were pro-government militants. Militants swooped down on that village one night and wiped out its men. Its residents recall the

contribution of their men to fighting militancy and point out with bitterness that India had left them unarmed to fend for themselves. Several Ikhwanis, discontented with their lot, told this correspondent in December 2000 that they had ended up falling between two stools. While Kashmiris reviled them as "renegades", the Indian armed forces had never treated them with respect, never fully trusted them. "Hundreds of our cadre laid down their lives for India, but we have received only harassment and insults in return," 26-year-old Khurshid, Parrey's son, told Swami.

While some in the Valley describe the pro-government militias as "misguided policy", the strategy, notwithstanding its flaws, did contribute to the decline of militancy. Besides, as one officer in the Border Security Force (BSF) said, the creation of the pro-government militias was the "best thing to do with a militant".

"Rehabilitation of these militants rarely works," he pointed out. "They return to militancy soon after they are freed."

A senior army officer in Jammu said: "If I have to put a militant through the police or judicial process, it is a waste of time, energy and effort. I have to put five of my men to guard the militant, find a vehicle with armed guards to take him to Srinagar or Jammu and, after all this, he will either escape or walk free, only to surface again as a militant.

"It makes more sense to put a bullet through his neck," he said. "The [alternative] to that is that we use them to fight the militants."

"The policy became a problem when the surrendered militants forgot they were once fighting the state and with considerable blood on their hands. Some had murdered policemen. They wanted bulletproof cars and armed guards and fancy salaries," recalled the BSF officer, adding that these were "unreasonable demands" that could not be met. "They were just terrorists, after all."

The story of Kuka Parrey is perhaps the story of several others in the Valley. They might have switched sides, but that did not necessarily mean they had mended their ways. At the end of the day, they were "just terrorists after all" and ended up living and dying by the gun.

Copyright © 2003 *The Asia Times*

Copyright © 2003 *The Associated Press*  
Copyright © 2003 *Radio Singapore International*  
Copyright © 2003 *The People's Daily*  
Copyright © 2003 *The Asia Times*  
Copyright © 2003 *The Asia Times*  
Copyright © 2003 *Radio Free Europe*  
Copyright © 2003 *The Asia Times*  
Reprinted for Fair Use Only.