

Turkmenistan: Secret U.S. Base For Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran Campaigns

Is the U.S. Violating Turkmenistan's Neutrality with the NDN?

By [Catherine A. Fitzpatrick](#)

Global Research, August 02, 2010
EurasiaNet 2 August 2010

Region: [Russia and FSU](#)
Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

-U.S. freight transited through Ashgabat is in fact military in nature and even constitutes criminal contraband. Airport employees claim they saw armored vehicles, combat helicopters and crates of ammunition. These reports challenge both the notion of Turkmen neutrality and the supposed nature of the bilateral agreement between Turkmenistan and the U.S.

-The U.S. has gained access to use almost all the military airfields of Turkmenistan, including the airport in Nebit-Dag near the Iranian border, which was reconstructed at American expense. In September 2004, at the Mary-2 airfield, U.S. military experts appeared and began reconstructing the facility with the help of Arab construction companies, which provoked the protest of Moscow....

-Prudnikov claims to have reports that the transport of drugs from Afghanistan and the transport of prisoners to the secret prisons maintained by the U.S. in Eastern Europe were coming through these transit points in Turkmenistan.

-An American military contingent is located in Ashgabat to oversee the operations related to refueling of military airplanes. NATO is also trying to open up a land corridor to bring freight by road and rail....

As EurasiaNet has reported about payments the U.S. made to Turkmenistan to use its airspace in violation of normal procedures, the Central Asian regional press has begun to ask questions about the U.S. relationship with the Central Asian countries assisting the Northern Distribution Network, and stories are beginning to surface that indicate more questions need to be asked.

In a special report in Russian for the Turkmen exile website gundogar.org, Viktor Prudnikov questions whether the Turkmen government's arrangement with the U.S. to allow goods to be transited across its territory to support troops in Afghanistan has in fact violated Turkmenistan's much-publicized position of neutrality. Prudnikov is not identified on the website, but he appears to be the same retired army general and commander-in-chief of the Russian Air-Defense Forces who used to be in charge of relations with other CIS countries.

...Prudnikov rightly asks whether the U.S. government has taken advantage of the fact that Turkmenistan is a closed and autocratic society to quietly get away with shipping more than just humanitarian goods to Afghanistan. He also cites reports of incidents involving U.S. planes flying from Afghanistan to Turkmenistan without dispatchers' permission....

...Americans quickly realized [that Turkmenistan creates] ideal conditions to conduct business in Central Asia for the sake of the war in Afghanistan.

American diplomats praise their American Center in Ashgabat and American facilities in Dashoguz and Turkmenabad, says Prudnikov....

From the onset of the Afghan campaign, the Pentagon was happy to drop American principles as a promoter of democracy in order to gain access to Turkmenistan's strategically-important airfields, believes Prudnikov. Turkmenistan has played an "invaluable role" in the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

[Deceased former president Saparmurat] Niyazov...agreed to allow the U.S. military transport aircraft to fly from the civilian airport in the city of Ashgabat in order to refuel planes ferrying humanitarian freight to Afghanistan. Prudnikov questions whether all the freight was humanitarian. According to unnamed sources he cites within Turkmen intelligence agencies who were charged with monitoring the freight, "at the international airport [in Ashgabat], the Americans created a closed terminal, to the territory of which we had no access and could not check whether these loads corresponded to their humanitarian purpose."

There are numerous witnesses, Prudnikov says...who claim that U.S. freight transited through Ashgabat is in fact military in nature and even constitutes criminal contraband. Airport employees claim they saw armored vehicles, combat helicopters and crates of ammunition. These reports challenge both the notion of Turkmen neutrality and the supposed nature of the bilateral agreement between Turkmenistan and the U.S.

Prudnikov also says that in 2003-2004, American military aircraft flew from Afghanistan to Ashgabat without permission from Turkmen dispatchers and upon landing, U.S. troops kept the plane under armed guard, according to their instructions. There are reportedly five incidents, says Prudnikov, where U.S. special troops even used weapons. The parents of two Turkmen teenagers who happened to be wounded in crossfire near the perimeter of the air terminal were given written instructions not to divulge any information about these incidents, he claims.

The U.S. has gained access to use almost all the military airfields of Turkmenistan, including the airport in Nebit-Dag near the Iranian border, which was reconstructed at American expense. In September 2004, at the Mary-2 airfield, U.S. military experts appeared and began reconstructing the facility with the help of Arab construction companies, which provoked the protest of Moscow, says Prudnikov. Turkmenistan reiterated its neutral status and said it would not be joining any military blocs nor permitting any military bases from foreign states on its territory. But the terminal at the Ashgabat international airport and the Mary-2 airfield are not "military bases" but "subsidiary support bases" [«вспомогательные опорные пункты»] so Turkmenistan can preserve its neutrality.

Prudnikov claims to have reports that the transport of drugs from Afghanistan and the transport of prisoners to the secret prisons maintained by the U.S. in Eastern Europe were coming through these transit points in Turkmenistan. The \$3 billion that Niyazov maintained in foreign bank accounts came from somewhere, he implies. "It was precisely the Pentagon that found a means to secretly transfer funds to the dictator to German banks for such important political intimate services," he claims.

Since 2002, air fuel has been sent by rail through Turkmen territory to the northern border towns of Turgundi and Hayraton in Afghanistan, destined to the U.S. Army fuel supply center, which is a contractor of the Defense Department for fuel deliveries.

When Niyazov died, Prudnikov says U.S. military and diplomats made a flurry of visits to Ashgabat to re-establish the same arrangements with President Berdymukhamedov.

While Turkmenistan is variously described as being “lost” by Russia and the U.S. and “won” by China, Turkmenistan continues to serve as one of the major transport links of the Northern Distribution Network to supply NATO forces in Afghanistan. Turkmenistan is a country that falls under U.S. law on defense allocations for 2010 which encourages active cooperation with the countries of Central Asia to extend the delivery routes across their territories. An American military contingent is located in Ashgabat to oversee the operations related to refueling of military airplanes. NATO is also trying to open up a land corridor to bring freight by road and rail, says Prudnikov.

Both the Foreign Ministry of Turkmenistan and the U.S. State Department have declined to comment to journalists about military cooperation between the two countries. A gundogar.org reader, Vladislav Korolev, in a note on the website’s forum, has asked the new U.S. Charge d’affaires Lynne Tracy to comment on the veracity of the piece.

The original source of this article is EurasiaNet
Copyright © [Catherine A. Fitzpatrick](#), EurasiaNet, 2010

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: **[Catherine A. Fitzpatrick](#)**

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long as the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca