

# United States, Kyrgyzstan Sign Air Base Supply Accord

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BISHKEK — Kyrgyzstan and the United States signed an agreement Tuesday on jet fuel supplies to a U.S. air base in the country, replacing previous deals with a more transparent system.

The new government in Kyrgyzstan, which also hosts a Russian air base, has tried to remove opaque supply schemes that it says favored the clan of former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, deposed in a popular uprising last April.

The Manas base, located at Kyrgyzstan's main civilian airport outside the capital Bishkek, is a vital transit point for the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan.

"Today we made the first step toward an agreement, enabling us to buy fuel from the state of Kyrgyzstan, with money to be transferred to the budget," said Larry Memmott, the U.S. charge d'affaires in Kyrgyzstan.

He was speaking after signing the agreement with Kyrgyz Energy Minister Askarbek

Shodiyev.

“We want this process to be completely transparent,” Memmott said in Russian. “This agreement will be in force as long as the transit center exists.”

The Kyrgyz state-run Manas Refueling Complex planned to supply up to 50 percent of the fuel consumed by the U.S. air base, said deputy company head Tilek Isayev.

The rest will be supplied by Mina Corp., a Gibraltar-based company awarded a contract by the United States last November. The company, which supplied fuel to the U.S. base under Bakiyev, has denied any links to his administration.

The Manas base is estimated to need 360,000 tons of jet fuel a year.

Meanwhile, a Kyrgyz-Russian intergovernmental commission was set to convene in Bishkek on Thursday to discuss a plan to set up a joint venture to ship fuel to the American base, Russian Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, Valentin Vlasov, said Tuesday, Interfax reported.

*(Reuters, Interfax)*

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