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Kyrgyzstan Raising Rent for Russian Bases

By The Moscow Times

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A shot of the Kant air base which operates in Kyrgyzstan under the CTSO.

Kyrgyzstan's Defense Ministry said Wednesday that it would raise rent prices for three of the four Russian military bases on its territory.

"Inflation is growing by leaps and bounds; everything is getting more expensive. On this basis, we asked the Russian side to increase their payments for rent," Kyrgyz Defense Minister Taalaibek Omuraliev said, Interfax reported.

Russian officials had no immediate response to the rent hike.

The bases for which Kyrgyzstan is raising payments are an underwater-weapons testing base in Karakol, a military communications center in Kara-Balta and a radio-seismic laboratory in Mailuu-Suu.

Omuraliev said the new pricing system will be introduced in 2014, when Russia will sign a new

lease for the bases. He did not provide a figure for the rent but said it would have to be paid in cash.

The fee for the fourth Russian military facility in Kyrgyzstan, the Kant air base, will not be increased because the base operates as part of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which includes Kyrgyzstan.

Omuraliev said Kyrgyzstan contributes more than 300 million soms ($6.4 million) to the operation of the Kant base each year.

The issue of the Defense Ministry debt to Kyrgyzstan was raised by Bishkek in February during a visit to Moscow by Kyrgyz President Almaz Atambayev, Kommersant reported. Soon after that, the Defense Ministry said it paid the debt, equal to $15.5 million.

The bases in Karakol, Kara-Balta and Mailuu-Suu have been used by Russia under a 1993 agreement by which Russia agreed to train Kyrgyz military personnel and provide military equipment.

The United States also leases a military base in Kyrgyzstan, and the country has repeatedly threatened to close it amid disagreements over rent.

In 2009, Washington persuaded the previous Kyrgyz president to allow the U.S. military to continue to use the base at the Manas airport near Bishkek in exchange for an extra $40 million a year and renovation of the airport.

Atambayev said shortly after his election last fall that he would prefer that the lease not be renewed when it expires in 2014.

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