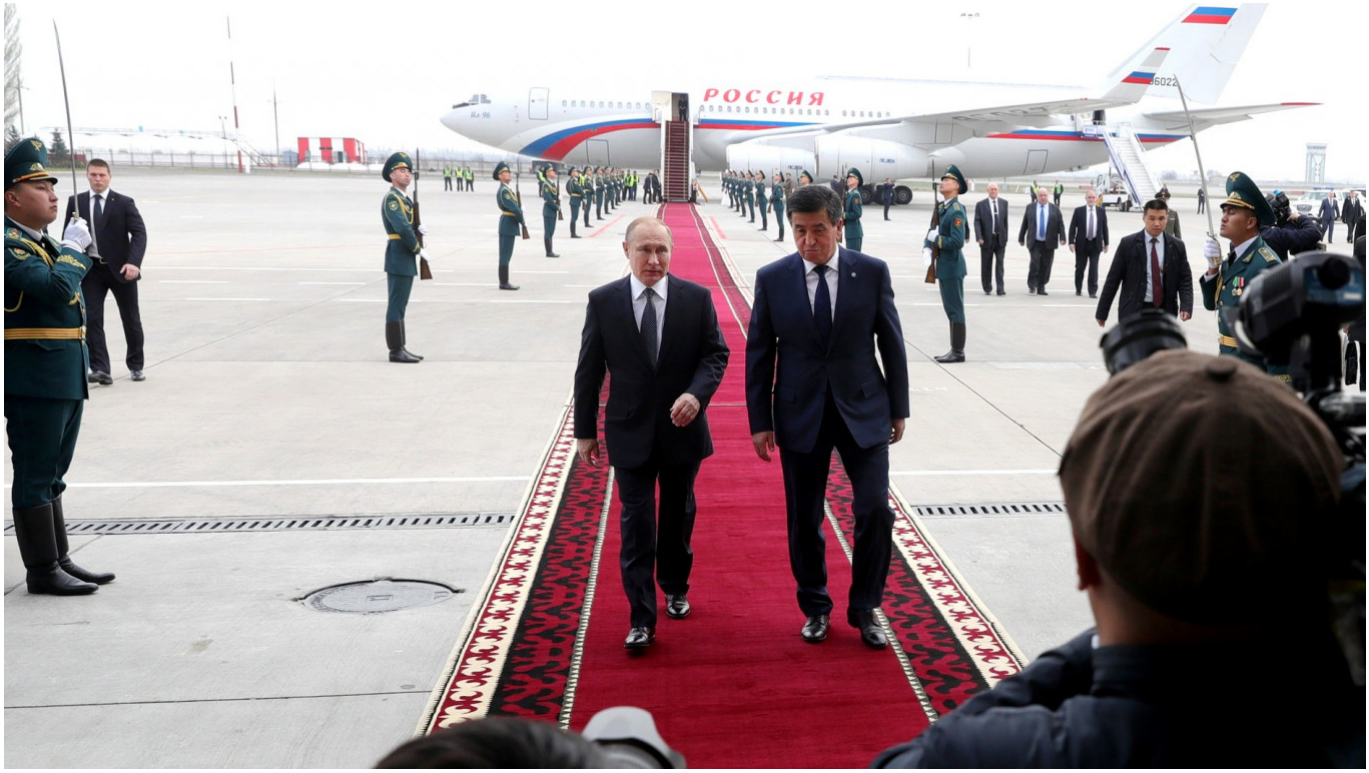
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Russia Gives Kyrgyzstan $30M Grant as Putin Visits Key Regional Ally

March 28, 2019



Kremlin.ru

Russia has announced a $30 million gift to Kyrgyzstan ahead of President Vladimir Putin's visit to the Central Asian country, one of Moscow's key military and economic allies in the region.

As a member of the Eurasian Economic Union, Kyrgyzstan enjoys close relations with Moscow. Russia, which has maintained a military airbase near Kyrgyzstan's capital of Bishkek since 2003, has written off more than $700 million of the country's debt over the past 14 years.

Kremlin aide Yury Ushakov confirmed the multimillion-dollar grant to Kyrgyzstan on the eve of Putin's visit to the former Soviet republic, Interfax reported Wednesday.

"The Russian government decided in March to provide $30 million of non-repayable assistance to support the state budget at the request of the Kyrgyz [government]," he was quoted as saying.

A video posted to social media shows Putin being offered a Kyrgyz snack upon his Thursday morning arrival in Bishkek.

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> «Это надо макать?»: Путин и боорсоки pic.twitter.com/T4pW3AaNG9
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> — Дмитрий Смирнов (@dimsmirnov175) March 28, 2019

Bishkek will be required to regularly account for how it spends the money on military salaries and social benefits.

Russia and Kyrgyzstan signed a $1.2 billion deal to invest in mineral resource exploration ahead of Putin's visit, and 30 additional bilateral deals are expected to be signed in total, the eurasianet.org news website reported. The two countries also signed a $1.5 billion hydropower cooperation agreement, the Kyrgyz economy ministry told the state-run TASS news agency.

Russia also announced an extension of amnesty for Kyrgyz migrants who had violated immigration laws, Ushakov said.

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