The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan Border Guards Exchange Fire

By Tolkun Namatbayeva for AFP

January 27, 2022



The border is a regular flashpoint for tensions between the two Central Asian states. **AP**

Kyrgyzstan accused Central Asian rival Tajikistan of firing on its troops Thursday in an outbreak of violence that comes after clashes at their contested border left dozens dead last year.

"The main exchanges of fire between border guard units of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan take place in the villages of Tort-Kocho and Chyr-Dobo. The Tajik side is using mortars and grenade launchers," Kyrgystan's national committee said in a statement.

The statement described the situation at the border as "tense", after an incident earlier in the day saw citizens of Tajikistan block a road between two Kyrgyz cities that passes through Tajikistan.

The road was later reopened after negotiations between border services of the two countries

"but the situation worsened due to the use of weapons and fire by the Tajik side on the border units of" Kyrgyzstan, the statement said.

Tajikistan, a closed authoritarian country, did not immediately comment on the situation and generally releases few statements during conflicts at the 970-kilometer-long border (600 miles), almost half of which is unagreed.

Tajik news site Asia-Plus, nevertheless, confirmed clashes, citing a Tajik villager who blamed Kyrgyz troops for opening fire first.

The Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) — a military alliance of which Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are members — said Thursday its Secretary-General Stanislav Zas held talks with military officials of the two countries in a bid to halt the conflict.

CSTO calls for talks

"The renewed clashes on the border, as a result of which there are wounded, causes serious concern. Armed confrontation on the Tajik-Kyrgyz border must be stopped immediately," the CSTO statement quoted Zas, who added that the bloc is ready to provide "the necessary assistance in resolving the conflict."

Kyrgyzstan's national security committee said in a statement that the heads of the two border services held talks by telephone at 21:45 local time.

"The Tajik side asked for a ceasefire. However, as of 22:30 Tajik servicemen continue to periodically fire at [Kyrgyz] positions," the statement said.

Media in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan reported that women and children in villages close to the site of the conflict began to evacuate after shooting started.

Clashes between communities over land and water along the pair's long-contested border are regular occurrences, with border guards often getting involved.

The area surrounding Tajikistan's Vorukh, a settlement known as an enclave for being surrounded by Kyrgyz territory, is a key flashpoint.

But the shooting that broke out last year between the two militaries was the heaviest fighting in years, leaving more than 50 people dead and raising fears that it might escalate into a wider conflict.

Kazakhstan, the country once considered a beacon of stability in Central Asia, experienced serious riots and clashes earlier this month, leaving at least 225 people dead.

The crisis moved President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to call for an intervention by the CSTO, which sent a contingent of over 2,000 Russia-led troops that stayed for two weeks as the situation stabilized.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/01/27/tajikistan-and-kyrgyzstan-border-guards-exchange-fire-a76178