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Russia and Kyrgyzstan to Create Shared Air Defense System

By AFP

October 11, 2023



The Kant military base in Kyrgyzstan. **Russian Defense Ministry**

Kyrgyzstan's parliament on Wednesday ratified an agreement for a common air defense system with Russia, just a day before a planned visit by Russian President Vladimir Putin to the Central Asian country.

The agreement states that a land plot of five hectares at the Kant Russian military base in Kyrgyzstan will be used for the joint program.

"Lawmakers examined and adopted the bill on the ratification of the agreement between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Federation for the creation of a Joint Regional Air Defense System," the Kyrgyz parliament said.

The agreement for a shared defense system between their two countries is valid for five years, Russian state-run news agency RIA Novosti reported.

Russia has similar deals with other allied countries including Kazakhstan, Belarus and Tajikistan.

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Putin was scheduled to travel to the Kant military base, but the Kyrgyz presidency told AFP Wednesday the visit had been canceled, without providing more details.

The Russian leader is still due to travel to Bishkek on Thursday in his first trip abroad since the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for him in March.

The announcement of the common air defense system comes as the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), comprising six post-Soviet states, is scheduled to meet this week in Bishkek.

But the alliance has faced mounting criticism in recent weeks as Russia refused to intervene when Azerbaijan launched an offensive on the ethnic Armenian separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

CSTO has also not sent peacekeeping troops to prevent border clashes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which are both members of the organization.

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