



## Interview With Kubat Otorbaev of Radio Liberty and Sultan Jumagulov of the BBC Kyrgyz Service

### Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan  
October 11, 2005

**QUESTION:** *(Via Kyrgyz Interpreter)* Dear Madame Secretary, you're welcome to Kyrgyzstan.

Dear Madame Secretary, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization demanded that its members define a timetable of American bases presence in Central Asia. In a response, the U.S. Government announced its bases would stay until it completes stabilization in Afghanistan. In your opinion, how could it take -- how long could it take to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan? And what will be the fate of American bases in Central Asia, specifically in Kyrgyzstan? And when will Afghan people not be in need of the international military assistance?

Also Kyrgyzstan's new leadership has allegedly asked to increase the rent payment for using the Manas airport, what is the U.S. answer to this?

**SECRETARY RICE:** *(Responding in English)* Well, today, the President spoke and I spoke to the issue of the base and he made very clear, what he has told us, that this base is needed for the war on terrorism. It's needed until the terrorists are defeated in Afghanistan. And I don't think we want to set a timetable, we just have to do it as quickly as possible to defeat the terrorists. That's the goal here.

It is also the case that the United States has made very clear that we are not seeking a permanent set of bases in Central Asia. We are operating here to support the war on terrorism, which is important to us and important to the region because the terrorists threaten both of us.

As to the requirements for the base and relations between Kyrgyzstan and the United States, we are always prepared to talk about our arrangements but we believe that it is a fair arrangement, and we will have a team coming soon to explain better how we have been dealing with certain technical issues concerning the base.

**QUESTION:** *(Via Kyrgyz Interpreter)* Madame Secretary, after the Uzbek Government announced the closure of the Karshi-Khanabad base, is the U.S. Government looking at its possible partial deployment at the Manas airport?

**SECRETARY RICE:** *(Responding in English)* The United States believes that it can certainly continue our operations and win the war on terrorism with the structures that we have in place now. We are supporting operations out of Manas to Uzbekistan, and we have needed over-flight rights in other places and I expect that that will continue to be the nature of our needs.

**QUESTION:** *(Via Kyrgyz Interpreter)* Economic and political relations between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have cooled off after Kyrgyzstan offered a temporary refuge for Uzbek asylum seekers and helped to create conditions for sending them to a third country. Some are even talking about Tashkent's pressure on Bishkek, and if Kyrgyzstan agrees to move the base in Karshi-Khanabad to Manas, the Kyrgyz-Uzbek relations might be irreparably damaged. Therefore, it looks like Kyrgyzstan is finding itself between two fires trying to fulfill its international commitments and good neighbor commitments. Is the U.S. Government considering this situation in developing its foreign policy?

**SECRETARY RICE:** *(Responding in English)* Well, our view is that countries that fulfill their international responsibilities are the ones that the international system respects and ultimately rewards. Uzbekistan is not fulfilling its international responsibilities at this point and everyone knows that. And Uzbekistan is losing support throughout Europe, certainly with the United States, and that cannot be good for the people of Uzbekistan. So I think Kyrgyzstan is the one that is in the strongest position here because Kyrgyzstan is acting as a responsible citizen. There will be economic and political support for Kyrgyzstan from many countries.

But I want to be very clear: We want Kyrgyzstan to have good relations with its neighbors, good relations with Russia, good relations with China, good relations in the region. We have good relations with those countries and we hope that Kyrgyzstan will, too. There is nothing about having good relations with the United States that suggests you have to choose to have bad relations with your neighbors. You should have good relations with your neighbors.

Thank you.

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