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New Kyrgyzstan President Wants US Military Base Closed

By John Glaser

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Kyrgyzstan's president-elect firmly told the United States on Tuesday to leave its military air base just outside the capital Bishkek when its lease expires in 2014.

Almazbek Atambayev is the prime minister but won the presidential election on Sunday. "When I was appointed prime minister last year, and again this year, I warned employees and leaders of the US embassy and visiting representatives that, in 2014 and in line with our obligations, the United States should leave the base," he said.



Atambayev spoke about potential resentment towards his country from other players in the region for helping America conduct the war in Afghanistan. "We know that the United States very often participates in various military conflicts. It happened in Iraq, in Afghanistan and now there is a tense situation with Iran," he said. "I wouldn't want any of these countries one day to make a return strike on the military base."

The US military uses the base in Kyrgyzstan as a supply route to occupying troops in Afghanistan. The Obama administration has promised to fully withdraw all troops from Afghanistan the same year that the lease for the Kyrgyzstan base expires, 2014.

But military officials and NATO statements have [repeatedly contradicted the 2014 withdrawal date](#) and the war is as much a failure now as ever, so many have been expecting an extension of the war well beyond 2014.

After tensions escalated with Pakistan in recent months, the US has been wooing Central Asian countries like Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to operate as supply routes instead of Pakistan. If the administration, the Pentagon, and NATO planned to extend the war beyond 2014, they'll be further restrained from doing so if soon-to-be-President Atambayev sticks to his promise to dismantle the US base.