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THE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: This abstract provides an overview of the evolution and modernization of the Army of the Republic of Uzbekistan since its establishment in the early 1990s. Initially shaped by its Soviet legacy, the Uzbek armed forces have undergone significant transformation to become a professional and capable institution focused on national defense and security. The abstract highlights key aspects of the army's structure, organization, modernization efforts, and challenges faced. It emphasizes Uzbekistan's commitment to enhancing military capabilities through strategic partnerships, technological advancements, and investments in personnel development. Looking forward, the abstract underscores the army's role in regional stability and international security, positioning Uzbekistan as an emerging player in the global defense landscape.

Key words: Uzbekistan, Army, Defense, Modernization, Evolution, National Security, Professionalization, Strategic Partnerships, Military Capability, Regional Stability.

The Armed Forces of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Uzbek: O'zbekiston Respublikasi Qurolli Kuchlari, Ўзбекистон Республикаси Қуролли Кучлари), is the name of the unified armed forces of Uzbekistan, consisting of the Ground Force and the Air and Air Defence forces under the defence ministry. Paramilitary units include the National Guard, a Frontier Service and a River Force. It is reported to be the largest and the strongest in Central Asia. The country has also began professionalizing its military, an effort that has only limited success and erratic government support. But even in Uzbekistan, these changes represent merely a modest beginning and most of the benefits are concentrated in a few elite, higher readiness formations rather than uniformly applied to the entire force. The Uzbek military is woefully inadequate, but it is far superior to its neighbours.



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On 2 July 1992 a Presidential Decree established a Ministry of Defence to supersede the Ministry of Defence Affairs. Over the succeeding years, Uzbekistan replaced Russian officers with ethnic Uzbeks and restructured the military to focus on targets like civil unrest, drug trafficking, and Hizb-ut-Tahrir.[citation needed] The three major Soviet military academies, the Tashkent Higher All-Arms Command School, the Chirchiq Higher Tank Command and Engineering School, and the Samarkand Higher Military Automobile Command School, were located in Uzbekistan. This caused the government to not send Uzbek officers to Russia for training. In 1994, they established the joint Armed Forces Academy, to train officers of all branches. Though the Uzbek language was becoming more in use by the army, Russian remained the main language used in training officers, due to the fact that most manuals were in Russian. But today Uzbek language is used in all spheres of defense system as it is an only state language in Uzbekistan.

In October 1993, by the decree, the 2nd Mobile Army Corps was formed on the basis of the 105th Guards Vienna Airborne Division, and the 1st Army Corps was established on the basis of the former 59th Army Corps. In January 1994, the 108th Motorized Rifle Division was disbanded, and its military units were incorporated into the 1st Army Corps. Disbanded regiments were replaced by motorized infantry, mountain artillery, tank, and anti-aircraft artillery brigades. In April 1994, departments of defense were introduced in the regions of the republic, the Republic of Karakalpakstan and the city of Tashkent, and departments of defense in cities and districts. Military reforms were implemented after the appointment of civilian Kadyr Gulyamov to the defence ministry. Soviet-style regimental structures, were replaced, with the basic fighting unit consisting of 14 soldiers. "Ranger" detachments based on the American model were also formed.

Since Shavkat Mirziyoyev came to power, the military has been involved in re-arming its military with modern equipment. From August to September 1997, Uzbekistan took part in the exercises of the Central Asian Battalion (CENTRASBAT) in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. as part of an eight nation joint exercise which include the United States, Russia and Ukraine. After the September 11, 2001 attacks, the United States leased the Karshi-Khanabad airbase in southern Uzbekistan, which borders Afghanistan. The American base there was called "Camp Stronghold Freedom," yet was more often referred to as "K2 Airbase" by the personnel in theater. In May 2005, the military was involved in suppressing unrest in the Ferghana Valley city of Andijan, which became known as the Andijan massacre. Consequently, the EU banned arms sales and imposed a one-year visa ban on 12 senior officials, including the security chief and interior and defence ministers, accusing them of bearing responsibility for the killings.



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In the aftermath of the incident, President Karimov dismissed several senior military figures: Defense Minister Gulyamov, Head of the Joint Headquarters of the Armed Forces Ismail Ergashev, and Commander of the Eastern Military District Kosimali Akhmedov. Burnashev and Chernykh said that '...although these dismissals did not change the formal system of administration in the security and military structures, they reflected serious shifts in power relations among regional elites representing their clans. A joint statement of the member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation issued in early July 2005 on a conference in the Kazakh capital of Astana called for a withdrawal of US troops from military bases in Central Asia. On 29 July 2005, Uzbekistan invoked a provision asking the U.S. to leave within 180 days. On 21 November 2005, the withdrawal of US troops from Karshi-Khanabad and any other bases was completed.

The European Union lifted the arms sales ban in 2009. Uzbekistan and Russia signed a mutual defence pact in 2005 for closer military cooperation. This marked a stark contrast to a few years earlier, when the US appeared to be Uzbekistan's favoured foreign friend, and relations with Russia were cooler.

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