

**Statement of John F. Tierney  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives**

**Hearing on “Crisis in Kyrgyzstan: Fuel, Contracts, and Revolution along the  
Afghan Supply Chain”**

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Good morning. Today’s hearing will explore the recent revolution in Kyrgyzstan, the causes of the political turmoil there, and Kyrgyzstan’s critical role in the supply chain for the U.S. and NATO war effort in Afghanistan. In addition, we will examine the political and geopolitical significance of allegations of corruption in connection with U.S. fuel contracts at the Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan, a critical transit and re-supply hub for Operation Enduring Freedom.

Last Monday, the Subcommittee announced a wide-ranging investigation into allegations that the contractors who supply fuel to the Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan had significant financial dealings with the family of deposed President Kurmanbek Bakiyev. I understand from press reports that the interim government in Kyrgyzstan has announced its own investigation into allegations of corruption in the Bakiyev regime, including the Manas fuel contracts.

Of course, allegations of corrupt practices among Kyrgyz public officials are an internal Kyrgyz matter. However, some of the present allegations raise serious questions about the Department of Defense’s management and oversight of contractors along the Afghan supply chain. Today’s hearing will not answer the ‘who, what, and where’ of the contractual dealings at Manas, nor test the veracity of allegations swirling in Central Asia. Those questions will be answered in due course by the Subcommittee’s ongoing investigation.

Rather, the purpose of today’s hearing is to look more broadly at the recent revolution in Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz-American relations, the history of the U.S. presence at Manas, and the significance of the allegations of corruption at the base as a driver of the revolution.

Since 2001, Kyrgyzstan has been a critical ally of the United States in support of our ongoing military efforts in Afghanistan. The Manas Air Base is a crucial hub for U.S. troops going in and out of Afghanistan as well as a refueling station for U.S. and NATO aircraft operating in the region. Not unexpectedly, Kyrgyzstan’s willingness to

host a U.S. air base on former Soviet soil has generated some domestic controversy in Bishkek, and even more controversy in Russia, which looks suspiciously at U.S. influence in Central Asia.

As the United States has increased its presence in Afghanistan, our dependence on the Manas Air Base and the Northern Distribution Network – the supply chain to Afghanistan through Central Asia – has also increased. U.S. dependence is particularly acute at Manas: in March 2010 alone, 50,000 U.S. troops transited in and out of Afghanistan through this base.

Let's be honest: at many times throughout our history, the United States has closely dealt with unsavory regimes in order to achieve more pressing policy or strategic objectives. That is realism in a nutshell. But the United States also prides itself on a more enlightened view of our role in the world and our long-term interests in universal respect for democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

Some suggest the United States has allowed strategic and logistical expedience in Kyrgyzstan to become a lasting embrace of two corrupt and authoritarian regimes. Regardless of U.S. intent, we are left with the fact that both President Akayev and President Bakiyev were forcefully ousted from office amid widespread public perception that the U.S. had supported the regimes' repression and fueled – no pun intended – their corrosive corruption.

Meanwhile, the leaders of Kyrgyzstan's political opposition, the men and women who bravely confronted President Bakiyev for his corruption and oppression, were left in the lurch. Today, many of those opposition leaders are in power and, I expect, the United States will have to work hard to restore our credibility in their eyes, beginning with transparency regarding U.S. fuel contracts at Manas. I wish them the good judgment to transform the art of Kyrgyz governance in a manner deserving of the Kyrgyz people.

Ultimately, it is my belief that only transparency will help Kyrgyz-American relations move forward on a new page. And toward that end, I look forward to our witnesses' thoughts on the future of this important alliance.