



## Breakthrough of Militants from Afghanistan to Tajikistan: Myth or Reality?

The Tajik authorities have again activated the topic of the alleged breakthrough into the country from Afghanistan by some militants. Thus, on October 16, the Lower House of the Parliament of Tajikistan ratified the Agreement on the procedure for the formation and use of joint teams of specialists (experts) of border agencies to respond quickly to the threats of the border security at external borders in some former Soviet states.

During the ratification of the document, the Deputy Commander of the Border Troops of the State Committee for National Security of Tajikistan Abdusattor Shohiyon said that the threat to the security of the state border is growing every day. According to him, the probability of a breakthrough of the border in the near future by militants from Afghanistan is growing. Shohiyon also noted that according to the data received, the militants are interested in studying the degree of protection of the Tajik border.

If you pay attention to the statements of the past few years by both Tajik and Russian experts and officials, then they both almost always adhered to the same opinion - i.e. periodically declared the existence of a threat of breakthrough of militants from Afghanistan. However, no serious actions were taken regarding the border even during the period when the borders of Tajikistan were not so heavily guarded as they are now, including at the height of the Syrian revolution, or in 2017-2018, when Russian and American troops actively began to bomb rebel positions in Syria. That is, the militants did not move to Central Asia, which was so much talked about by Russian media and officials.

It is also worth paying attention to the important side: all incidents regularly occurring on the Tajik-Afghan border are not related to the militants, but are related to smugglers from Afghanistan and Tajikistan who are directly or indirectly connected with high-ranking officials in charge of drug trafficking, the interests of some smuggler groups clash with the interests of another, resulting in armed clashes. That is, in fact over the past few years, not a single case of clashes related to the militants has been recorded.

Then the question arises, what is the purpose of such statements both from the Tajik and Russian authorities? In fact, the creation of public opinion about the threat of an invasion of Tajikistan from Afghanistan was initially created by Russia as an excuse for even more interference in the affairs of its former colony. It's not a secret to anyone that Russian military bases are located in Tajikistan, and there are Russian military advisers at each border point. However, Russia actually wants to return to the situation that existed before 2005, when the Russian task force of the border troops was responsible for the southern borders of Tajikistan. Russia, without a direct border with Afghanistan, cannot effectively compete with the United States in the Afghan

direction, and the appearance of the Russian military on a permanent basis on the Afghan border will open up incredible geopolitical opportunities for Russians in this region.

But the corrupt pro-Russian regime of Rakhmon, for his part, does not want to lose the formal signs of sovereignty, therefore he seeks to justify Russia's prompt political and military intervention in Tajikistan, i.e. in fact, a return to the colonial past, which, in principle, is natural, given the fact that Rakhmon alone was put in his place by Russia to protect its interests and combat the Islamic revival in the country.

Observers do not exclude the existence on the territory of Afghanistan of people from Central Asian countries who left their homes under pressure from the authorities, in particular because of the anti-Islamic policies pursued by the regimes of these countries. And it is likely that they have a desire to return to their homes, but at the same time they do not have such an opportunity, that is, they have neither the strength to break through, nor the technical equipment.

We must not forget the fact that the Central Asian region, due to its geopolitical location, is a chessboard for the intrigues of superpowers, to establish its influence. Then, in fact, the signed agreement primarily serves the interests of the Russian Federation, since the region is completely under its control.

For the Rakhmon regime, this agreement is advantageous in that it is a kind of additional guarantee of maintaining its power, as well as the 201st Russian military base. That is, through constant statements about the existence of an imaginary threat of militants breaking out of Afghanistan, the Tajik regime hopes to create an atmosphere of fear among the country's population, putting it before a choice: either the so-called peaceful life, but in the shadow of the Russian occupier, or the constant war and devastation, as in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Yemen or Libya.

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