
BORDER CONFLICT COMPELS KYRGYZSTAN AND TAJIKISTAN TO LOOK FOR FOREIGN WEAPONS

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Neighboring Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan came close to seeing the outbreak of renewed border clashes on June 4. This danger of fresh violence emerged little more than a month after the so-called three-day war between the two countries, from April 28 to April 30 [] most significant armed conflict between these two Central Asian states since the region gained its independence from the former Soviet Union in 1991. The late-April fighting resulted in wide-scale destruction of rural residential areas on both sides of the border and the killing of 36 Kyrgyzstani and 19 Tajikistani citizens, mostly civilians.

The latest crisis was triggered by the Tajikistani military installing container houses in the disputed border area, a deliberate provocation, as some officials from Kyrgyzstan asserted. Yet although the situation did not escalate into a larger conflict this time, both sides quickly mobilized large numbers of military personnel in response. Moreover, Kyrgyzstans government evacuated thousands of villagers living close to the disputed border areas. The involvement of senior-most security officials from both countries in deescalating the situation demonstrated how close the two neighbors came to another showdown along their non-delimited shared frontier. Moreover, the latest incident highlighted how these two countries attitudes toward each other have hardened after the April 28-30 fighting.

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