

## **US Anti-Terrorism Plans Get Central Asian Backing**

**Author:** [Galima Bukharbaeva](#)

Central Asian states pledge support for American bid to pursue those responsible for last week's outrages.

In the aftermath of the American hijacking tragedy, Central Asian states have expressed backing for Washington's efforts to find the perpetrators. But it remains to be seen how much practical support they will be able to provide.

If, as many suspect, Osama bin Laden, was involved in the attacks in New York, Washington and Pittsburgh, the US will probably retaliate by bombing the Saudi dissident's training camps in Afghanistan. This could spread instability throughout the Central Asia.

The three republics sharing borders with Afghanistan - Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan - have most to fear. "If they start bombing Osama bin Laden's bases in Afghanistan, refugees will sweep into Tajikistan and Uzbekistan," warned Central Asian analyst Faizulla Iskhakov.

Nonetheless, most countries in the region have indicated their willingness to assist the US in hunting down the perpetrators of the attacks. One of the ways they could do this would be to permit US forces to use their countries as a springboard for raids on bin Laden's bases.

"These kind of inhuman acts need the coordinated and effective actions of all countries and international organisations," said a Kazak foreign ministry statement.

It went further to say that Almaty is ready to assist the US in pursuing those responsible for last week's outrages. "Kazakstan is ready to undertake further joint measures needed to combat terrorism."

However, such willingness may be premature - nothing can practicably be done without the consent and cooperation of Moscow. Which, at this stage, seems highly unlikely.

The region's readiness to assist the US stems from its own concern over Islamic terror organisations. "Here in Central Asia, we are all too aware about fundamentalist terrorism imported from neighbouring countries," said Kazak president Nursultan Nazarbaev.

President Akaev of Kyrgyzstan, whose country has suffered armed incursions by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, IMU, along its border with Tajikistan, said, " This terrible act of aggression shows what a threat international terrorism brings."

There were unconfirmed reports from the Russian intelligence service that two Uzbeks were among the hijackers, and that the IMU were involved in the planning and execution of the atrocities. Tashkent immediately tightened up security on hearing of the US attacks, fearful of similar outrages on its own soil.

Central Asians are also concerned that Muslim militancy may turn Americans and Europeans against Islamic nations. A high-ranking Kazak official, Nigmatjan Isingar, warned that the tragic events in the US may prompt some in the West to make a direct link between Islam and terrorism. Kyrgyz deputy Tursynbai Bakir Uuly pointed out that politicians needed to refrain from "using terrorism and Islam as synonyms".

Ironically, these sort of associations are being made in the region itself. In the last five years, little distinction has been made between peaceful religious organisations and militant groups like the IMU - provoking criticism from international groups, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. In the wake of the US attacks, non-violent Islamic groups in the region may find themselves under even greater pressure from the authorities.

Galima Bukharbaeva is IWPR regional director in Uzbekistan and Sultan Jumagulov is a BBC stringer in Bishkek.

**Location:** Central Asia  
Uzbekistan  
Turkmenistan  
Tajikistan

---

**Source URL:** <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/us-anti-terrorism-plans-get-central-asian>