

PROCESSES OF IMPROVING THE LOCAL AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM IN THE UZBEK SSR (1945–1960)**Teshaboyev Boburjon Abror ugli**

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Abstract. This article examines the organizational and legal foundations, reform processes, and stages of development of the local air defense system in the Uzbek SSR during the post-World War II period, specifically between 1945 and 1960, based on archival sources. The study analyzes the initial measures taken to adapt the system to peacetime conditions following the end of the war, the nuclear threats that emerged against the backdrop of escalating geopolitical tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, and the defense reforms carried out in Uzbekistan in response to these threats. In particular, the 1949 "Regulations on Local Air Defense of the USSR," the 1955 program for preparing the population for nuclear defense, the construction of shelters, the establishment of emergency rescue units, and personnel training issues are analyzed on the basis of archival documents. Furthermore, the article highlights the significance of the local air defense system during peacetime, as illustrated by the 1948 Ashgabat earthquake. The article is based on an analysis of resolutions, directives, and orders issued by the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR and the executive committees of Tashkent city and regions, presenting new scholarly conclusions regarding the formation and improvement of the civil defense system during this period.

Keywords: local air defense, Uzbek SSR, Cold War, nuclear threat, civil defense, archival sources, defense reforms, population protection.

Although the organizational structure of the local air defense system was largely preserved in the first post-war years, the transition to peacetime created the need for its revision and optimization. In accordance with the resolution of the USSR Central Executive Committee dated 24 October 1945, governing bodies, military units, and non-militarized formations were significantly reduced. As a result, urban units were abolished, and the total personnel strength was reduced to 58,980¹. In addition, the annual funding allocated for maintaining urban battalions was reduced to 100 million rubles. These measures reflected a pragmatic approach aimed at adapting the state's defense policy to the new political and economic conditions of the post-war period.

Furthermore, on the basis of the demobilization decision adopted in August 1945, the number of urban battalions was sharply reduced, and formations in certain regional centers were disbanded. This indicates that, alongside the decline in the level of military threat, priority was given to redirecting centralized resources toward reconstruction and economic sectors.

During December 1945 – January 1946, new peacetime staffing structures for the headquarters and services of the air defense forces were developed and approved. These documents were prepared on the basis of summarizing the practical experience accumulated during the war years and were aimed at adapting the defense system to the new geopolitical environment. This process represented an important stage in the modernization of the military command system and in the institutional consolidation of wartime experience.

On 22 January 1946, the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs submitted to the government the Regulations on the Air Defense Forces. This regulation legally codified organizational and protective measures tested during the war for application in peacetime. It

¹ Местная противовоздушная оборона в годы Великой Отечественной войны (1941–1945): Документы и материалы. – М.: Воениздат, 1968. – С. 412–414.

thereby contributed to the improvement of regulatory and legal management mechanisms in the defense sphere.

At the same time, political tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union intensified after the war. Intelligence reports recorded the threat of possible air strikes. In particular, a secret report prepared in November 1945 by the Joint Intelligence Committee under the U.S. Department of Defense identified 20 Soviet cities as primary targets for atomic strikes and estimated potential casualties at 13 million people. These factors became among the principal geopolitical reasons accelerating Soviet policy aimed at reorganizing and strengthening the national defense system².

The U.S. Directive No. 432/28 dated 14 December 1945 designated long-range aviation equipped with atomic bombs as the principal means of achieving strategic superiority over the Soviet Union. The document stated that the use of 196 atomic bombs would provide an advantage in favor of the United States.

The “Pincher” plan developed in 1946 envisaged strikes against the military potential of the USSR, and the city of Tashkent was included among the potential targets.

Between 1947 and 1949, the plans “Broiler,” “Grabber,” “Halfmoon,” “Fleetwood,” and “Dropshot” developed scenarios for large-scale atomic strikes against major Soviet cities. In particular, the “Dropshot” plan provided for the use of 300 atomic bombs and 250,000 conventional bombs within the first 30 days. These threats sharply intensified the necessity of preserving and improving the local air defense system in the post-war period³.

Under conditions of growing strategic threats, on 31 October 1949 the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union approved the “Regulations on the Local Air Defense of the USSR.” The document clearly defined the functions, structure, forces and means of the system, as well as the procedures for public participation. This act legally strengthened the local air defense system.

Thereafter, measures were implemented in Uzbekistan to improve the warning system, construct shelters, provide protective equipment, and strengthen engineering and sanitary measures at industrial facilities. The system also came to include tasks related to infrastructure restoration and assistance to affected populations.

The 1948 Ashgabat earthquake demonstrated the practical significance of this system in peacetime. Specialists sent from Uzbekistan actively participated in rescue and recovery operations. According to available data, on 6 October 1948 medical personnel from Moscow, Tashkent, Chardzhou, Mary, and other cities arrived in the Turkmen SSR and began providing urgent assistance to earthquake victims. Within a short period, more than one thousand doctors and nurses were mobilized to carry out triage, perform primary surgical procedures, and implement anti-epidemic sanitary measures. In the author’s view, this indicates that a system for the rapid mobilization of medical services in emergency situations had already taken shape⁴.

The experience gained in eliminating the consequences of the earthquake became an important practical basis for improving the local air defense system in the systematic organization of search and rescue, emergency recovery, and other urgent operations. During this process, effective mechanisms of interagency cooperation, centralized mobilization of resources, and rapid management were developed. Under conditions of resource shortages, the necessary equipment was allocated from the warehouses of the Ministry of Defense. As a result, system personnel succeeded in eliminating the consequences of destruction within a short period and providing prompt assistance to the population.

In 1950, in accordance with Instruction No. 133 of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs, special emergency recovery groups were established within the local air defense system in a number of cities. These formations were intended for the rapid elimination of destruction caused

² Фролов В.С. Гражданская оборона США. // Экономика, политика, идеология. 1980. № 3. – С. 27.

³ Herman Kahn, On Thermonuclear War. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961. – P. 17.

⁴ Шойгу С. К. От МПВО к гражданской защите (исторический очерк). – Москва: «УРСС», 1998. – С. 104.

by emergencies and for the restoration of infrastructure⁵. This measure became an important organizational step that strengthened the practical capacity of the system.

After the Second World War, the creation of nuclear weapons by the Soviet Union fundamentally changed the military-political situation. For this reason, the functions of the local air defense system were redefined in 1949 and 1956. The system was adapted to protect the population and economic facilities under conditions of nuclear threat. This signified the transition of defense policy to a new strategic stage.

As a result, specialized defense services were established at the union, republican, and regional levels. According to archival documents, deficiencies in the control of external lighting in Tashkent were identified in 1951, and measures were prescribed to eliminate them. In addition, local governing bodies were tasked with strengthening the functioning of the system, informing the population, and regulating shelters⁶.

On 26 November 1951, the Government of the Republic discussed the condition of the local air defense system in the Uzbek SSR and adopted a resolution on its strengthening. According to the resolution, representatives of defense authorities were to be involved in the processes of issuing construction permits, reviewing technical documentation, and commissioning facilities for operation. This strengthened the integration of the system with state administration and construction policy.

According to archival sources, at a meeting of the Council of Ministers in 1952, the preparedness of municipal utility facilities for defense purposes was assessed as unsatisfactory, with negligence and irresponsibility in implementing government resolutions identified as the main causes⁷.

On 31 July 1952, the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR approved the plan for the construction of local air defense protective facilities for 1953–1955. On the basis of this resolution, a specific program was established for the construction and improvement of defense facilities throughout the republic. These measures constituted an important practical step aimed at strengthening the territorial defense infrastructure.

According to available data, on 30 October 1952 the Tashkent City Council of Deputies discussed the condition of air defense work in Lenin District and at major industrial enterprises. Later, on 18 February 1953, a report on the state of air defense in the city of Chirchiq was heard, and a resolution was adopted on strengthening the system. This indicates that defense issues were given particular attention at the level of local governing bodies as well⁸.

On 31 March 1953, the Tashkent City Executive Committee approved a resolution on the establishment of self-defense groups in residential buildings. On 3 April, issues concerning the increase in the number of shelters and protective facilities, their maintenance in accordance with established standards, and their provision with the necessary equipment were considered. These measures were aimed at directly involving the population in defense activities.

During the first quarter of 1953, local air defense issues were also discussed in the Samarkand region, where reports of industrial enterprise managers were heard⁹. Bu tadbirlar hududiy xavfsizlikni mustahkamlashga xizmat qilgan.

Arxiv hujjatlariga ko'ra, 1954-yilda Toshkent va Samarqand shaharlaridagi havo hujumidan mahalliy mudofaa masalalari boshqaruv organlarida jami 35 marta muhokama qilingan¹⁰. This indicates that regular oversight was exercised over the sector.

⁵ Ляндрес Я.Б. Роль массовых формирований МПВО и населения в ликвидации последствий нападения с воздуха. Изд. ДОСААФ. М., 1958. – С. 78.

⁶ O'zMA, 2228-fond, 1-ro'yxat, 4-ish, 20-varaq.

⁷ O'zMA, 2228-fond, 1-ro'yxat, 4-ish, 15-varaq.

⁸ O'zMA, 2228-fond, 1-ro'yxat, 23-ish, 2-varaq.

⁹ O'zMA, 2228-fond, 1-ro'yxat, 33-ish, 84-varaq.

¹⁰ O'zMA, 2228-fond, 1-ro'yxat, 50-ish, 73-varaq.

On the basis of the Soviet Union resolution of 29 June 1955, the Government of the Uzbek SSR, on 23 July, established measures for preparing the protection of the population and industrial facilities against nuclear weapons. In accordance with the resolution, the training of citizens from the age of sixteen was introduced under a ten-hour program. These measures indicate that the defense system had been adapted to conditions of nuclear threat.

On the same day, in order to strengthen the local air defense system, the staffing structures of the Tashkent regional and city executive committees were approved¹¹. As a result, specialized services were established covering medical support, rescue operations, communications, transport, energy supply, and other fields.

The Tashkent City Executive Committee adopted measures to ensure regular supervision over the condition of shelters. In accordance with the resolution of 1 January 1956, the administrative structure was expanded to include the position of Deputy Head of the Shelter Service, as well as one inspector for every 150 shelters. These changes increased the efficiency of the management of the defense system.

The Tashkent City Executive Committee also implemented a number of organizational measures aimed at systematic control over the condition of shelters. In particular, pursuant to the resolution of 1 January 1956, the post of Deputy Head of the Shelter Service and an inspectorate position for every 150 shelters were introduced. These reforms contributed to improving the managerial effectiveness of the defense system.

In addition, under the resolution of 16 August 1955, the administrations of Tashkent, Samarkand, Chirchiq, Fergana, and Andijan were transformed into headquarters. New local air defense headquarters were also established in Namangan, Bukhara, and the Karakalpak ASSR¹². This indicates the expansion of the territorial administrative network of the system.

During the period under review, the Ministry of Health of the Uzbek SSR actively participated in local air defense measures. The Red Crescent Society organized training circles entitled "Ready for Sanitary Defense" and "Be Ready for Sanitary Defense," through which the population was prepared to provide medical assistance. Between 1955 and 1958, 990 nurses were trained, while 3,420 reserve nurses completed accelerated training courses¹³. These measures contributed to strengthening the medical capacity of civil protection.

Under conditions of nuclear-missile warfare, cooperation between Soviet Army troops and local air defense structures acquired particular importance. Therefore, on 26 December 1955, the commander of the Turkestan Military District issued a directive regulating cooperation between local garrison troops and defense headquarters. In accordance with this directive, measures were implemented throughout the republic to coordinate the air defense interests of Soviet troops and local garrisons¹⁴. These measures strengthened the integration of military and civil defense systems.

From the standpoint of scholarly analysis, the measures implemented were aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the air defense system and strengthening cooperation between central and local structures. This process served to coordinate the defense system on the basis of unified command under conditions of a nuclear-missile threat. In addition, measures related to public warning systems and the construction of protective facilities had important practical significance in ensuring public safety.

In order to prepare the population for action under special conditions, on 31 December 1955 the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR approved the Rules of Conduct for Citizens during a "Threat Situation." According to these rules, the population was to be trained to respond to the signals "Air Raid" and "Chemical Attack."

¹¹ O'zMA, 2228-fond, 1-ro'yxat, 80-ish, 121-varaq.

¹² O'zMA, 2228-fond, 1-ro'yxat, 52-ish, 192-varaq.

¹³ O'zMA, 2228-fond, 1-ro'yxat, 51-ish, 181-varaq.

¹⁴ O'zMA, 2228-fond, 1-ro'yxat, 62-ish, 73-varaq.

Furthermore, on 2 February 1956, a resolution was adopted concerning the duties of the heads of enterprises, institutions, and educational establishments during such warning signals. Under the resolution, the constant readiness of shelters and the training of the population in accordance with the relevant instructions were made mandatory. These measures strengthened the organizational discipline of the civil protection system.

On 14 April 1956, a new “Regulation on the Local Air Defense System of the USSR” was approved. It defined the regular training of the population in protection against weapons of mass destruction as one of the principal functions of the system¹⁵. In addition, this system was recognized as a nationwide defense framework responsible for protecting the population from nuclear weapons and other modern means of destruction, organizing rescue operations, providing assistance to victims, and carrying out urgent emergency recovery work. This Regulation became an important legal stage in adapting the defense system to new military threats.

During these years, the local air defense system achieved significant results in protecting national economic facilities, developing evacuation plans for children and persons with disabilities, implementing engineering and technical measures in cities and economic facilities, conducting compulsory public training, protecting the population from modern weapons, providing timely warnings of air raid threats, and constructing protective facilities.

Furthermore, on 26 November 1956, the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR adopted a resolution “On Measures for Preparing the Population against Air Raids.” In accordance with this resolution, citizens underwent training against nuclear threats under a 12-hour program in 1956 and a 22-hour program in 1957¹⁶. This resolution contributed to the further improvement of the training system for protecting the population against air raids.

In 1957–1958, the Government of Uzbekistan approved a special plan for preparing the population for air defense. According to this plan, it was intended to train 3.2 million people throughout the republic, prepare 38,300 public instructors, and retrain 257,000 instructors. In addition, in 1959 the training of the republic’s population under a 22-hour program was successfully completed.

In 1957, the Soviet Union successfully tested an intercontinental multistage ballistic missile for the first time. In October of the same year, it was this very technology that enabled the launch of the world’s first artificial satellite into orbit¹⁷. This event was regarded as a major turning point that brought about fundamental changes in the military sphere of the Soviet Union. As a result, the major powers were compelled to revise their military doctrines. The structure of the armed forces, the level of combat readiness, and approaches to the means and forms of protecting the population changed significantly. Protecting the population from weapons of mass destruction became a priority task.

During this period, no local air defense headquarters existed in the Surkhandarya, Khorezm, and Kashkadarya regions; consequently, no system for preparing the population against air raids had been established there. In 1959, the leaders of these regions appealed to the Government of Uzbekistan, emphasizing the necessity of establishing local air defense headquarters in those territories.

On 6 September 1957, the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR approved Instruction No. 587, which established the procedure for carrying out defense measures in cities, workers’ settlements, and rural areas where local air defense headquarters had not been formed. The instruction provided for warning the population in the event of an enemy attack, reducing casualties, assisting major cities, creating special defense groups, evacuating the population, and temporarily accommodating citizens left without shelter.

¹⁵ Колтуков Г.К. и др. Гражданская оборона вчера и сегодня. М.: Атомиздат, 1975. – С. 19.

¹⁶ Ахунджанов С., Базаров Ю. Гражданское оборона Узбекистана на современном этапе. – Ташкент: Узбекистан, 1977. – С. 10.

¹⁷ Громова А. “В круге света”. Библиотека научное фантастики. Vol. 15. – Москва: Молодая гвардия, 1965. – С. 31.

In order to strengthen the systematic preparation of the population for protection against atomic weapons, on 30 December 1957 a total of ten air defense schools were established in the cities of Chirchiq, Bekobod, Jizzakh, Kattaqo'rg'on, Leninsk, Chust, Kogon, Khiva, To'rtko'l, and Kokand. These schools operated within the DOSAAF voluntary society.

A system for encouraging citizens who actively participated in defense activities was also introduced. In particular, in 1959, sixty-three employees who had achieved high results in developing the local defense system and training the population were awarded the badge "Excellent Worker of Local Air Defense."

On 4 May 1959, a resolution entitled "On Measures to Ensure the Preparation of the Country for Local Air Defense" was adopted¹⁸. In order to ensure the implementation of this resolution, large-scale mass events were organized throughout the territory of Uzbekistan. In particular, in 1960 competitions on local air defense were held in the regions of the republic. According to available sources, 157,000 people participated in these events in Tashkent Region, 141,000 in Namangan Region, and 19,000 in Kashkadarya Region¹⁹.

These competitions were regarded as important practical exercises that contributed to improving defense preparedness among the population. In addition, educational films translated into Uzbek, Tajik, and Karakalpak were screened in order to familiarize broad sections of the population with the defense system, and special exhibitions were organized in the regions. These measures played an important role in increasing the population's knowledge and skills in the field of defense.

From the beginning of 1959, local air defense courses in the city of Tashkent began to operate effectively²⁰. These courses were aimed at training the population, particularly representatives of enterprises, organizations, and educational institutions, to act properly under conditions of emergency threats.

At the beginning of the 1960s, the protection of civilians became an urgent issue at the strategic level. It became evident that national defense required large-scale measures not only in frontline areas, but also in rear territories. Therefore, the need arose for a fundamental qualitative reform of the local air defense system, and existing approaches were reconsidered.

On 13 January 1960, the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union adopted the resolution "On Measures to Reduce the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR"²¹. This resolution had a profound impact on the subsequent development of the civil protection system. In accordance with it, the air defense headquarters throughout the country were significantly reduced, while the headquarters structure and air defense troops were transferred to the Ministry of Defense of the Soviet Union²². As a result, only 12 officers remained in headquarters at the Union level, 5 officers in the republics, and merely 2 officers in the regions.

These reductions had a negative impact on the local air defense system. Headquarters were deprived of the ability to manage and organize the necessary measures for the protection of the population, the activities of non-military formations nearly ceased, and the combat readiness of the system declined significantly.

In conclusion, during the post-war years the organizational structure of the local air defense system was revised in accordance with peacetime conditions. However, the intensification of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union and the emergence of new threats made it necessary to strengthen the defense system. For this reason, emergency recovery groups were

¹⁸ Информационный сборник МПВО. № 3, 6. – Москва, 1960. – С. 18.

¹⁹ Охунжонов С. Граждан мудофааси хозирги боскичда. – Тошкент, Ўзбекистон, 1982. – Б. 4.

²⁰ Ахунджанов С., Базаров Ю. Гражданское оборона Узбекистана на современном этапе. – Ташкент: Узбекистан, 1977. – С. 11.

²¹ МВД России. Энциклопедия. Науч. ред., В.Ф.Некрасов. - Москва: Объединенная редакция МВД России, Издательский дом «ОЛМА ПРЕСС», 2002. - С.17.

²² Шойгу С. К. От МПВО к гражданской защите (исторический очерк). – Москва: «УРСС», 1998. – С. 122.

established in many cities, specializing in clearing debris, restoring buildings and infrastructure, and reestablishing the operation of municipal networks.

In addition, the Tashkent City Executive Committee introduced the posts of Deputy Head of the Shelter Service and one inspector for every 150 shelters in order to ensure systematic supervision over the condition of shelters. These measures contributed to improving the orderliness and efficiency of system management.

Nevertheless, in 1960 the transfer of headquarters structures and air defense troops to the Ministry of Defense of the Soviet Union, together with the sharp reduction of headquarters staff, had an adverse effect on the functioning of the system. As a result, management capacities for protecting the population were restricted, the activities of non-military formations nearly ceased, and the combat readiness of the local air defense system declined substantially.

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