

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
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From: Deyo, Justin A
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Subject: (AP) Thousands flee ethnic riots in Kyrgyzstan; Russia sends troops to base

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan (AP) - As minority Uzbeks flee the Central Asian nation of Kyrgyzstan by the thousands, Russia is sending in a battalion of paratroopers to protect its air base in the country. More than 100 people have been killed and about 1250 wounded in four days of ethnic violence spreading across southern Kyrgyzstan. Doctors and rights activists say the actual toll is likely far higher than that official count, because wounded Uzbeks are too afraid of being attacked again to go to hospitals. Mobs of ethnic Kyrgyz have been reportedly torching Uzbek villages and neighborhoods, slaughtering residents. Authorities in Uzbekistan says more than 75,000 refugees have fled its neighbor. Most are said to be women, children and the elderly, and many have gunshot wounds. While the Kremlin has refused Kyrgyzstan's request for military help quelling the violence, the Interfax news agency reports Russia has sent about 300 paratroopers to reinforce security at its air base. Kyrgyzstan hosts both U.S. and Russian military air bases, but they are in the north, away from the ethnic rioting.

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