



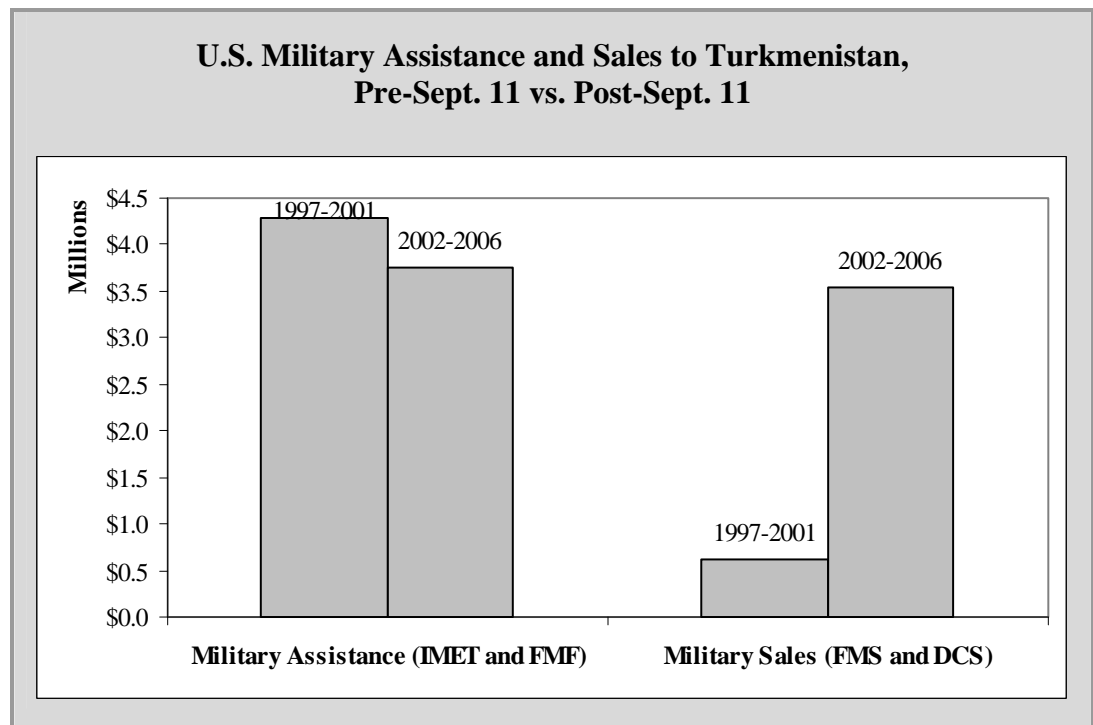
TURKMENISTAN*

Background

Turkmenistan, like many of its Central Asian neighbors, was ruled first by the Russian Empire and then by the Soviets, after the dissolution of the Russian Empire. Turkmenistan was formally incorporated into the USSR as the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic in 1925. Turkmenistan achieved independence with the collapse

of the Soviet Union in 1991 and elected the former Communist Party Chief Saparmurat Niyazov to the presidency in an uncontested election. In 1999, Turkmenistan became the only Central Asian republic to do away with presidential elections altogether, which it did through a parliamentary vote. Until his death in late 2006, Niyazov was the absolute ruler of Turkmenistan, creating a cult of personality around himself, and forbidding any dissent or debate about him or his government.

The sole political party in the country is the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (DPT), and all members of both houses of parliament are vetted by the administration. The state of parliamentary elections in Turkmenistan is such that either international observers have not been invited to witness



* Although Turkmenistan is not a formal U.S. ally in the war on terror, it is a strategic location for the ongoing Operation Enduring Freedom. Moreover, all of Turkmenistan's neighbors are key U.S. allies, placing Turkmenistan in the middle of U.S. national security interests. The death of Saparmurat Niyazov in December 2006 left a substantial opening for a warming of U.S.-Turkmen relations and an opportunity for increased military cooperation. For these reasons, Turkmenistan is included in this study.

the proceedings, or international observers have declined to participate, given the inherently undemocratic premises of the elections. The Niyazov regime consistently engaged in purges of government officials and members of the security forces suspected of opposition to the regime. An assassination attempt against Niyazov on Nov. 25, 2002, led to severe repression that particularly targeted suspected opponents of the regime.

On Dec. 21, 2006, Niyazov died unexpectedly of a heart attack, leaving the future of Turkmenistan in question. Niyazov's Deputy Prime Minister Kurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, was named the interim leader until presidential elections were held in February 2007. Berdymukhamedov won 89 percent of the vote in the elections, which were the first in nearly 20 years, and was inaugurated on Feb. 14, 2007, as Turkmenistan's second president. Only members of the late president Niyazov's ruling party were allowed to run in the February elections, creating inherently flawed elections. However, analysts are optimistic that the political repression maintained by the Niyazov regime will be relaxed during Berdymukhamedov's tenure as president.

However, during Berdymukhamedov's interim leadership, the human rights situation in Turkmenistan remained "extremely poor," according to the State Department's 2006 report on human rights practices. Security forces use torture and physical abuse against prisoners, detainees, and individuals who criticize the Niyazov government. Prison conditions are life-threatening and arbitrary arrest and detention occurs frequently. No international human rights organizations are allowed to maintain a regular presence in Turkmenistan, and the OSCE country director was denied accreditation. Turkmen citizens have no means of changing their government. The executive branch dominates both the judiciary and parliament and, until his death, Niyazov also served as chairman-for-life of the largest house in parliament. One of the few limited improvements noted by the U.S. State Department was the fact that relatives of political prisoners were not dismissed from school and work as they had been in previous years.

Political opposition remained forbidden during 2006, although Berdymukhamedov has hinted that opposition political parties may be permitted to operate in the future (Agzybirlik, the chief political opposition party, was banned in 1989). Up until the death of Niyazov, political opposition has been considered treason; citizens found to oppose the regime are subject to life imprisonment. Freedom of assembly is severely restricted – permits are needed for public meetings, yet are seldom granted. Turkmenistan effectively has no freedom of speech or of the press, as all media is state-run. Turkmenistan has no official state religion, and all religious activities are closely monitored by the government, as are the normal activities of citizens, who do not enjoy any rights of privacy. The death of Niyazov leaves the future of Turkmenistan open to speculation, as it is unclear whether Berdymukhamedov will succeed in carrying out promised reforms.

Despite possessing significant oil resources and the world's fifth largest natural gas supply, Turkmenistan remains one of the poorest countries in Central Asia. A lack of export routes for gas and oil, the inefficiency of the Soviet command economy, and misuse of export revenues by the government have meant that Turkmenistan is not profiting as much as it might be from its natural resources. Although Berdymukhamedov has spoken of introducing extensive economic and social reforms, it remains to be seen whether these promises are merely rhetoric, or the beginning of a new era for Turkmenistan. Outside of its relations based on oil and gas exports, Turkmenistan remains isolated from other regional relations. As an extension of this so-called neutrality in foreign affairs, Turkmenistan does not participate in Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) counterterrorism efforts, unlike all of its Central Asian neighbors. Turkmenistan also does not struggle with the

extremist groups that operate within the borders of neighboring countries, which can in part be attributed to the severe restrictions on speech and assembly by the government.

U.S. Military Assistance Prior to Sept. 11, 2001

Turkmenistan began receiving U.S. military assistance in 1994 and received moderate amounts of both IMET and FMF funds through 2001. Very few U.S. arms transfers were concluded with Turkmenistan between fiscal year 1991 (FY 91) and FY 01; the two exceptions were DCS transactions concluded in FY 00 totaling \$625,000, and the transfer of a Coast Guard patrol boat via the EDA program, also in FY 00.

U.S. Military Assistance since Sept. 11, 2001

Turkmenistan has remained neutral and has not formally participated in U.S. counterterrorism efforts, but it has supported the U.S. “war on terrorism” by providing non-military assistance, such as land corridor and over-flight rights for humanitarian assistance operations in Afghanistan. Because of this cooperation, and because of its own domestic struggles to eradicate terrorist networks, the U.S. State Department has considered Turkmenistan to be a “front-line state” in the “war on terrorism.”

U.S.-Turkmen relations, which were already somewhat tenuous, began to worsen after the Niyazov administration began to further infringe on its citizens’ human rights, following the November 2002 attempt to assassinate Niyazov. However, some U.S. officials see the death of Niyazov as an opening for reform and liberalization of the Turkmen government that could mark the beginning of stronger U.S.-Turkmen relations. Berdymukhamedov has indicated that Turkmenistan is interested in warmer relations between the two countries; this is likely motivated, at least in part, by a desire to develop the oil and gas resources within Turkmenistan and diversify the list of importers, which, at the moment, is dominated by Russia. The FY 08 congressional budget justification for foreign operations states that the death of Niyazov has presented the United States with, “an opportunity to turn a page in its relationship with Turkmenistan and encourage the development of a more stable, democratic, and prosperous country.”

On the whole, Turkmenistan has actually received less U.S. military assistance in the five years following Sept. 11 (FY 02-FY 06), than it did prior to Sept. 11 (FY 97-FY 01). However, Turkmenistan continued to receive IMET and FMF despite the governmental crackdown in 2002, and severely deteriorating human rights conditions that have yet to improve. Turkmenistan did conclude more arms sales with the United States after Sept. 11 than it did before, however, concluding only \$625,000 between FY 97 and FY 01, as compared with \$3.5 million between FY 02 and FY 06. These defense sales consisted largely of communications equipment and other non-lethal supplies.

Unlike many of its Central Asian neighbors, Turkmenistan is not funded under the NADR-ATA program due to a lack of formal defense cooperation with the United States. Likewise, Turkmenistan is not a beneficiary of the Regional Defense and Counterterrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP). However, the U.S. military is building two \$5 million border stations on Turkmenistan’s borders with Iran and Afghanistan in order to improve border security and fight illicit trafficking in Central Asia.

U.S. Military Assistance and Sales to Turkmenistan, FY 90 - FY 08					
	IMET	FMF	DCS	FMS	EDA
1990	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	n/a
1991	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	n/a
1992	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	n/a
1993	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
1994	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
1995	\$118,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
1996	\$213,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
1997	\$262,000	\$500,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
1998	\$336,000	\$450,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
1999	\$261,000	\$600,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
2000	\$313,000	\$600,000	\$625,000	\$0	\$575,000
2001	\$258,000	\$699,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
1990-2001	\$1,811,000	\$2,849,000	\$625,000	\$0	\$575,000
1997-2001	\$1,430,000	\$2,849,000	\$625,000	\$0	\$575,000
2002	\$388,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2003	\$216,000	\$690,000	\$0	\$1,823,000	\$0
2004	\$283,000	\$500,000	\$118,000	\$381,000	\$0
2005	\$389,000	\$694,000	\$9,000	\$236,000	\$0
2006	\$291,000	\$297,000	\$74,000	\$901,000	\$0
2002-2006	\$1,567,000	\$2,181,000	\$201,000	\$3,341,000	\$0
2007	\$395,000	\$250,000	\$7,000	\$1,000,000	\$0
2008	\$300,000	\$0	\$37,000	\$900,000	n/a

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