



POLICY

Electronics for Russian military equipment: how the Russian Federation circumvents sanctions with the help of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

June 22, 2023, 5:30 p.m

Radio Svoboda

Russia imports Western electronic equipment for its military equipment to bypass US and EU sanctions, using intermediaries - companies in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

In a new investigation, RFE/RL journalists found that during the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, despite increased American and European Union control over the export of dual-purpose technologies to the Russian Federation, Russia began using the electronics supply network of at least two Central Asian countries that are not restricted by Western sanctions.

Schemes (a RFE/RL project) received a list of Western electronic components found in Russian weapons and support systems compiled by Ukrainian intelligence for the EU. How do they get into sanctioned Russia?

Subsequently, RFE/RL journalists discovered these and other details among the array of data from the customs of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan with the help of international import-export databases ImportGenius and Sinoimex. Journalists found evidence of Western dual-use goods being shipped through these countries to Russia, including microchips, telecommunications equipment and other electronics, which the Ukrainian military found in Russian missiles, tanks, helicopters, drones and radio systems used by the Russian military in full-scale warfare. against Ukraine. And the scale of these supplies to Russia from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, according to the investigation, has increased tenfold compared to exports in previous years.

As the RFE/RL investigation revealed, Kyrgyz and Kazakh firms are involved in the deliveries, some of which were created after February 24, 2022 and have Russian roots.

Intermediaries from Kazakhstan: Russian business partners and clients in the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation and the FSB

RFE/RL journalists identified several companies in Kazakhstan that began supplying Russia with dual-use products after the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

One of them is "**EltexAlatau**". In just one day in December 2022, this Kazakh company sent to Russia more than 100 batches of dual-purpose electronics, which, according to official Kyiv, are used by Russian forces in Ukraine.

Among the goods, in particular, are the chips of the American company **Analog Devices**, which are used in the Sosna-U night vision devices - the Russian T-72B3M tanks are equipped with them. In the same month, the manufacturer "Uralvagonzavod" announced the delivery of a new batch of these tanks to the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation.

And although "**EltexAlatau**" does not indicate the recipient of parts in the Russian Federation, its official partner is the Russian company "**Eltex-MSK**", which on its official website directly names the Ministry of Defense of Russia and the FSB as its regular "clients".

Another partner of the Kazakh "**EltexAlatau**" is the Russian telecommunications equipment manufacturer "**Eltex**". One of its managers wrote in 2017 that the company implements complex projects for private and state customers, including the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. The Kazakh company also has a common shareholder with Eltex - Russian businessman **Oleksiy Chernikov**. The Kazakh company refused to comment on RFE/RL journalists' request.

Another company, Astana-based **Astaris**, established two months after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, also supplies dual-use products to Russian customers.

According to customs data, between May and September 2022, Astaris sent dozens of shipments of Western dual-use goods to Russia that fall into seven of the nine categories marked on the US sanctions list as "high priority" - due to the fact that they were found in Russian weapons used in Ukraine.

The sole owner of Astaris is an entrepreneur of Belarusian origin **Oleksandr Skorobogaty** . Radio Liberty journalists called him and asked about deliveries to Russia, but he hung up. Skorobogaty is also a co-owner of a logistics company in Smolensk, but later said in response to a request on WhatsApp that he "did not transport any items to Russia and did not bring anything from Russia."

The Russian "New Electronic Company" in Smolensk is listed as the sole recipient of supplies from Astaris . They did not answer the question whether electronic products are used in military production.

Another Kazakh company, **Elem Group** , was registered on March 14, 2022, a few weeks after Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The company is closely related to the Russian company **Streloy E-Commerce** , which since January 2012 has received at least 300 batches of electronics, including dual-purpose ones, from Elem Group.

273 consignments contained dual-use items listed on US sanctions lists as "high priority" products.

One of the founders of Elem Group, businessman from the Russian Federation **Kyrylo Tulyakov**, is the founder of the Russian company Streloy E-Commerce. Which, according to Clearspending.ru, previously supplied electronics to the Russian company "**Rusalox**" , which is **a branch of the "Rosnano"** corporation , a participant in Russian military-industrial exhibitions.

There are no Western or Ukrainian sanctions against Streloy E-Commerce, although the National Agency for Prevention of Corruption of Ukraine has called for sanctions against this Russian company and its management.

Elem Group and Streloy E-Commerce did not respond to RFE/RL's request for comment.

The fourth Kazakh firm, "**Company Electronics**" , which is related to the Russian electronics manufacturer **ITC** , also supplies parts to Russia. ITC, in turn, provides Western technologies to the Russian **Research Institute of Automation named after N. L. Dukhov** , where nuclear warheads are developed. Previously, it was also a supplier for the sanctioned Russian companies Electropribor and Aurora.

According to customs data, the Kazakh "Electronics Company" does not supply ITC parts directly, but uses a Lithuanian intermediary for this - the company OTK Group, whose owner, Jan Volk, has both **Lithuanian** and Russian citizenship, and among the shareholders there are also citizens of the Russian Federation.

In a telephone conversation with a journalist of the Kazakh service of RFE/RL, Jan Volk said that his company "can't send anything to Russia" and hung up. After that he didn't answer anymore. He did not respond to a written request sent to him on WhatsApp.

ITC did not respond to a request for comment.

From Kyrgyzstan to Russia

Two months after the beginning of the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine, a photo of the Russian BMP-1AM "Basurmanin" appeared on the streets of the city of Kupyansk in the Kharkiv region, which was then controlled by Russian troops. A few days later, a Russian propagandist published a video: a Russian armored column, consisting, among other things, of "Basurmanins", is driving along a road in the east of Ukraine.

"Basurmanin", in particular, is equipped with a tactical radio station "Aqueduct", which provides secure communication on the battlefield. Despite the fact that it is Russian-made, it widely uses electronics from American and European companies, such as **Texas Instruments**, **Atmel** and **Xilinx**. Ukrainian spies, who got into "Aqueduct", also established that in the middle of the device there is an operational amplifier manufactured by **Analog Devices** called **AD822**.

In March 2022, the Kyrgyz company **RM Design and Development** began supplying analogue amplifiers to the Russian Federation from Analog Devices. The recipient is a Russian company associated with the production of military telecommunications equipment, as evidenced by data from the ImportGenius database.

Its name is "**Microdevice**". Created shortly before February 24, 2022, it has already managed to receive from a partner from Kyrgyzstan more than 300 supplies of dual-purpose parts that are used in the military equipment of the Russian Federation and are on the US sanctions list.

The official founder of Mikropribor is the accountant **Liliya Ismagilova** , and the director is the karate instructor **Maria Fedorova** . They are not owners or managers of any other Russian companies, but RFE/RL journalists were able to establish that Fedorova worked at the Izhevsk Radio Plant (IRZ), which develops and supplies goods to the Russian army and is already under Ukrainian sanctions .

Another company that receives electrical appliances from the aforementioned Kyrgyz firm is **Region-Prof** in St. Petersburg, which has been under Ukrainian sanctions since 2019.

Previously, this company was one of the suppliers of the **Penza Research Electrotechnical Institute** , an enterprise engaged in the development of secure communication technologies for the Russian state security services.

From April to October 2022, "Region-Prof" received more than 500 batches of goods from RM Design and Development, including microcontrollers from the American company Atmel. They have already been found in Russian military equipment: combat helicopters, drones, military communication systems, etc.

The already mentioned developer of nuclear weapons, "Research Institute of Automation named after N. L. Dukhova", the investigation says, could also receive details from the Kyrgyz company through its Russian supplier - **Basis Trade Prosoft** .

Responding to RFE/RL's request, the Russian companies "Region-Prof" and "Basis Trade Prosoft", which received dual-use products from a Kyrgyz partner, denied cooperation with the Russian defense industry, but noted that Kyrgyzstan is not bound by Western sanctions.

The sole founder and shareholder of RM Design and Development is Kyrgyz businessman **Shakir Marov** . He is a partner of Bishkek businessman **Anton Ripp** , who managed the Russian company "Ryberg", which in 2022 received supplies of electronics from the mentioned firm from Kyrgyzstan. Ripp himself said in a comment to RFE/RL that he had already sold his Russian company, but did not answer questions about RM Design and Development.

Businessman Shakir Marov referred a journalist from Radio Liberty's Kyrgyz service to his other partner, **Ivan Plutytskyi** , who refused to discuss exports to Russia, saying that their firm was a "small non-public company." Shortly after the conversation, the company's website stopped working. Neither Marov nor Plutytskyi responded to written requests for comment.

What now?

EU representatives have publicly expressed concern that dual-purpose technologies exported from EU member states are actually being imported into Russia.

"We want to discuss with the authorities the implementation of a system that will allow us to check whether the goods sent from Europe to the countries of Central Asia really reach these countries of destination and do not end up in Russia," David O told RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service on March 28. **Sullivan**, the international representative of the European Union for the implementation of EU sanctions.

Officials in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have come under pressure from both Moscow and Western governments over the transfer of Western technology to Russia and expressed concern about possible secondary sanctions against them from the United States and the EU.

The United States has not imposed export restrictions on Kazakhstani companies so far, sanctions have been imposed on only one Kyrgyz company on suspicion of "providing support to Russia's military and defense sector."

Timur Suleimenov, the first deputy head of the administration of the President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, publicly stated that Kazakhstan "will not be a tool for circumventing sanctions against Russia."

"We will abide by the sanctions. Although we are part of the EEU (*Eurasian Economic Union - ed.*) along with Russia, Belarus and other countries, we are also part of the international community. Therefore, the last thing we want is secondary US and EU sanctions against Kazakhstan," said Suleymenov.

Speaking at the EU-Central Asia Summit in early June, Kyrgyz President **Sadyr Japarov** said: "We understand the concerns and requests of our European partners regarding a certain group of goods subject to sanctions, and we are ready to continue the dialogue with the EU on this issue."

Meanwhile, exports of Western dual-use electronics continue to flow to Russia from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. RFE/RL reached out to the administrations of the presidents of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan for comment, but did not receive a response by the time the investigation was published.

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