

CIVIL DEFENSE SYSTEM IN UZBEKISTAN DURING THE EARLY YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE (1991–1996)

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Abstract

This article analyzes the stages of development of the civil defense system in Uzbekistan during 1991–1996 based on historical sources. In the first years of independence, the increase in natural and technological emergencies required the creation of new state management mechanisms. Major disasters, including the 1991 Jigariston landslide, mudflows, and floods, demonstrated the need to improve national preparedness for emergencies. During this period, emergency commissions, civil defense headquarters, and operative management bodies were established. Government resolutions adopted in 1992–1996 were aimed at protecting the population, developing monitoring systems, improving evacuation measures, and ensuring regional security. These reforms became an important foundation for the later establishment of a modern emergency management system in Uzbekistan.

Keywords

civil defense, emergency situation, Uzbekistan, independence period, Jigariston landslide, mudflow, flood, evacuation, security, monitoring, state management, emergency commission, disaster response, population protection, natural disaster, technological hazard, rescue operations, regional security, government resolution, institutional reform

In the 1990s, international restrictions on the use of biological weapons were introduced, and the risk of nuclear war in the world declined sharply. At the same time, the emergence of new technological weapons designed not to directly harm human health, but to disable economic and industrial facilities, was observed. These developments created the need to improve the civil defense system and to establish a new specialized state system based on a comprehensive approach.

According to statistical data, while 1.6 percent of the world's population suffered from natural disasters, accidents, and catastrophes in the 1960s, by the 1990s this figure had risen to 3.5 percent. This confirms the necessity of

modernizing security systems and ensuring thorough preparedness for emergencies that may arise in peacetime⁷.

The new system intended to replace civil defense was required not only to carry out rescue operations, but also to perform comprehensive tasks such as mapping hazardous areas, constructing seismically resistant facilities, conducting short-, medium-, and long-term monitoring activities, and ensuring public preparedness for emergencies.

Taking this necessity into account, significant institutional reforms were implemented in order to strengthen the protection of the population under extreme peacetime conditions, in accordance with the Law “On Improving the Structure of Executive and Administrative Authorities in the Uzbek SSR and Introducing Amendments and Additions to the Constitution of the Uzbek SSR”⁸.

In particular, pursuant to a resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers under the President of the Uzbek SSR, the Commission for Emergency Situations under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR was incorporated into the structure of the Cabinet of Ministers under the President. In addition, commissions for emergency situations were established within the Council of Ministers of the Karakalpak ASSR, regional executive committees, and the Executive Committee of the city of Tashkent.

Furthermore, sectoral and facility-level commissions were created within ministries, agencies, state committees, concerns, and associations that operated major technically hazardous facilities across the republic. I. Jo‘rabekov, First Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers under the President of the Uzbek SSR, was appointed Head of Civil Defense and Chairman of the Commission for Emergency Situations⁹. The Civil Defense Headquarters of Uzbekistan was entrusted with the tasks of improving the qualifications of managerial specialists responsible for emergency response and disaster recovery, as well as organizing and enhancing public preparedness for action during emergencies.

The severe hydrometeorological processes observed across the territory of Uzbekistan during the second and third ten-day periods of May 1991 became one of the most significant periods of natural disasters in the republic’s history. During

⁷ Джурабеков И. Первый заместитель Премьер-министра, Председатель Комиссии Кабинета Министров Республики Узбекистан по чрезвычайным ситуациям. Детальный национальный отчёт Республики Узбекистан, подготовленный для среднесрочного обзора МДУОСБ и Всемирной конвенции по уменьшению опасности стихийных бедствий 1994 года.

⁸ O‘zbekiston Sovet Sotsialistik Jumhuriyatining 1990-yil 1-noyabrdagi “O‘zbekiston SSRda ijroiya va boshqaruv hokimiyatining tuzilishini takomillashtirish hamda O‘zbekiston SSR Konstitutsiyasi (asosiy qonuni) ga o‘zgartish va qo‘shimchalar kiritish to‘g‘risida” 156-XII-son Qonuni. O‘zbekiston Sovet Sotsialistik Respublikasi Oliy Sovetining Vedomostlari, 1990-y., 31—33-son.

⁹ O‘zbekiston SSJ Prezidenti huzuridagi Vazirlar Mahkamasining 1991-yil 17-aprel kunidagi “O‘zbekiston SSJ Vazirlar Mahkamasining favqulodda vaziyatlar bo‘yicha Komissiyasini O‘zbekiston SSJ Prezidenti huzuridagi Vazirlar Mahkamasining favqulodda vaziyatlar bo‘yicha Komissiyasiga aylantirish haqida” gi 103-son qarori.

this time, heavy rainfall, mudflows, and storm winds occurred in the Karakalpak ASSR, as well as in the Bukhara, Jizzakh, Kashkadarya, Namangan, Samarkand, Syrdarya, Khorezm regions, and other areas, causing large-scale socio-economic consequences.

As a result of these natural disasters, substantial material damage was inflicted on the living conditions of the population and on the national economy of the republic. The agricultural sector suffered particularly severe losses: cotton fields and other agricultural crops over vast areas were damaged, while orchards and vineyards were destroyed, negatively affecting food security and the raw material base. This clearly demonstrated the vulnerability of the economic system, which at that time was highly dependent on the agrarian sector, to natural hazards.

In addition, residential buildings, хозяйственные сооружения, socially significant facilities, and production infrastructure in a number of cities and rural settlements were destroyed or seriously damaged. Damage to the infrastructure of collective and state farms disrupted labor processes and caused problems in employment and the social welfare system.

On 4 May 1991, at approximately 6:45 a.m., a major natural disaster—a mountain landslide—occurred in the village of Jigariston near the city of Angren in Tashkent Region. As a result of heavy rainfall, increased water flows in the mountainous area, and seismic impacts, a massive volume of soil slid toward the settlement located at the foot of the mountain. Consequently, many residential houses in the village were buried under layers of earth exceeding 10 meters in thickness, resulting in severe human casualties and material losses.

Because the landslide occurred within an extremely short period of time, the population did not have sufficient time to prepare for the emergency. Numerous houses, farm buildings, roads, and engineering-utility networks were destroyed. Initial rescue operations were carried out by surviving residents themselves, who managed to pull children, women, and elderly people from partially destroyed houses and piles of soil. The injured were transported to hospitals in the city of Angren.

This tragedy is regarded as an emergency that could have been forecast in advance. Nearly twenty years earlier, the territory of Jigariston village had already been identified as a landslide-prone area, and residents had repeatedly been warned about the necessity of relocation. Nevertheless, continued residence in the hazardous zone, along with the failure to implement preventive and engineering protection measures in a timely manner, led to the severe consequences of the disaster¹⁰.

¹⁰ Xalq so'zi gazetasi. 1991-yil 7-may, 85-son, 2-bet.

On the day the disaster occurred, the leadership of the republic established a special government commission and an operative headquarters in order to determine the causes of the emergency and eliminate its consequences¹¹. Measures were taken to provide the affected population with food, temporary shelter, and medical assistance. Special equipment and transport vehicles were mobilized for the urgent evacuation of residents from the hazardous area.

Civil defense units, special rescue detachments, military personnel, and specialists brought in from the cities of Angren, Chirchiq, and Olmaliq participated in the rescue operations. Workers from nearby industrial facilities, including mining areas, were also mobilized to assist. At the same time, particular attention was paid to engineering and technical safety measures, taking into account the possibility of repeated landslides.

The state allocated financial assistance in order to provide social protection for the affected population. In particular, monetary compensation was granted to affected families, ready housing in the city of Angren was allocated for 50 families, and some families were provided with agricultural land plots. Measures were also taken to place children in summer camps and sanatoriums for rehabilitation and psychological recovery. On 6 May 1991, a day of mourning was declared in the Uzbek SSR.

This landslide clearly demonstrated the necessity of improving the emergency management system in Uzbekistan, monitoring hazardous natural processes, relocating populations in advance, constructing engineering protection facilities, and establishing coordinated management mechanisms among state authorities. The Jigariston tragedy later served as an important historical experience in forming a centralized emergency management system in the republic, including the scientific, legal, and organizational foundations for the future activities of the Ministry of Emergency Situations.

In order to eliminate in a short period the consequences of the large-scale natural disasters that occurred in the territory of Uzbekistan in May 1991, as well as to provide state support to collective farms, state farms, industrial enterprises, organizations, and the directly affected population, financial measures were undertaken by the central authorities. In particular, pursuant to Resolution No. 317 of the Council of Ministers of the USSR dated 31 May 1991, additional financial resources were allocated to the Uzbek SSR for the year 1991¹².

Within the framework of this resolution, a total of 380 million rubles was allocated to the republic, the majority of which was directed toward the restoration

¹¹ Xalq so'zi gazetasi. 1991-yil 7-may, 85-son, 1-bet.

¹² Xalq so'zi gazetasi 1991-yil 22-may, 95-son, 1-bet.

of production and non-production infrastructure. In particular, 290 million rubles was designated to finance construction and installation works for the erection of new facilities in place of destroyed ones, as well as for the reconstruction of existing buildings. This contributed to the rapid restoration of regional infrastructure disrupted as a result of the natural disasters¹³.

At the same time, 80 million rubles was allocated for repair and restoration work at facilities damaged by the natural disaster. In order to ensure the social protection of the population, targeted cash benefits amounting to 51 million rubles were designated. In addition, 100 million rubles was allocated for the payment of insurance compensation to provide material support to residents whose homes had been damaged or destroyed.

These financial measures reflect the direct involvement of the state in eliminating the consequences of emergencies within the framework of the centralized administrative system in the early 1990s. At the same time, this resolution is regarded as an important historical stage in the formation of mechanisms for combating natural disasters, restoring infrastructure, and providing social protection to the population in the territory of Uzbekistan. It also served as valuable experience for the later development of the civil protection and emergency management system during the years of independence.

Within the framework of this government resolution, a set of financial and organizational measures aimed at eliminating the consequences of the 1991 natural disasters was established. In particular, insurance institutions and banking-financial bodies at both the republican and union levels were actively involved in order to ensure the continuity of agricultural production.

According to the resolution, 100 million rubles in non-repayable loans was to be allocated to the organs of Uzgosstrakh from the inter-republican insurance reserve fund administered by the USSR State Insurance Committee (Gosstrakh). These funds were directed toward covering the actual costs of replanting agricultural crops incurred by collective farms, state farms, and other agricultural enterprises. This measure helped prevent the disruption of production processes in the agrarian sector.

At the same time, in order to ensure the financial stability of the republican insurance system, the Board of the USSR State Insurance Committee (Gosstrakh) was authorized to write off Uzgosstrakh's debt of 110 million rubles on repayable loans at the expense of the inter-republican insurance reserve fund under its

¹³ O'zbekiston SSJ Prezidenti huzuridagi Vazirlar Mahkamasining 1991-yil 21-iyundagi "O'zbekiston SSJ nohiyalarida tabiiy ofat oqibatlarini tugatishda yordam ko'rsatish to'g'risida"gi 167-son qarori.

administration. This decision was aimed at easing the burden placed on the republic's financial institutions under emergency conditions.

The resolution also recommended that the USSR State Bank (Gosbank) consider the request of the Government of the Uzbek SSR to provide long-term loans to agricultural enterprises on preferential terms. It was envisaged that these loans would be issued through the republican Agroprombank, making this measure an important instrument of financial support for agricultural production.

In addition, extra material and technical resources were allocated in 1991 to carry out work aimed at eliminating the consequences of the natural disaster. At the same time, food products, construction materials, and consumer goods were supplied to the population of the affected areas, and their distribution through sale to residents was organized. These measures were intended to preserve social stability and satisfy the basic needs of the population under emergency conditions.

Overall, this resolution clearly reflects the coordinated use of financial, insurance, and banking mechanisms employed within the framework of the centralized Soviet administrative system in the early 1990s to mitigate the consequences of natural disasters. At the same time, it served as an important historical experience in shaping subsequent policies in Uzbekistan aimed at combating emergencies and restoring the agricultural and social sectors. In the early 1990s, a significant increase was observed not only in the number of natural emergencies, but also in emergencies of a technological nature and in their level of risk. This created the need to ensure public safety, improve preparedness for emergencies, and introduce modern management mechanisms. Proceeding from this necessity, in 1992 the Directorate for Civil Defense and Emergency Situations, as well as the Civil Defense Headquarters, were established under the Ministry of Defense Affairs. The authorized staffing level of the Civil Defense Headquarters of the Republic of Uzbekistan was set at 156 personnel.

The functions and activities of the Directorate for Civil Defense and Emergency Situations included the development of forecasts and long-term projects for organizing and implementing civil defense at the republican level in both peacetime and wartime, the formation, strengthening, and consistent development of the material and technical base of the civil defense system, as well as ensuring that civil defense forces and resources remained in a constant state of combat and operational readiness in the event of emergencies¹⁴. These structures played an important role in ensuring public safety, particularly in coordinating the actions of state authorities during emergency situations.

¹⁴ Vatanpavar gazetasi 1996-yil 5-mart, 28 (667)-son, 1-varaq.

In the first years of independence, a sharp increase in precipitation across the republic, together with the intensification of mudflow and flood processes, led to the emergence of an emergency hydrometeorological situation in Uzbekistan. According to forecasts of the hydrometeorological service, there was a high risk of major mudflows and floods in the river basins of Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya, Chirchiq, Ohangaron, Sanzar, Zarafshan, and Shohimardon, as well as in the right-bank tributaries of the Syrdarya located in Namangan Region.

In order to prevent the above-mentioned threats and to protect settlements, engineering and technical infrastructure, transport routes, and agricultural lands, Resolution No. 209 of the Cabinet of Ministers under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 28 April 1992, "On the Establishment of an Emergency Flood Control Commission," was adopted. The commission established under this resolution included government leaders and heads of the principal ministries and agencies, as well as representatives of the transport, energy, agriculture, healthcare, internal affairs, insurance, and hydrometeorological sectors. This demonstrates the formation of an intersectoral coordination mechanism in emergency management.

The resolution assigned responsibility for ensuring the safe passage of mudflow and floodwaters to the relevant ministries and agencies, and provided for the establishment of round-the-clock operational civil defense headquarters at both republican and territorial levels. Permanent duty services were introduced in hazardous areas, and the necessary reserves of material and technical resources were created. Timely warning of the population and temporary evacuation when necessary were designated as priority tasks of the civil defense authorities¹⁵.

Overall, this resolution represented an important stage in Uzbekistan's transition toward a centralized, rapid, and coordinated management model in the field of reducing the risk of natural disasters. It subsequently served as a foundation for the establishment of permanent emergency institutions and the formation of state policy in this sphere.

In the first years of independence, the state authorities of the republic gained a certain degree of organizational experience in preventing natural disasters and eliminating their consequences. In order to intensify these efforts, on 12 April 1994 the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted Resolution No. 201 "On Measures for the Prevention and Elimination of Catastrophic Consequences Associated with Floods, Mudflows, and Landslides."

¹⁵ O'zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidenti huzuridagi Vazirlar Mahkamasining 1992-yil 28-apreldagi "Favqulodda suv toshqiniga qarshi komissiya tuzish to'g'risida" gi 209-son Qarori.

On the basis of this resolution, civil defense units and rapid response forces were established, territorial structures were formed in the regions, and flood control commissions began to operate¹⁶.

At the same time, mudflows, floods, and landslides caused major material damage every year and, in some cases, resulted in human casualties. This situation demonstrated the lack of consistency and coordination in natural disaster management, while the measures undertaken were largely periodic and reactive in nature. In particular, the continued disorderly construction in hazardous zones placed hundreds of settlements and economic facilities at risk.

The warming of climatic conditions and the increase in precipitation intensified mudflow, flood, and landslide processes, further complicating the situation. The institutional fragmentation of monitoring and warning services also emerged as a factor that increased existing risks.

Under these circumstances, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted a set of comprehensive measures aimed at preventing natural disasters and reducing their consequences. The personal responsibility of regional, city, and district administrations, as well as heads of ministries, was strengthened, while special attention was given to coordinating the activities of the water management, geology, and hydrometeorological services. Improving mechanisms for public protection, identifying hazardous zones, and carrying out evacuation when necessary were designated as priority tasks. For example, in 1996, 278 households were relocated from areas subject to evacuation in Tashkent Region, while in 1997 this figure reached 914 households moved to safe locations¹⁷.

Overall, these resolutions represented an important historical stage in the formation of the emergency management system in Uzbekistan and created the institutional foundations for subsequent policies in the field of civil protection and natural disaster risk reduction.

In conclusion, the years 1991–1996 marked a new phase in the formation and improvement of the civil defense system in Uzbekistan. The natural and technological emergencies that occurred in the first years of independence created the necessity for a fundamental reform of the existing management system. In particular, the 1991 Jigariston landslide, as well as mudflows and floods, demonstrated the need to establish effective mechanisms for the prompt response of state authorities, the protection of the population, and the elimination of disaster consequences.

¹⁶ O‘zMA, M 37-fond, 1-ro‘yxat, 1915-ish, 36-varaq.

¹⁷ O‘zMA, M 37-fond, 1-ro‘yxat, 1914-ish, 25-varaq.

During this period, commissions on emergency situations, civil defense headquarters, operational management structures, and territorial services were established. On the basis of government resolutions, important organizational and legal foundations were created for monitoring, warning systems, evacuation, rescue, and recovery operations. This contributed to the formation of a centralized and coordinated system of emergency management.

Thus, the reforms implemented in 1991–1996 created the institutional foundation of the modern civil protection system in Uzbekistan and served as an important historical basis for the subsequent establishment of the Ministry of Emergency Situations.

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