

## THE ROLE OF CIVIL DEFENSE IN ENSURING THE STATE DEFENSE CAPACITY DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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**Annotation.** *This article examines the formation, institutional development, and practical activities of the local air defense system in Uzbekistan during the Second World War, based on archival sources and historical materials. The study analyzes the organization of civilian protection against air and chemical attacks, the establishment of self-defense groups, the development of sanitary squads, and the implementation of mass training programs between 1941 and 1945. Particular attention is given to the evacuation and accommodation of displaced populations, measures to combat infectious diseases, the training of medical personnel, and efforts aimed at strengthening defense infrastructure.*

*The article also explores the cooperation between the local air defense system and the armed forces, the experience of large-scale public mobilization, and the system's role in post-war reconstruction. It concludes that the local air defense structure evolved beyond its initial local framework and became a nationwide mechanism for protecting the rear, forming an essential component of the state's defense capacity.*

**Keywords:** *Second World War, Uzbekistan, local air defense, civil defense, mass mobilization, sanitary squads, evacuation, defense infrastructure, military cooperation, post-war reconstruction.*

On 22 June 1941, the German invasion of the Soviet Union placed the country's political, military, and economic potential under severe strain. From the very first days of the war, the Soviet government adopted urgent measures aimed at mobilizing internal resources and ensuring the protection of the population and key economic facilities against air and chemical attacks.

On 1 July 1941, the Executive Committee of Tashkent Region reviewed the issue of strengthening urban and regional air defense and adopted a resolution to establish a specialized training and chemical testing ground [1]. This measure was aimed at providing practical training for the population and employees of industrial and national economic facilities to act effectively under conditions of air and chemical attacks.

In accordance with the government decree of 2 July 1941, a system of compulsory training for the protection of the population against air and chemical attacks was introduced in the Uzbek SSR. Under this resolution, local air defense headquarters organized systematic instruction for civilians in the use of personal protective equipment and appropriate conduct under conditions of chemical threat. At the same time, individuals aged 16 to 60 were involved in general civil defense training, while those aged 8 to 16 received basic protective instruction [2].

According to press reports, within the territory of Uzbekistan, the local air defense system and the Society for the Promotion of Defense, Aviation, and Chemical Construction trained 4.5 million citizens under a 28-hour “Chemical Air Defense” program, while more than 151,000 individuals completed an extended 40-hour course. These participants received initial practical training within self-protection groups.

These measures demonstrated the significant contribution of Uzbekistan’s population and civil defense system to strengthening the country’s defense capacity during the Second World War. To ensure the implementation of the decree, reserve commanders were mobilized, and specialized schools were established in various regions to train instructors and leaders for self-defense groups [3].

On 3 July 1941, a statement published in Pravda emphasized that the threat posed by enemy aviation extended to rear areas and underscored the necessity of maintaining constant vigilance and preparedness for air and chemical defense among the population [4]. During the war years, systematic and large-scale training initiatives were implemented across the republic to enhance civilian preparedness for emergency situations. A 28-hour “Chemical Air Defense” program was introduced for the general population, while a 40-hour course was established for community-based instructors. Self-defense groups operated actively within the air defense system and were supplied with essential technical equipment, including gas masks, to strengthen their operational capacity. The active participation of women in this process was recognized, and distinguished participants were duly rewarded[5].

According to archival sources, as of 26 July 1941, thousands of self-defense groups had been established across the republic, and in the early years of the war their total number reached 6,572. These figures indicate that the system of preparing the population for emergency situations was implemented on a broad and centralized basis [6]. The effective performance of self-defense groups was clearly demonstrated in the case of 203 Injenernaya Street, Oktyabr District, Tashkent. The activities of the group leader, E. Kondratyuk, were officially recognized by the relevant public organization [7]. Self-defense groups reinforced their theoretical knowledge through practical training exercises conducted at the republican level and began to apply their skills effectively in practice. In particular, the exercises held in Bukhara on 5–6 July 1941 represented a significant stage in this process [8]. During the exercises, simulated air raids and the dropping of high-explosive bombs were staged, along with practical demonstrations of firefighting and rescue-and-recovery operations. Such training activities were systematically organized across the republic in collective farms, educational institutions, and industrial enterprises.

As a result, self-defense groups acquired not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills, achieving a comprehensive level of preparedness. This significantly enhanced their functional effectiveness under emergency conditions. On 15 September 1941, the Executive Committee of Tashkent reviewed the issue of completing the construction of district command posts for local air defense. Following the meeting, a resolution was adopted to finalize and fully equip all command posts with the necessary communication facilities by 25 October 1941[10].

On 19 September 1941, a meeting of military administrative authorities in Tashkent addressed the issue of strengthening collective protection measures for the population and

adopted an appropriate resolution. In accordance with this decision, all national economic commissariats and enterprise managers were instructed to develop concrete action plans by 25 September 1941 to provide workers engaged in major production shifts with secure shelters.

Additionally, it was planned to establish 90 demonstration training sites across the city of Tashkent to enhance the population's preparedness for air raids [11]. This resolution reflects a comprehensive set of measures aimed at protecting urban populations from the threat of air raids during the Second World War. The establishment of secure shelters for workers ensured their safety within the production process while simultaneously preserving labor productivity and maintaining the uninterrupted operation of strategically important industrial facilities. On 10 October 1941, the Executive Committee of Tashkent allocated funds for equipping shelters at Schools No. 1 and No. 152. Simultaneously, thousands of air and chemical defense circles were established in enterprises, institutions, collective farms, households, and educational establishments across both urban and rural areas.

Higher education institutions were actively involved in the process of training the population. In particular, students of the Chemistry Faculty of the Central Asian State University conducted instructional sessions on chemical defense for civilians. Faculty members and students of the Tashkent Institute for Advanced Training of Pedagogical Personnel, as well as numerous teachers from schools in the Frunze District, volunteered to serve as instructors in chemical defense. Additionally, 100 employees of the Tashkent Medical Institute were trained in sanitary defense and appointed as leaders of air and chemical defense circles [12]. Thus, mass propaganda and outreach activities aimed at enhancing public preparedness for emergency situations were widely implemented across the republic, involving tens of thousands of agitators. According to available sources, more than 2,000 propagandists operated in the Khorezm region alone, contributing to broad public participation in defense-related measures [13].

According to archival data, between 1941 and 1943 more than 7,000 lectures and discussions dedicated to air and chemical defense were conducted across the republic. In addition, 1,900 practical training sessions involving 160,000 participants were organized, and specialized instructional films were shown to 63,000 individuals [14].

In October 1941, local air defense headquarters were established in the cities of Samarkand, Fergana, Bukhara, and Termez, and in May 1942 similar structures were formed in the Karakalpak ASSR [15]. These headquarters played a significant role in strengthening the institutional framework of the territorial defense system.

On 12 May 1942, the republican government and military administrative authorities adopted a resolution to establish local air defense headquarters, initiating the formation of these structures across the regions. In particular, by Resolution No. 162 of 9 July 1942, the Samarkand Regional Executive Committee established a local air defense headquarters under its authority. This development demonstrates the institutionalization of regional defense administration [16].

By a resolution of the Government of the Karakalpak ASSR dated 28 September 1942, a local air defense headquarters was established under the republican government. However, analysis indicates that only the head of the headquarters and his deputy held permanent

positions, while the remaining personnel operated on a temporary basis. This suggests that the administrative structure had not yet been fully institutionalized [17].

According to archival data, in 1942 the republican budget allocated 791,000 rubles for the construction of a local air defense command post in Tashkent. This allocation represents a practical measure aimed at strengthening the defense infrastructure [18]. In accordance with wartime requirements, the staffing structure of local air defense headquarters was approved in 1942. As a result, 15 personnel were assigned in Tashkent, 42 across six district-cities, 5 in Samarkand, 12 in three urban districts, and 6 in Fergana [19]. These staffing allocations facilitated the systematic and effective implementation of tasks related to preparing cities for local air defense.

According to archival data, in 1943 the republican budget allocated 1,187 thousand rubles for the construction of a local air defense command post in Samarkand. This allocation constituted a significant practical measure aimed at strengthening the city's defense infrastructure under wartime conditions [20]. In 1943, 2,290 thousand rubles were allocated to strengthen local air defense activities, of which 600 thousand rubles were directed toward the development of specialized courses in Tashkent. These funds contributed to reinforcing the republic's defense capacity during the war years.

In accordance with the decree "On Mandatory Training of the Population for Air Defense," it was planned to train 4,621,362 individuals across the republic. As of 31 December 1942, 96.8% of the target had been fulfilled, with 4,472,266 persons having completed the training. Of these, 1,111,475 were children aged 8 to 16 [21]. These indicators demonstrate the strategic importance of the broad involvement of the younger generation in defense training. Such participation contributed not only to the sustainability of the military and civil defense system but also to enhancing the effectiveness of defense measures at the regional level. From 20 March 1943, specialized 45-day training courses for commanders of the republican local air defense were launched in Tashkent [22]. In the early years of the war, approximately 4.5 million individuals were trained through schools and defense circles within the framework of the air defense system, and 6,572 self-defense groups were established.

According to archival data, during the Second World War thousands of nurses were trained in the republic, along with nearly 23,000 sanitary squads, 1,150 sanitary instructors, and 13,682 medical orderlies. In addition, the number of recipients of the "Ready for Sanitary Defense" badge reached 150,000 [23].

During the Second World War, thousands of elderly people and children were evacuated to Uzbekistan. Local air defense headquarters, public health authorities, and the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan actively participated in their reception and accommodation. The situation necessitated the timely provision of medical assistance and the strengthening of sanitary and hygienic measures, particularly for children. To this end, a 25-member sanitary unit was established at the Tashkent railway station, and 40 medical orderlies from the railway system were mobilized. Additionally, 907 soldiers and activists were involved in accommodating evacuees. Special brigades were also formed at major railway stations, including Tashkent, Aris, Ursatyevskaya, Samarkand, and Andijan, to provide services for

evacuated populations [24]. Due to the growing demand for medical personnel at both the front and in the rear, a resolution was adopted on 5 July 1941 to establish nursing courses within military sanitary institutions. The Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan organized short-term nursing courses with a total capacity of 1,155 places.

These courses lasted from two to six months and were conducted in Tashkent (630), Samarkand (140), Fergana (175), Namangan (35), Andijan (35), Bukhara (40), Urgench (35), and Turtkul (35) [25].

Across the republic, sanitary squads were established at national economic enterprises on the initiative of patriotic citizens, and their systematic training was organized. For instance, Dr. V. Rubayeva, as a member of a sanitary squad, provided medical assistance while also participating in blood donation activities.

In July 1941, 74 young women took part in a blood donation campaign held at the M. Gorky Factory in Tashkent. This initiative became an important step in promoting donor engagement among sanitary personnel and strengthening wartime medical support [26]. Women, housewives, and students were widely involved in the activities of the Red Crescent Society, seeking to acquire nursing qualifications in order to serve at the front and in field hospitals. This process reflected the nationwide mobilization of the population of Uzbekistan in support of the war effort and the pursuit of victory [27].

According to available data, the spread of infectious diseases intensified in certain regions of the republic in 1942. In Namangan region alone, 3,241 cases of epidemic typhus, 1,147 cases of dysentery, and 770 cases of typhoid fever were recorded. Among children, cases of whooping cough (523), toxic dyspepsia (387), measles (405), diphtheria (103), and meningitis (20) were identified [28]. Sanitary squads actively cooperated with medical professionals in identifying and combating infectious diseases. For this purpose, 10-member brigades were formed within medical districts across the republic. In total, 425 brigades comprising 4,291 members identified 412 cases of disease [29].

According to archival data, in 1942 a total of 3,269 evacuees, including children, were engaged in work activities. Of these, 422 served as members of sanitary squads, 201 as sanitary guards, and 2,646 as other active personnel.

As a result of these efforts, 17,935 individuals underwent sanitary procedures, and 5,895 evacuated families received medical examinations. Additionally, 309 cases of illness were identified, 151 individuals were provided with first aid, and 1,000 citizens were vaccinated [30].

In accordance with the decree of the Government of Uzbekistan dated 1 April 1943, local air defense headquarters in several regions, as well as the headquarters under the Central Committee of the Karakalpak ASSR, were reduced, and the headquarters in the cities of Bukhara, Termez, Chirchik, Yangiyol, Qarshi, Kattakurgan, Namangan, Kokand, and Andijan were dissolved.

At the same time, the personnel of the local air defense system contributed to strengthening national defense and the combat capacity of the army not only through dedicated service but also through personal financial contributions. They actively participated in fundraising efforts for the establishment of tank columns and air squadrons [31]. In Tashkent, funds collected by the personnel and commanders of local air defense formations were used to

construct the “Tashkent Local Air Defense” tank column, which was subsequently transferred to the army.

In addition, the staff and units contributed 115,912 rubles in cash and government bonds valued at 1,166,445 rubles to the Defense Fund. In recognition of this dedication, a telegram of gratitude was sent to the leadership of the Tashkent local air defense [32].

Personnel and commanders trained in local air defense schools in Uzbekistan demonstrated notable bravery on the fronts of the Second World War. During the war years, the republic prioritized supplying the front with military equipment, weapons, aviation assets, and food, while simultaneously ensuring the protection of the population and national economic facilities.

This experience confirmed the importance of expanding cooperation between the local air defense system and the armed forces, as well as involving all able-bodied citizens in defense measures. The system of training engineering, technical, and construction specialists proved effective both during the war and in the post-war reconstruction period.

Pursuant to the decree of 21 August 1943, large-scale emergency restoration work was carried out in liberated territories, resulting in the reconstruction of thousands of kilometers of engineering networks, roads, and bridges, hundreds of industrial enterprises, and tens of thousands of buildings and residential houses. This process clearly demonstrates that the local air defense system played a significant role not only during the war but also in the post-war recovery phase [32].

In conclusion, during the Second World War, the air defense and local air defense forces evolved into a large-scale militarized system that played a crucial role in preserving the functioning of cities and rural areas. In particular, the local air defense system demonstrated high effectiveness by relying on broad public participation, preventing the implementation of destructive enemy plans in well-organized regions.

By the end of the war, this system assumed a significant role in the reconstruction of devastated cities, the fulfillment of military and economic tasks, and the protection of liberated territories. Consequently, the local air defense system transcended its initial local framework and developed into a nationwide mechanism for protecting the rear, becoming an essential component of the state’s defense capacity and an integral part of the Armed Forces structure.

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