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The History of Central Asian Peacekeepers: The Development of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan's Peacekeeping Units by Fits and Starts

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Previous Publication: This paper was originally published in the Journal of Slavic Military Studies, April 2018, Volume 31, No. 2. It is being posted on the Foreign Military Studies Office website with permission from this publisher.

FMSO has provided some editing, format, and graphics to this paper to conform to organizational standards. Academic conventions, source referencing, and citation style are those of the author.

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the history of the Central Asian Armed Forces' involvement with peacekeeping and their current efforts to build peacekeeping units. The governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan have had an interest in taking part in international peacekeeping missions, and NATO has provided security assistance to each to develop a peacekeeping unit. These units have been working on becoming interoperable with NATO forces with the goal of deploying on an international peacekeeping mission. An examination of the development of Central Asian peacekeeping units gives some idea of what these governments look for in security cooperation partnerships, when these units might deploy on a peacekeeping mission, and the impact this could have for the governments and armed forces of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

Introduction

The history of the Central Asian Armed Forces' involvement with peacekeeping dates back to the Tajik Civil War in the 1990s, when Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan deployed units as part of the Russian-led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Peacekeeping Force. In the years since then, the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan have had an interest in taking part in international peacekeeping missions, and NATO has provided security assistance to each to develop a peacekeeping unit. These units have been working on becoming interoperable with NATO forces with the goal of deploying on an international peacekeeping mission. An examination of the development of Central

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Asian peacekeeping units shows when these units might deploy on a peacekeeping mission and what impact this could have for security cooperation partnerships for the governments and armed forces of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

Background: The CIS Peacekeeping Force and the Central Asian Battalion

When the Civil War in Tajikistan began in 1992, the governments of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan believed that the conflict was a threat to the CIS. When fighting in Tajikistan broke out, the Russian 201st Motorized Rifle Division and detachments of the Russian Border Guards Service were garrisoned in different parts of the country with the latter along the Tajik-Afghan border. The CIS decided to deploy a peacekeeping force made up of units from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan to support the Russian 201st and the Border Guards already in country.¹

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan deployed units to Tajikistan in 1993, and each was tasked with a section of the Tajik-Afghan border, flanked by Russian units. Even before the deployment, Uzbekistan's Armed Forces provided support to pro-government units of Tajikistan, and this often took place alongside Russian forces.² Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan each contributed a battalion with an estimated 500 personnel to the peacekeeping force, while Uzbekistan contributed a battalion of unknown strength. The deployments of soldiers in the Kazakh and Kyrgyz battalions lasted around six to seventh months.³ Kazakhstan's battalion included soldiers from the 35th Air Assault Brigade, an Interior Ministry unit, and a contingent from the Border Guards, deployed in an area east of the town of Qalai Khum (Gorno-Badakhshan). An estimated 43 members of the Kazakh battalion were killed in action, 17 of whom were killed in an ambush in the Pshikharv Valley on 7 April 1995.⁴ Kyrgyzstan's battalion included soldiers from a motorized rifle brigade from Osh, deployed in an area south of the city of Khorog (Gorno-Badakhshan).⁵

¹A.S. Serrano, 'CIS Peacekeeping in Tajikistan', in J. Mackinlay and P. Cross (eds.), *Regional Peacekeepers: The Paradox of Russian Peacekeeping*, United Nations University Press, Tokyo, 2003, pp. 156–183.

²Ibid.

³G. Bolshega, 'Мы помним тебя, Таджикистан' [We Remember You, Tajikistan], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (17 August 2012) http://nvo.ng.ru/gpolit/2012-08-17/1_tajikistan.html (accessed 30 November 2016).

⁴M. Kurbanova, 'Бесстрашный казбат: История казахстанских миротворцев в Таджикистане' [Fearless Kazbat: The History of Kazakhstan's Peacekeepers in Tajikistan], *Asia-Plus* (8 May 2015) <http://news.tj/ru/news/besstrashnyi-kazbat-istoriya-kazahstanskikh-mirotvortsev-v-tadzhikistane> (accessed 30 November 2016); N. Bulanova, 'Первый солдат Президента Назарбаева' [The First Soldier of President Nazarbayev], *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* (31 October 2015) <http://www.kazpravda.kz/interviews/view/pervii-soldat-prezidenta-nazarbaeva1/> (accessed 30 November 2016); E. Musabekov, 'История создания Аэромобильных войск Республики Казахстан' [The History of the Formation of the Airmobile Force of the Republic of Kazakhstan], *Desantura.ru* (1 June 2008) http://desantura.ru/articles/23/?SHOWALL_1=1 (accessed 30 November 2016).

⁵Z. Ibrayev, 'Кыргызская военная миссия на афганской границе' [The Kyrgyz Combat Mission on the Afghan Border], *K News* (23 February 2014) <http://knews.kg/2014/02/kyrgyzskaya-voennaya-missiya-na-afganskoy-granitse/> (accessed 30 November 2016).

Uzbekistan's battalion deployed near the city Shahrtuz, and Uzbek forces took part in operations in Tajikistan before the CIS decided to get involved, where operations included air strikes against opposition forces that had been in Afghanistan.⁶

The CIS Peacekeeping Force operated under Russian command and did not carry out a traditional peacekeeping mission. The mission involved protecting humanitarian convoys and critical infrastructure, but at times it crossed into peace enforcement as CIS units supported the government in place against the United Tajik Opposition (UTO). The CIS made a request to the UN in 1993 to obtain an official mandate as a peacekeeping force, and while this never happened, the CIS Peacekeeping Force served as the most reliable security force in Tajikistan at the time and later coordinated some activities with the UN Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT). The UN Security Council established the peacekeeping operation UNMOT in December 1994 to monitor the September 1994 Tehran cease-fire agreement signed between the Tajik government and the UTO, and it operated until May 2000 when its mandate ended.⁷

Overall, the CIS peacekeeping force in Tajikistan provided the Central Asian units with real peacekeeping experience, though it is unknown how much of this has been retained and implemented into training. Before the Tajik Civil War ended, the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan put together a proposal in December 1995 for the creation of a peacekeeping unit called the Central Asian Battalion (CENTRASBAT).⁸

The proposal included a request to NATO, with support from US Central Command (CENTCOM), to assist in the development of the peacekeeping unit through the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. CENTRASBAT consisted of three motorized rifle companies as well as supporting units from the armed forces of each member. The most visible training for the peacekeeping unit took place through joint exercises in 1997, 1998, and 2000, with a seminar in 1999. The exercise CENTRASBAT 97 stood out from the others as it included 40 soldiers from the unit who went through training at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. They then flew in C-17s alongside 500 soldiers from the US Army 82nd Airborne Division from North Carolina to Kazakhstan. There they conducted an airborne drop followed by peacekeeping tasks at a training facility. The peacekeeping exercise then moved overland to Uzbekistan, where members of the unit continued training on peacekeeping tasks.⁹

⁶A.S. Serrano, 2003, op. cit.

⁷A.S. Serrano, 2003, op. cit.; Conciliation Resources, V. Goryayev, 'Architecture of International Involvement in the Tajik Peace Process (March 2001) <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/tajikistan/methodology.php> (accessed 20 December 2016); United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 'Completed Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan', <http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/unmot/Unmot.htm> (accessed 20 December 2016).

⁸M.J. McCarthy, Lt. Col USAF, *The Limits of Friendship: US Security Cooperation in Central Asia*, Air University Press, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, 2007, www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA475720 (accessed 21 December 2016).

⁹Ibid.; Y. Chernogayev, 'Учения в Средней Азии' [An Exercise in Central Asia], *Kommersant* (19 September 1997) <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/184270> (accessed 22 December 2016).

Even before the CENTRASBAT exercises took place, the NATO PfP exercise series ‘Cooperative Nugget’ and ‘Cooperative Osprey’ marked the first time that Central Asian forces participated in peacekeeping exercises. ‘Cooperative Nugget’ took place in 1995 at Fort Polk, Louisiana, and included a platoon each from Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. In 1996 ‘Cooperative Osprey’ included units from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Both exercises worked on developing peacekeeping capabilities, and ‘Cooperative Nugget’ took place again in 1997 and 2000, while ‘Cooperative Osprey’ took place again in 1998 and 2001. CENTRASBAT disbanded in late 1999, though its annual exercise in 2000 went on as planned. It was recommended to the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan to form their own peacekeeping units, but only Kazakhstan decided to continue this effort and took its peacekeeping company from CENTRASBAT and formed the Kazakhstan Peacekeeping Battalion (KAZBAT) in 2000.¹⁰

The development of the Kazakhstan Peacekeeping Battalion (KAZBAT)

KAZBAT’s main goal has been the same as CENTRASBAT: to achieve interoperability and capabilities on par with NATO forces to deploy on an international peacekeeping mission. To achieve this goal, KAZBAT has been involved with a couple of efforts: the deployment of members of the unit to Iraq and conducting ‘Steppe Eagle’, an annual peacekeeping exercise with NATO forces. In August 2003, Kazakhstan deployed members of the unit to Iraq in support of coalition operations. The deployment consisted of 27 soldiers, mostly engineers, serving for six-month periods with a total of 10 rotations that lasted until 2008. While it took place before KAZBAT received NATO interoperability status, over 200 soldiers from the unit served under a Polish command and carried out ordnance disposal and water purification. The unit sustained one casualty in January 2005.¹¹

The annual ‘Steppe Eagle’ peacekeeping exercises have also played a role in the development of KAZBAT and are an important part of the unit achieving

¹⁰M.J. McCarthy, 2007, op. cit.

¹¹M.J. McCarthy, 2007, op. cit.; R. McDermott and Col. I. Mukhamedov, ‘Kazakhstan’s Peacekeeping Support in Iraq’, *Central Asia Caucasus Institute Analyst* (28 January 2004) www.cacianalyst.org/resources/pdf/issues/20040128Analyst.pdf (accessed 26 January 2017); iCasualties.org, ‘Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq Coalition Casualties: Military Deaths by Country, Nationality: KAZ’ (2009) <http://icasualties.org/Iraq/Nationality.aspx?hndQry=KAZ>, (accessed 26 January 2017); I. Moskovka, ‘Куда же “Казбат” без мин и гранат?’ [Where Will “Kazbat” Go Without Mines and Grenades?], *Vremya* (24 July 2010) <http://www.time.kz/news/archive/2010/07/24/17017> (accessed 26 January 2017); Z. Kusanova, ‘Военная доктрина Казахстана: может, надо вроде НАТО (2-я часть)’ [The Military Doctrine of Kazakhstan: Maybe NATO Is Necessary (part 2)], *Inform Buro* (25 June 2015, <http://informburo.kz/stati/voennaya-doktrina-2-6111.html>) (accessed January 26 2017); Z. Kusanova, ‘Казбатовцы обезвредили 4 миллиона мин и заработали по 15 000 долларов’ [Kazbat Soldiers Destroyed 4 Million Mines and Earned 15,000 dollars], *Inform Buro* (21 July 2015) <http://informburo.kz/stati/missiya-8742.html> (accessed 26 January 2017).

NATO interoperability status to deploy on a peacekeeping mission. As part of Kazakhstan's Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO, KAZBAT is being assessed according to NATO's Operational Capabilities Concept (OCC). NATO established the OCC in April 1999 to build up the capabilities and interoperability of PfP members' armed forces to participate in NATO peacekeeping operations.¹²

The 'Steppe Eagle' exercises have been conducted annually since 2003, with most of them taking place at facilities in Kazakhstan, though members of KAZBAT traveled to training centers in Germany and the UK in recent years. All of the exercises have involved the armed forces of the US and the UK, in addition to other NATO members, working with KAZBAT on peacekeeping tasks, including patrolling, protecting convoys of humanitarian aid, civil-military relations, and responding to civil unrest.¹³ NATO has been assessing KAZBAT according to two evaluation levels, with level one measuring interoperability status with NATO forces, and level two measuring capabilities to be added to NATO's Pool of Forces, the latter of which would make the unit available for a peacekeeping mission. KAZBAT reportedly achieved evaluation level one during the 2017 iteration of 'Steppe Eagle'.¹⁴

While the deployment to Iraq and the 'Steppe Eagle' exercises have been the most visible efforts to develop KAZBAT, the unit has been involved with other peacekeeping exercises and related training. Kazakhstan's Armed Forces established KAZCENT, a training center in the city of Almaty as part of the country's IPAP and involvement with the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), a US security assistance program. Training and seminars have taken place in KAZCENT since December 2009 and have included soldiers from KAZBAT and focused on English terminology in multinational operations, NATO staff procedures, UN peacekeeping operations overview, legal aspects of UN Peacekeeping Operations, civil-

¹²North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 'E-Library, Official Texts (Chronological), Towards a Partnership for the 21st Century' (25 April 1999) http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_27434.htm (accessed 21 August 2017).

¹³Steppe Eagle Exercise, *Facebook* (17 August 2017) <https://www.facebook.com/steppe.eagle> (accessed 27 January 2017); "'Казбат" и военные НАТО проводят учения "Степной орел-2014" в Германии' ["Kazbat" and NATO Soldiers Are Carrying Out the Exercise "Steppe Eagle-2014"], *Tengri News* (7 October 2014) http://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/kazbat-i-voennyye-nato-provodyat-ucheniya-stepnoy-orel-2014-v-germanii-263034/ (accessed 27 January 2017); V. Severny, "'Степной орел" впервые взмыл над Европой' ["Steppe Eagle" Soared Over Europe for the First Time], *Megapolis* (13 October 2014) <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1413263520> (accessed 27 January 2017); 'Steppe Eagle — 2016: First Week Ended', *Kazinform* (25 July 2016) http://www.inform.kz/en/steppe-eagle-2016-first-week-ended-photos_a2929104 (accessed 27 January 2017); W. Howard, '5 Nations Partner for Peacekeeping Exercise in England', *Stars and Stripes* (28 July 2016) <http://www.stripes.com/news/5-nations-partner-for-peacekeeping-exercise-in-england-1.421345> (accessed 27 January 2017).

¹⁴Capt. D. Dillehay, 'Flags Rise Over Exercise Steppe Eagle Opening Ceremony', *Defense Imagery and Video Distribution System* (22 July 2017) <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/242225/flags-rise-over-exercise-steppe-eagle-opening-ceremony> (accessed 21 August 2017); R. Weitz, 'Kazakhstan Steppe Eagle Exercise Helps Sustain NATO Ties', *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst* (18 September 2013) <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12816-kazakhstan-steppe-eagle-exercise-helps-sustain-nato-ties.html> (accessed 21 August 2017); 'НАТО высоко оценило уровень подготовки казахстанских военных на учениях' [NATO Evaluated the High Level of Readiness of Kazakhstan's Soldiers in the Exercises], *Inform Buro* (7 August 2017) <https://informburo.kz/novosti/nato-vysoko-ocenilo-uroven-podgotovki-kazhastanskih-voennyh.html> (accessed 13 September 2017).

military relations, a UN staff officers course, and the NATO operational planning process.¹⁵ Additionally, the Arizona National Guard carries out peacekeeping training through the National Guard State Partnership Program and GPOI.¹⁶

KAZCENT conducted a few courses with the Peace Operation Training Center in Jordan in preparation for 'Shanti Prayas-II', a GPOI peacekeeping exercise that took place from 23 March to 7 April 2013 in Nepal. Two Kazakh officers participated in the staff training portion of the exercise, while a platoon took part in the field portion, which focused on patrolling, operating checkpoints, and conducting convoys.¹⁷ Personnel from KAZBAT also participated in 'Shanti Prayas-III' in 2017 in Nepal and 'Regional Exercise (REGEX) 2014' in Istanbul, a NATO command post exercise that focused on coordination and planning for a multinational peacekeeping operation.¹⁸ Additionally, Kazakhstan sent observers to the peacekeeping exercise series 'Khaan Quest', a joint effort between the United States and Mongolia, in 2012 and 2013.¹⁹

KAZBAT has yet to deploy with a NATO or UN peacekeeping mission, but members of the unit have deployed as experts on mission to the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI).²⁰ These deployments began after Kazakhstan's Parliament approved a proposal from President Nazarbayev on 20 December 2013 to deploy officers on UN

¹⁵Учебный центр «Партнерство во имя мира» Военного института сухопутных войск, "Архив Новостей", <https://web.archive.org/web/20130805055106/http://kazcent.kz/>, (accessed 30 January 2017); US Department of State, 'Arms Control and International Security, Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM), Office of Plans and Initiatives (PM/PI), Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI)', <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/gpoi/index.htm> (accessed 31 January 2017).

¹⁶D. Miles, 'Guard Program Builds Partner Capacity, Relationships in Centcom', *American Forces Press Service* (1 November 2013) <http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=121042> (accessed 27 January 2017).

¹⁷Peace Operation Training Center, Jordan, 'News', https://web.archive.org/web/20140530054308/http://potc.mil.jo/archive_news.shtml (accessed 31 January 2017); 'NA to Host Peacekeeping Exercise', *The Kathmandu Post* (17 March 2013) <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2013-03-18/na-to-host-peacekeeping-exercise-368597.html> (accessed 27 January 2017); 'Gpoi Peacekeeping', *Flickr* (2013) <https://www.flickr.com/photos/94326174@N03/> (accessed 27 January 2017).

¹⁸S. Yugra, 'Турецкий гамбит' [The Turkish Gambit], *Megapolis* (27 October 2014) https://web.archive.org/web/20141202161047/http://www.megapolis.kz/art/Turetskiy_gambit-2014_10_26 (accessed 31 January 2017); 'Казахстанские офицеры миротворческой бригады «Казбриг» участвуют в учениях НАТО в Стамбуле' [Kazakhstan's Officers From the Peacekeeping Brigade 'Kazbrig' Are Participating in a NATO Exercise in Istanbul], *Regnum* (21 October 2014) <http://www.regnum.ru/news/polit/1858872.html> (accessed 19 December 2014); 'Exercise Shanti Prayas III Concludes', *The Himalayan Times* (3 April 2017) <https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/exercise-shanti-prayas-iii-concludes/> (accessed 18 July 2017); Nepalese Army, 'Ex Shanti Prayas-III', <http://www.nepalarmy.mil.np/shantiprayas.php> (accessed 18 July 2017).

¹⁹'Khaan Quest 2012 to Start on August 12, 2012', *Info Mongolia* (12 August 2012) <https://web.archive.org/web/20140804042445/http://www.infomongolia.com/ct/ci/4709> (accessed 30 January 2017); 'Khaan Quest Military Exercises Kick Off in Mongolia', *Xinhua* (3 August 2013) http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-08/03/c_132599452.htm (accessed 25 August 2014).

²⁰United Nations Peacekeeping, 'Resources, Statistics, Troops and Police Contributors, Archive, Troop and Police Contributors Archive (1990–2016)', http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors_archive.shtml (accessed 31 January 2017); Z. Kusanova, 'Офицеры Казбата в Африке служат без оружия' [Officers of Kazbat in Africa Serve Without Weapons], *Inform Buro* (29 October 2015) <https://informburo.kz/stati/ne-saharnaya-missiya-na-chuzhbine-oficerov-kazbata-14569.html> (accessed 31 January 2017).

peacekeeping missions as observers. Since the proposal passed, the number of KAZBAT personnel deployed as experts on mission to MINURSO ranged from one to five, while there have been one or two experts on mission with UNOCI. The proposal left open the possibility of deploying a company from KAZBAT as a unit and not just individuals from the battalion.²¹

While Kazakhstan has been active in a number of peacekeeping-related training with NATO, the government decided not to deploy officers to the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan, as part of an agreement made with NATO. However, in 2008 the Kazakh government reached an agreement with NATO to send four officers in medical and logistics positions on six-month rotations to ISAF headquarters. In June 2011 the Kazakh Senate (the upper house of Kazakhstan's parliament) failed to ratify the agreement, and while the statement issued by the government left open the possibility of the deployment in the future, this is not likely to happen. A veterans group of the Soviet-Afghan War in Kazakhstan opposed the deployment and carried out a public campaign against it. This was in addition to skepticism within the government about getting involved in a foreign conflict, even if the officers would have been in non-combat roles.²²

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan's efforts to develop a peacekeeping force

While Kazakhstan quickly formed a peacekeeping unit after CENTRASBAT disbanded, Kyrgyzstan's interest in a peacekeeping unit did not come back for several years, while Tajikistan also started working to develop its own peacekeeping unit with the goal of eventually deploying it on a peacekeeping mission. The government of Kyrgyzstan became the first in the region to deploy its personnel on UN peacekeeping missions as individual police, military observers, or experts on mission starting in the late 1990s. Deployed personnel have come from the National Security Committee (GKNB), Interior Ministry, Drug

²¹United Nations Peacekeeping, op. cit.; S. Sabekov, 'Парламент поддержал предложение Н. Назарбаева о направлении в качестве наблюдателей офицеров ВС РК для участия в миссиях ООН' [Parliament Supported the Proposal of N. Nazarbayeva on the Deployments of Officers of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan as Observers on UN Missions], *Kazinform* (20 December 2013) http://www.inform.kz/ru/parlament-podderzhal-predlozhenie-n-nazarbaeva-o-napravlenii-v-kachestve-nablyudateley-oficerov-vs-rk-dlya-uchastiya-v-missiyah-oon_a2615079 (accessed 31 January 2017); M. Aimbetova, 'Миссия выполнима?' [Mission Possible?], *Vremya* (19 December 2013) <http://www.time.kz/news/politics/2013/12/19/missiya-vipolnima> (accessed 31 January 2017).

²²R. McDermott, 'Kazakhstan's Senate "Rejects" Planned Deployment to Afghanistan', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* (21 June 2011) http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=38078&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=512 (accessed 7 August 2015); M. Aimbetova, 'Ветераны-афганцы: Парламент втягивает нас в войну!' [Soviet-Afghan War Veterans: Parliament Is Leading Us to War!], *Vremya* (26 May 2011) http://www.time.kz/redirect_to_article/21751 (accessed 23 August 2017).

Control Service, and the Ministry of Defense.²³ Kyrgyz personnel have consistently been deployed in small numbers on a number of UN peacekeeping missions since then, including MINURSO, the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB), the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the United Nations Integrated Mission in East Timor (UNMIT), and the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS).²⁴

While a large number of personnel from Kyrgyzstan's state security services and Ministry of Defense have deployed on UN peacekeeping missions, they never deployed as a contingent unit.²⁵ The Kyrgyz who deployed on UNMISS were listed as a 'contingent troop' but never totaled more than two soldiers at any time.²⁶ Tajikistan has also sent personnel, largely from the Interior Ministry, on UN peacekeeping missions, including individual police to UNAMID from 2008–2014 and a contingent soldier to the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in 2013.²⁷

While individual members or small groups from Kyrgyzstan's and Tajikistan's security services deployed on UN peacekeeping missions help establish an international profile for each country, it is not the same as having and deploying a contingent peacekeeping unit. The Kyrgyz and Tajik peacekeeping units have followed a similar development path that KAZBAT took through work with NATO's PfP program, the National Guard State Partnership Program, and the GPOI. Kyrgyzstan is partnered

²³S. Torogeldiyeva, 'С.Куренкеев: «Служба в миротворческой миссии ООН — это достойное представление Кыргызстана»' [S. Kurenkeev: 'Service in a UN Peacekeeping Mission — It Is a Worthy Representation of Kyrgyzstan'], *Kabar* (28 May 2014) <http://old.kabar.kg/kabar/full/77235> (accessed 29 March 2017); S. Moiseeva, 'В миротворческих миссиях в горячих точках насчитали 35 кыргызстанцев' [There Are 35 Kyrgyz Service Members Serving in Peacekeeping Missions in Various Hot Spots], *Vecherniy Bishkek* (29 May 2013) http://www.vb.kg/doc/229901_v_mirotvorcheskih_missiih_v_goriachih_tochkah_naschitali_35_kyrgyzstancv.html (accessed 29 March 2017).

²⁴United Nations Peacekeeping, op. cit.

²⁵A. Kitayev, 'Бригада специального назначения «Пантера» Национальной Гвардии Кыргызстана' [The Special Purpose Brigade 'Pantera' of the National Guard of Kyrgyzstan], *Oruzhie Rossii* (18 October 2016) http://www.arms-expo.ru/photo/fotoreportazh/brigada-spetsialnogo-naznacheniya-pantera-natsionalnoy-gvardii-kyrgyzstana/?sphrase_id=12384578 (accessed 18 July 2017).

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷United Nations Peacekeeping, op. cit.

with the Montana National Guard, while Tajikistan works with the Virginia National Guard.²⁸

The government of Kyrgyzstan discussed establishing another peacekeeping unit in the mid-2000s and in 2012 set the framework for forming a peacekeeping unit.²⁹ Kyrgyzstan first received peacekeeping training in 2007 through US security assistance. Since then members of Kyrgyzstan's Armed Forces have participated in seminars, workshops, and field training exercises with the Montana National Guard, members of National Guard units of other states, and other US forces.³⁰ Additionally, Kyrgyzstan participated in 'Steppe Eagle' in 2013–2016 as well as 'Khaan Quest 2016' and 'Shanti Prayas-III' in 2017 and received security assistance from India and the United Kingdom related to the development of a peacekeeping unit.³¹

²⁸В США будет подписан Меморандум о взаимопонимании по дальнейшему развитию сотрудничества между Кыргызстаном и штатом Монтана [There Will Be a Memorandum of Understanding Signed in the USA on Further Development and Cooperation Between Kyrgyzstan and the State of Montana], *Khabar* (26 November 2003) <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1069834740> (accessed 27 March 2017); Virginia National Guard, 'Virginia-Republic of Tajikistan State Partnership Program', <http://vko.va.ngb.army.mil/VirginiaGuard/SPP/index.html> (accessed 27 March 2017); US Department of State, 'What We Do, Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM), Bureau of Political-Military Affairs Releases, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs Reports, Foreign Military Training and DoD Engagement Activities of Interest', <https://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/rpt/fmtrpt/index.htm> (accessed 26 April 2017).

²⁹Z. Ibraliyev, 'Кыргызстан готовит инженерную военную часть для миротворческих операций под флагом ООН' [Kyrgyzstan Is Preparing an Engineering Unit for Peacekeeping Operations Under the UN Flag], *24.kg* (25 March 2008) <http://arch.24.kg/community/33257-2008/03/25/80165.html> (accessed 27 March 2017); Z. Ibraliyev, 'В Кыргызстане появится миротворческая мотострелковая рота' [A Motorized Rifle Peacekeeping Company Will Form in Kyrgyzstan], *24.kg* (11 November 2008) <http://arch.24.kg/community/41952-2008/11/11/97563.html> (accessed 27 March 2017); S. Moiseeva, 'Представитель Кыргызстана выступил на дебатах Совбеза ООН по миротворцам' [The Representative of Kyrgyzstan Spoke at the Session of the UN Security Council], *Vecherniy Bishkek* (22 January 2013) http://www.vb.kg/doc/213091_predstavitel_kyrgyzstana_vystupil_na_debat_tah_sovbeza_oon_po_mirotvorcam.html (accessed 27 March 2017); Централизованный Банк Данных Правовой Информации Кыргызской Республики [The Central Bank of Data of Legal Information of the Kyrgyz Republic], 'Нормативные правовые акты' [Normative Legal Acts], О проекте Закона Кыргызской Республики 'Об основах и порядке участия Кыргызской Республики в деятельности по поддержанию международного мира и безопасности' [On the Project of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic, 'On the Basis and Order of Participation of the Kyrgyz Republic in the Activities of Support of International Peace and Security'], от 12 января 2012 года №35 [From 12 January 2012 No. 35], <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/93399> (accessed 27 March 2017).

³⁰US Department of State, 'Foreign Military Training and DoD Engagement Activities of Interest'; A. Kasybekov, 'Морпехи США рвутся к нам. НАТО тоже' [Marines of the USA Are Eager to Come to Us. NATO as Well], *Vecherniy Bishkek* (27 September 2011) <http://members.vb.kg/2011/09/27/panorama/7.html> (accessed 19 May 2017); 'US Military Shares Peacekeeping Experience With Kyrgyz Partners', *Kabar* (14 May 2014) <http://old.kabar.kg/eng/society/full/9885> (accessed 19 May 2017); *Montana National Guard*, Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Montana-National-Guard-State-Partnership-Program-153843651489247/> (accessed 19 May 2017).

³¹U. Akishev, 'Кыргызстанских военных обучат проведению миротворческих операций' [Kyrgyzstan's Soldiers Will Be Instructed in Carrying Out Peacekeeping Operations], *Kloop* (6 July 2011) <https://kloop.kg/blog/2011/07/06/kyrgyzskix-voennyx-nauchat-organizovyvat-mirotvorcheskie-operacii/> (accessed 19 May 2017); S. Moiseeva, 'Генштаб договорился с индийскими военными о стажировке' [The General Staff Came to an Agreement With Indian Military on Training], *Vecherniy Bishkek* (27 February 2015) http://www.vb.kg/doc/304797_genshtab_dogovorilis_s_indijskimi_voennymi_o_stajirovke.html (accessed 19 May 2017); M. Skolyshcheva, 'Индия передаст медицинское оборудование для миротворцев Кыргызстана' [India Will Transfer Medical Equipment for the Peacekeepers of Kyrgyzstan], *Vecherniy Bishkek* (10 July 2015) http://www.vb.kg/doc/319568_india_peredast_medicinskoe_oborydovanie_dlia_mirotvorcev_kyrgyzstana.html (accessed 19 May 2017); 'Для изучения английского языка среди военнослужащих Минобороны КР и Великобритании подписали меморандум' [The Ministry of Defense of the Kyrgyz Republic and Great Britain Signed a Memorandum for the Study of English for Service Members], *KG Inform* (27 September 2013) <http://www.kginform.com/ru/news/20130927/18383.html> (accessed 19 May 2017); 'Министерства обороны Кыргызстана и Великобритании подписали План двустороннего военного сотрудничества' [The Ministries of Defense of Kyrgyzstan and Great Britain Signed a Plan of Mutual Military Cooperation], *KG Inform* (25 November 2013) <http://www.kginform.com/ru/news/20131125/18813.html> (accessed 19 May 2017).

The government of Tajikistan started to develop a peacekeeping unit in 2009, when it wrote a white paper that outlined a plan for creating a peacekeeping battalion.³² Various peacekeeping training events started in 2008, but it was in 2010 that the peacekeeping battalion began training as a unit.³³ Members of the Virginia National Guard, through the State Partnership Program, often work with the battalion, and training events have included: awareness and avoidance of IEDs and unexploded ordnance, patrolling and urban operations, lectures on UN standards of peacekeeping operations from Jordanian officers, communications and land navigation, infantry tactics, and deployment logistics.³⁴ Additionally, a US Navy Construction Battalion assisted Tajikistan's Ministry of Defense construction unit on the Peace Support Operation Training Center at the Shamsi base in Dushanbe, and Tajik personnel took part in the 'Steppe Eagle' exercises in 2012–2016, in the 'Khaan Quest' exercises in 2014–2016, and in 'Shanti Prayas-II' in 2013.³⁵

Other peacekeeping activities

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan have also been involved with peacekeeping activities with the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). All three governments are currently members of the CSTO, a political-military organization that formed and evolved out of the framework of the CIS in the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Other members of the CSTO are Russia, Belarus, and Armenia. The CSTO allows member states to purchase weapons and equipment from the Russian defense industry at the same prices the Russian military pays, and the organization regularly conducts joint military exercises with its Collective Operational Reaction Force (CORF).³⁶

³²CENTCOM, 'Tajikistan Expand Security Partnership', *United States Central Command* (29 June 2010) <http://www.centcom.mil/en/news/press-releases/centcom-tajikistan-expand-security-partnership> (accessed 14 July 2017).

³³'US Embassy Hosts UN Peacekeeping Workshop', *Asia-Plus* (13 February 2015) <http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/us-embassy-hosts-un-peacekeeping-workshop> (accessed 15 August 2017).

³⁴D. Miles, 2013, op. cit.; M. Skrepenski, 'Va. Guard Engineers Work With Tajikistan's Peacekeeping Operations Battalion on Improvised Explosive Device and Unexploded Ordinance Avoidance', *Virginia National Guard* (12 March 2010) <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2010/03/12/3146/> (accessed 14 July 2017); 'Virginia Guard Troops Lead Exchange With Tajikistan Peacekeeping Operations Battalion', *Virginia National Guard* (23 July 2012) <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2012/07/23/1670/> (accessed 14 July 2017); 'Virginia Guard Communication Professionals Work With Tajikistan Peacekeeping Operations', *Virginia National Guard* (30 September 2012) <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2012/09/30/2274/> (accessed 14 July 2017); M. Skrepenski, 'Virginia National Guard Works With Tajikistan's Peacekeeping Operations Battalion on Infantry and Medical Tactics', *Virginia National Guard* (30 November 2012) <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2012/11/30/2894/> (accessed 14 July 2017); US Department of State, 'Arms Control and International Security, Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM), Bureau of Political-Military Affairs Releases, DipNote Blog and Other Releases, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Other Releases, Peacekeeping Deployment Workshop in Tajikistan' (10 May 2013) <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/othr/misc/209676.htm> (accessed 14 July 2017).

³⁵K. Schlai, 'NMCB 133 Conducts First Mission in Tajikistan', *Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133* (15 January 2013) http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=71448 (accessed 14 July 2017).

³⁶Организация Договора о коллективной безопасности [The Collective Security Treaty Organization], <http://www.odkb-csto.org/> (accessed 30 September 2013); 'На страны ОДКБ приходится 5 проц. от общего объема российского военного экспорта' [CSTO Members Make up 5 Percent of All Russian Arms Exports], Центр анализа мировой торговли оружием [Center of Analysis of World Arms Trade] (30 June 2011) <http://www.armstrade.org/includes/periodics/news/2011/0630/13208689/detail.shtml> (accessed 26 September 2013).

Kazakhstan designated its 37th Air Assault Brigade, while Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan each contribute a battalion to the CORF, which also has Russian aircraft based at the Kant Airbase outside Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The CORF can be deployed, under Russian command, to deal with threats from conventional militaries and non-state armed groups under a collective defense article. The force can also deploy in response to disaster situations and peacekeeping. The CSTO leadership started discussions on creating a peacekeeping force in June 2004, though member states only signed the agreement to establish the force in October 2007.³⁷

The CSTO signed a memorandum of understanding with the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations in 2012, which allowed the organization to carry out a peacekeeping mission under a UN mandate.³⁸ Prior to 2012, the CSTO's legal framework only allowed a peacekeeping mission in the territory of a member state. The CSTO has conducted 'Unbreakable Brotherhood', an annual joint peacekeeping exercise with the armed forces of member states since the 2012 memorandum. The exercises involve working out various peacekeeping tasks, such as delivering humanitarian aid, protecting convoys, demining and ordnance disposal, or crowd control during civil unrest.

The exercise in 2016 marked the first time that the organization rehearsed a scenario of deploying to a conflict under a UN mandate as previous scenarios rehearsed a peacekeeping mission in a member state.³⁹ While the

³⁷ Организация Договора о коллективной безопасности [The Collective Security Treaty Organization], 'Документы [Documents], Правовая база ОДКБ [Legal Framework of the CSTO], Соглашение о миротворческой деятельности Организации Договора о коллективной безопасности (Душанбе, 06.10.2007) [Agreement on Peacekeeping Activities of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (Dushanbe, 06.10.2007)], http://odkb-csto.org/documents/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=1679 (accessed 25 July 2017).

³⁸ O. Vlyadykin, 'ООН за сотрудничество с ОДКБ, а НАТО — против' [The UN Is for Cooperation With the CSTO, While NATO — Is Against It], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (5 October 2012) http://nvo.ng.ru/eventsnvo/2012-10-05/2_odkb.html (accessed 25 July 2017).

³⁹ В Казахстане завершилась активная фаза первого миротворческого учения ОДКБ «Нерушимое братство-2012» [The Active Phase of the First Peacekeeping Exercise of the CSTO 'Unbreakable Brotherhood — 2012' Has Finished in Kazakhstan], *Asia-Plus* (18 October 2012) <http://news.tj/ru/news/v-kazakhstane-zavershilas-aktivnaya-faza-pervogo-mirotvorcheskogo-ucheniya-odkb-nerushimoe-brat> (accessed 6 February 2013); 'Противодействовать массовым беспорядкам научатся казахстанские миротворцы' [Kazakhstan's Peacekeepers Learn to Counter a Large Crowd of Rioters], *Tengri News* (3 October 2013) http://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/protivodeystvovat-massovym-besporiadkam-nauchatsya-kazahstanskije-mirotvortsyi-242850/ (accessed 24 October 2013); 'Кыргызстан принял участие в миротворческом учении ОДКБ «Нерушимое братство-2013» в России' [Kyrgyzstan Took Part in the CSTO Peacekeeping Exercise 'Unbreakable Brotherhood — 2013' in Russia], *Kabar* (12 October 2013) <http://kabar.kg/rus/society/full/64658> (accessed 24 October 2013); A. Gerasimov, 'Миротворцы готовятся «к бою»' [The Peacekeepers Are Preparing 'to Fight'], *Krasnaya Zvezda* (30 July 2014) <http://www.redstar.ru/index.php/newspaper/item/17610-mirotvortsy-gotoviyatsya-k-boyu> (accessed 26 September 2014); A. Aleksandrov, '1500 километров не предел' [1500 Kilometers Is Not the Limit], *Krasnaya Zvezda* (4 October 2015) <http://www.redstar.ru/index.php/newspaper/item/26002-1500-kilometrov-ne-predel> (accessed 29 April 2016); V. Molchanov, 'По мандату ООН' [Under a UN Mandate], *Krasnaya Zvezda* (23 August 2016) <http://www.redstar.ru/index.php/newspaper/item/30160-po-mandatu-onn> (accessed 25 October 2016); 'Подведены итоги учения "Нерушимое братство-2016" с миротворческими силами ОДКБ' [Summarizing the Results of the Exercise 'Unbreakable Brotherhood — 2016' With the Peacekeeping Forces of the CSTO], *Belta* (27 August 2016) <http://www.belta.by/society/view/podvedeny-itogi-ucheni-j-nerushimoe-bratstvo-2016-s-mirotvorcheskimi-silami-odkb-207484-2016/> (accessed 25 October 2016); 'В Беларуси начались совместные учения ОДКБ "Нерушимое братство-2016"' [The Joint Exercise of the CSTO 'Unbreakable Brotherhood — 2016' Has Started in Belarus], *Ratel* (24 August 2016) http://www.ratel.kz/kaz/v_belarusi_nachalis_sovmestnye_ucheniya_odkb_nerushimoe-bratstvo_2016 (accessed 25 October 2016).

‘Unbreakable Brotherhood’ exercises worked on peacekeeping-related training, each iteration included a phase that emphasized eliminating a terrorist group through a combined arms assault as much as peacekeeping mission tasks.

Since the Russian-backed Collective Security Treaty Organization or CSTO signed the memo with the UN in 2012, the organization’s leadership continues to discuss potential peacekeeping deployments to various conflicts. While CSTO member states continue to participate in the ‘Unbreakable Brotherhood’ exercises, there have been questions from the three governments when CSTO officials discuss the deployment of a peacekeeping force in response to a conflict in the territory of a member state or to an outside conflict, specifically Ukraine or Syria.⁴⁰ Questions and doubts from CSTO members stem from the organization’s response to the June 2010 violence in southern Kyrgyzstan.

The government of Kyrgyzstan struggled to contain the outbreak of violence that began on 9–10 June 2010 in the city of Osh, which quickly spread to other areas in the south and resulted in over 400 killed and tens of thousands displaced. The Kyrgyz government appealed to the CSTO for a peacekeeping force on 12 June, which was ultimately rejected because the situation did not fit into the organization’s charter in that the response requested was to an internal conflict in a member state.⁴¹ The CSTO amended its charter in December 2010 to allow a peacekeeping force to deploy in response to an internal conflict, but the CSTO’s response to the violence in Kyrgyzstan caused members to see the organization differently, and they question whether the organization would provide peacekeepers in response to a conflict on their territory.⁴²

Questions surrounding the deployment of a CSTO peacekeeping force came into better focus when on 23 June 2017 reports emerged that Russian officials made a request to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to make a contribution to a peacekeeping force in Syria. The reports contradicted statements

⁴⁰‘Силы ОДКБ готовы к любым сложным операциям, в том числе в Украине, — Бордюжа’ [CSTO Forces Are Prepared for Any Complicated Operation, Including in Ukraine — Boryuzha], *Asia-Plus* (30 August 2014) <http://news.tj/ru/news/cily-odkb-gotovy-k-lyubym-slozhnym-operatsiyam-v-tom-chisle-v-ukraine-bordyuzha> (accessed 25 July 2017); ‘Николай Бордюжа — РБК: У нас не палочная система, как в НАТО’ [Nikolay Boryuzha — RBC: We Do Not Have ...], *Vecherniy Bishkek* (24 January 2015) http://www.vb.kg/doc/300639_nikolay_bordyuzha_rbk_y_nas_ne_palochnaia_sistema_kak_v_nato.html (accessed 25 July 2017); ‘В ОДКБ создается полицейское подразделение для миротворческих миссий ООН’ [A Police Unit for UN Peacekeeping Missions Is Being Formed in the CSTO], *TASS* (23 August 2016) <http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/3559984> (accessed 25 July 2017).

⁴¹‘Russian Armed Forces Not to Be Used to Settle Situation in Kyrgyzstan’, *ITAR-TASS* (12 June 2010); ‘Moscow Says Peacekeepers Can Go to Kyrgyzstan Only Under CSTO Charter’, *ITAR-TASS* (12 June 2010).

⁴²М. Makulbekov, ‘Силы ОДКБ могут быть использованы внутри Организации только при обращении государств-членов — Президент РК’ [Forces of the CSTO Can Be Utilized Within the Organization Only at the Request of a Member-State — President of the Republic of Kazakhstan], *Kazinform* (10 December 2010) http://www.inform.kz/ru/sily-odkb-mogut-byt-ispol-zovany-vnutri-organizacii-tol-ko-pri-obraschenii-gosudarstv-chlenov-prezident-rk_a2330872 (accessed 28 July 2017); V. Mukhin, ‘Ахиллесова пята коллективной обороны’ [The Achilles Heel of Collective Defense], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (13 December 2010) http://www.ng.ru/cis/2010-12-13/1_oborona.html (accessed 28 July 2017).

from the Kazakh and Kyrgyz governments, which claimed that they had not been conducting any negotiations to contribute to a peacekeeping force.⁴³ Also, both noted that they would only get involved in a peacekeeping mission to Syria if it came with a UN mandate.⁴⁴ While Tajikistan never received any mention regarding the deployment to Syria, the whole affair demonstrates how Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are reluctant to get involved in a CSTO peacekeeping mission. Ultimately, the CSTO has yet to deploy a peacekeeping force.

In addition to efforts with the CSTO, the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan have sent personnel to support OSCE missions, including: the OSCE Mission to Georgia (now closed), the OSCE Minsk Group, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, and the OSCE Mission to Moldova. The various OSCE missions involve similar peacekeeping tasks to UN missions, and while these have provided additional experience for Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Tajik personnel, they have not contributed to NATO interoperability. Also, the three governments only deployed small numbers of individuals, not their respective peacekeeping units.⁴⁵

Outlook

The history of Central Asian involvement in peacekeeping shows that it has become an important part of the overall development of the armed forces of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Kyrgyzstan stopped developing its peacekeeping unit after CENTRASBAT disbanded, but it has been active since 2012 with its new unit. This takes place alongside a number of deployments of individual police and experts on mission to various UN peacekeeping missions. Tajikistan never participated in CENTRASBAT but has also been active for several years starting with the formation of its peacekeeping unit in 2010 and deployments of individuals on UN missions.

Kazakhstan has been the most active and consistent with the development of its peacekeeping unit KAZBAT, which formed right after CENTRASBAT disbanded. The annual 'Steppe Eagle' exercises have demonstrated how the

⁴³Темир Джумакадыров прокомментировал отправку миротворцев из КР в Сирию' [Temir Jumakadyrov Commented About the Deployment of Peacekeepers From the Kyrgyz Republic to Syria], *Zanoza* (23 June 2017) http://zanoza.kg/doc/359345_temir_djymakadyrov_prokommentiroval_otpravku_mirotvorcev_iz_kr_v_siriu.html (accessed 26 July 2017); 'Возможность направления военных РК в Сирию прокомментировал спецпредставитель Президента РФ' [The Special Representative of the Russian Federation Commented About the Possibility of Deploying Soldiers of the Republic of Kazakhstan to Syria], *Kazinform* (5 July 2017) http://www.inform.kz/ru/vozmozhnost-napravleniya-voennykh-rk-v-siriyu-prokommentiroval-specpredstavitel-prezidenta-rf_a3042982 (accessed 26 July 2017).

⁴⁴The Special Representative of the Russian Federation Commented ... op. cit.; I. Safronov, A. Jorjevich, and M. Korostikvo, 'Наблюдатели порядка' [The Observers of Order], *Kommersant* (23 June 2017) <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3332229> (accessed 26 July 2017).

⁴⁵Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 'Where We Are', <http://www.osce.org/where-we-are> (accessed 31 July 2017).

Kazakh government is committed to developing KAZBAT, and this even drew in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to participate. While the Kazakh government sent smaller numbers of personnel to UN missions than Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan, those who deployed on UN missions came from KAZBAT. The effort by the three governments with NATO takes place alongside CSTO peacekeeping activities, including the latter's annual 'Unbreakable Brotherhood' joint peacekeeping exercises. Despite membership in the CSTO and participation in these exercises, the governments of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan stated that they would only deploy peacekeepers to Syria under a UN mandate.

The creation and development of the Central Asian peacekeeping units suggests that while the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Tajik governments maintain close ties with Russia through the CSTO, they look at security cooperation with NATO as the best option to build up and ultimately deploy their respective units. However, when these units might be ready to deploy on a peacekeeping mission and the impact this could have for the governments and armed forces of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan is important to consider.

While Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have been active in developing their respective peacekeeping units with NATO, they have yet to develop to the point of receiving a certification of interoperability to deploy with NATO forces. Even Kazakhstan, for all of its efforts and consistency to develop KAZBAT, has yet to receive NATO's Evaluation Level 2, which would place the unit in NATO's Pool of Forces and open the door for a peacekeeping mission. It is likely that KAZBAT will achieve Evaluation Level 2 certification at some point, but it remains a step the unit needs to take. KAZBAT's timeframe for being available for a peacekeeping mission, much less deploying on one, is difficult to determine.

Regardless of when Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, or Tajikistan takes part in a peacekeeping mission with their respective units, the impact of such a step will be significant, and there are a couple of things that have already taken place that can help gauge that impact. KAZBAT's deployment to Iraq alongside coalition forces did not receive any notable criticism from the CSTO or Russia, much less within Kazakhstan, and those who deployed cited it as a valuable experience for the unit and service to the nation.⁴⁶ The rejection of the deployment to support ISAF is worth noting, but the efforts against the deployment by the Soviet-Afghan War veterans group are a representation of what the government and people in Kazakhstan felt about getting involved in Afghanistan.

KAZBAT's Iraq deployment marked a significant example of a Central Asian government getting involved in a conflict outside of Russian influence.

⁴⁶ Z. Kusanova, 21 July 2015, op. cit.

If the Russian government opposed KAZBAT's deployment to Iraq, it carried out no high-profile or public criticism. Russia responded by increasing peacekeeping activities through the CSTO, and while the three governments supported this, the refusal to send any peacekeeping forces to Syria indicated that they are reluctant to conduct a peacekeeping mission without UN backing or NATO involvement. If there is a NATO peacekeeping mission that KAZBAT deploys on, and the Kyrgyz and Tajik peacekeeping units develop to a high enough level to also participate, it will provide a concrete example of how the three governments have worked with a security cooperation partner outside of Russian influence. Russia will maintain strong security cooperation partnerships with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan for the foreseeable future, but when it comes to peacekeeping, the three governments have shown that there is one area of security cooperation for which they do not look to Russia for help.

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