



Partners in Central Asia

NATO is seeking to deepen cooperation with its Partner countries in Central Asia — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This reflects the decision taken by Allied leaders at the Istanbul Summit of 2004 to make partnership with Central Asia, as well as the Caucasus, a priority for the Alliance. It is part of NATO's policy to reach out to strategically important regions, whose security and stability are closely linked to wider Euro-Atlantic security. Each of the five countries have the potential to positively impact on the future development of Afghanistan, where the Alliance is deeply engaged.

NATO's Partnership structures and cooperation programmes offer a multilateral framework for security dialogue and opportunities for practical bilateral cooperation in a wide range of areas with NATO member states and other Partner countries. This promotes transparency, builds confidence and helps address shared security challenges.

All five Central Asian countries were early participants in the North Atlantic Cooperation Council – a forum for dialogue established by the Alliance in December 1991 as a first step in reaching out beyond the East-West divide to former Warsaw Pact members. This body was later replaced by the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in 1997. Four out of the five countries quickly took advantage of the opportunities offered by the Partnership for Peace, joining this major programme of practical bilateral cooperation shortly after its launch in 1994 (Tajikistan joined later on, in 2002).

Since these early days, each of the country's relations with NATO has evolved differently, as Partner countries are free to choose how and in which areas they wish to cooperate with NATO. Aside from cooperating with the Alliance, several of the Central Asian Partners also participate in other regional security organizations. NATO sees no contradiction between their cooperation with the Alliance and their desire to build strong relations with other organizations.

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NATO'S SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE TO THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

At the Istanbul Summit in June 2004, the Allies decided to appoint a Special Representative to the Caucasus and Central Asia. Robert Simmons is the first to be given this responsibility. His role is to maintain high-level working contacts with regional leaders in order to promote regional security and assist Partners in making the best possible use of Partnership tools.

He works closely with regional officials as well as with colleagues in other relevant organizations such as the European Union and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. This helps to ensure that communication is ongoing and work is done in a complementary fashion.

His work in the Caucasus and Central Asia is supported by two liaison officers, one based in each region. Each liaison officer works directly in an advisory role with relevant government authorities on achieving the reform goals set out in their cooperation programmes with NATO.



The importance of fostering security in the region

With the Great Silk Road passing through the region, promoting the exchange of goods as well as knowledge and ideas between Europe and the Far East, Central Asia has historically been of considerable importance. It continues to be so today.

In the current security environment, the NATO Allies share key security challenges with their Partners in Central Asia. The threats posed by terrorism, religious extremism, ethnic conflict, failed states, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and drug-trafficking defy borders and can only be addressed through concerted international cooperation.

Many of these security challenges are manifest in Afghanistan, which has been at the heart of NATO's security agenda in recent years. The terrorist attacks on the United States of 11 September 2001 were orchestrated by al-Qaida from their base in Afghanistan. These attacks demonstrated the indivisibility of security in the Euro-Atlantic area and focused international attention on Central Asia. NATO's involvement in the region increased when it took command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan in August 2003.

ISAF's mission is to help the Afghan authorities build a viable peace in the country, which is recovering from decades of civil war, and to prevent it from becoming a safe haven for terrorists again. Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan share borders with Afghanistan and developing strong partnerships with these neighbouring countries is essential to supporting ISAF's mission.

Beyond providing logistical support for ISAF (see p. 5), the diverse ethnic make-up of Afghanistan means that these Central Asian countries also have ties with important local communities and

actors, which can have a positive impact on the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan. It is also in the interest of Central Asian countries to see the situation in Afghanistan stabilized – they wish to prevent the risk of instability spreading to their own countries and are themselves struggling to address the problem of trafficking in Afghan narcotics.

Another important issue that affects both Central Asia and the NATO Allies is that of energy security, as Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan sit on significant supplies of oil and natural gas. Promoting security in the region is in the interest of both energy-importing countries, which are looking to diversify their energy sources and supply routes, and energy-exporting and transit countries, which need to ensure the security of their industry and pipeline infrastructure.

The framework for cooperation

The essence of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme is the partnership formed between each individual Partner country and NATO. Cooperation is tailored according to the country's ambitions, needs and abilities, and jointly implemented with the Partner government. Partners choose from an extensive menu of activities to draw up two-year programmes of cooperation, known as Individual Partnership Programmes.

Activities on offer touch on virtually every field of NATO activity, including defence-related work, defence reform, defence policy and planning, civil-military relations, education and training, military-to-military cooperation and exercises, civil emergency planning and disaster-response, and cooperation on science and environmental issues.

Each Central Asian Partner's individual programme of cooperation with NATO has evolved differently, according to its respective needs and interests.

Kazakhstan, a particularly active Partner in the region, takes part in the full spectrum of Partnership activities and, in 2006, became one of five Partner countries that have agreed an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO. This new Partnership mechanism was launched by the Allies after the Prague Summit in 2002, aimed at Partner countries with the political will and ability to deepen their relationship with NATO. Set in a two-year timeframe, the IPAP brings together the various cooperation mechanisms through which Kazakhstan interacts with the Alliance into an action plan that is sharply focused on supporting the country's reform objectives. Under this arrangement, the Kazakh government sets out its reform plans, priorities and related timelines. NATO agrees to provide focused, country-specific advice and individual Allies seek to coordinate their bilateral assistance to better support the country's domestic reform efforts.

COUNTERING THE TRADE IN AFGHAN NARCOTICS

Afghanistan produces some 90 per cent of the world's output of opium, posing a major challenge for the international community. The drugs trade is linked to organized crime and the financing of terrorism. Drug use poses tremendous social and health problems which transcend national boundaries.



All five Central Asian Partners are participating in a Pilot Project for Counter-Narcotics Training of Afghan and Central Asian Personnel, which was launched by the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) in December 2005. The initiative seeks to build local capacity and to promote regional networking and cooperation by sharing the combined expertise of the Allies and Russia with mid-level officers from Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) acts as the Pilot Project's executive agent.

Russia and Turkey have hosted training courses for officers from Afghanistan and Central Asian countries and mobile courses are also being conducted in the field. By end 2007, over 330 officers from the region had been trained under the initiative.



Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymuhammedov (left) visited NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer (right) in Brussels in November 2007 to discuss cooperation and regional security issues. The leaders and top officials of Partner countries regularly visit NATO headquarters for high-level political dialogue.

Kyrgyzstan is showing increased interest in further developing its partnership activities and recently agreed to participate in the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP) in 2007.

Tajikistan was the last of the Central Asian countries to join the PfP programme in 2002. It has been expanding partnership activities since then.

Turkmenistan's cooperation with NATO is rather more limited. However, the country's recent efforts to open itself up to greater cooperation and dialogue with neighbours and international organizations also present opportunities for enhanced cooperation with NATO.

Cooperation was initially promising with Uzbekistan, which at one point was involved in developing an IPAP. However, progress slowed significantly since the controversy over the events in Andijan in May 2005, which led NATO Allies to call for an independent international investigation. Nevertheless, limited cooperation continues and channels of communication have remained open. Most recently, there have been encouraging signs of a desire to increase cooperation.

Partnership values

Partnership is about more than practical cooperation – it is also about values. When Partner countries join the Partnership for Peace, they sign the PfP Framework Document. In doing so, Partners commit to respect international law, the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Helsinki Final Act, and international disarmament and arms control agreements; to refrain from the threat or use of force against other states; to respect existing borders; and to settle disputes peacefully.

The Framework Document also enshrines a commitment by the Allies to consult with any Partner country that perceives a threat to its territorial integrity, political independence, or security. The purpose of these commitments and of the PfP programme as a whole is to build confidence and transparency, diminish threats to peace, and build stronger security relationships with the Allies and with other Partner countries. Other instruments, such as the IPAP, offer an important opportunity for political consultations between Partner countries and NATO. Heads of state and ministers regularly visit NATO Headquarters to meet the Secretary General and the North Atlantic Council, NATO's principal decision-making body.

Multilateral dimension

In addition to bilateral cooperation, the Partnership framework for cooperation has an important multilateral dimension. This is embodied in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), which brings together the 26 Allies with 23 Partner countries in a forum for dialogue and consultation. Meetings of the EAPC are held monthly at the level of ambassadors, annually at the level of foreign and defence ministers and chiefs of defence, as well as occasionally at summit level.

EAPC members regularly exchange views on a wide range of security issues, including the evolving security situations in Kosovo and Afghanistan, where peacekeepers from Allied and Partner countries are deployed together. The EAPC has also taken initiatives to promote and coordinate practical cooperation and the exchange of expertise in areas such as combating terrorism, border security, and other issues related to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and small arms and light weapons.

To facilitate consultation and cooperation, all five Central Asian Partners have established diplomatic representation to NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. Moreover, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are represented in the Partnership Coordination Cell at NATO's operational command – Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), in Mons, Belgium – which facilitates the countries' participation in training and exercises.

Key areas of cooperation

Beyond promoting transparency and building confidence, key priorities of NATO's cooperation with its Central Asian Partners are to improve interoperability (the ability of the forces of these countries to work with those of the Allies and other Partner countries) in peacekeeping operations and to develop practical cooperation to address shared security challenges. Some countries are also benefiting from tailored advice and support for defence and security-sector reforms. Other important areas of cooperation are disaster-preparedness and scientific and environmental collaboration. Activities to raise public awareness of the benefits of cooperation with NATO are also being developed.

Security cooperation

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have all provided some form of support to the NATO-led operation in Afghanistan. This support has included over-flight rights and the leasing of military bases to individual Allies. Kyrgyzstan hosts a US/Coalition base at Bishkek's Manas Airport; Tajikistan's Dushanbe Airport hosts French military aircraft; and Germany uses a facility in Termez, Uzbekistan; and until December 2005, the United States also had a base in Uzbekistan at Karshi-Khanabad. Tajikistan signed a transit agreement with NATO in 2004.

Kazakhstan has also expressed an interest in supporting reconstruction in Afghanistan, possibly through one of ISAF's Provincial Reconstruction Teams (these are international teams, combining both civilian and military personnel, working in Afghanistan's provinces to provide security for aid workers and help reconstruction work). Kazakhstan recently adopted its first bilateral assistance package for Afghanistan totalling US\$3 million, which provides for investment, agricultural aid, and the construction of schools, hospitals and railways. Specialists from Uzbekistan have assisted with a number of infrastructure projects in Afghanistan, including the rebuilding of ten bridges connecting the northern part of



Tajikistan signed a transit agreement with NATO in 2004 in support of the NATO-led operation in Afghanistan.



German helicopters stationed in Termez, Uzbekistan, are used for transportation of soldiers and material for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

the country with Kabul. Tajikistan is supporting efforts to facilitate the movement of people and goods across the river Panj, which marks the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. The Tajik government has worked with the Aga Khan Development Network and the Afghan government to complete the construction of several bridges, with more to be completed in the future.

The geographic proximity of the Central Asian countries to Afghanistan and internal problems with religious extremism have reinforced their interest in working with NATO Allies to better respond to the threat of terrorism. Some of the Central Asian Partners contribute to the fight against terrorism through their participation in the Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism (PAP-T), which was launched in the wake of the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. Cooperation in this area includes sharing intelligence, and training and exercises to enhance counter-terrorist capabilities and border security capabilities. Improving preparedness for managing the consequences of a possible terrorist attack is also important.

Defence and security sector reform

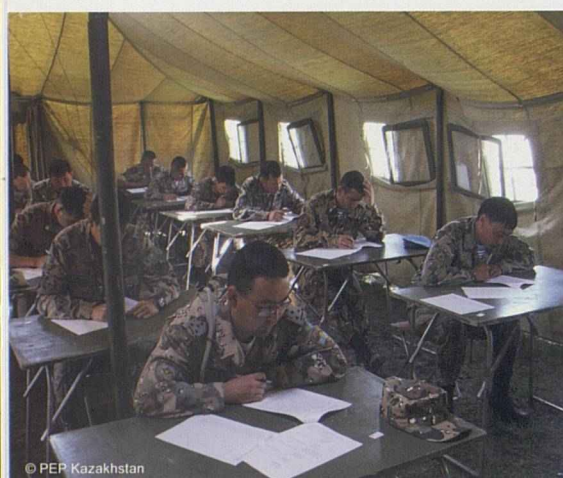
Defence and security sector reform remains an increasingly important area of NATO's cooperation with Partner countries. It is an area in which NATO and individual Allies have considerable expertise that Partners can draw on.

One key focus is to improve the ability of Partner country forces to support NATO-led peacekeeping and crisis-management operations. Bilateral programmes and multinational exercises help to develop the capacity of Partner forces to work alongside NATO forces. Learning to speak a common language and developing interoperability in terms of standard procedures are essential.

Another priority for cooperation with Partners in the area of defence and security sector reform is to promote the effective and efficient management of defence institutions, as well as civilian and democratic control of the armed forces.

Whereas in most other Partner countries defence reform efforts and military transformation have been concerned with downsizing or adapting existing security structures, the situation in Central Asia is somewhat different. Many of the countries in the region had to develop a whole new class of officers, which needed to be recruited and trained. In addition, new structures for defence ministries posed a challenge for reforms to promote parliamentary and civilian control, and transparent planning and resource allocation in the defence area.

A key instrument for helping Partners with specific and technical reforms is the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP). It helps identify, develop and evaluate forces and capabilities which might be made available for NATO-led peace-support operations. It also provides a framework for Partners to develop effective, affordable and sustainable armed forces, as well as promote wider defence reform efforts. Under PARP, planning targets are negotiated with each participating country and extensive reviews measure progress annually.



KAZBRIG soldiers take language training on location in the morning before starting tactical training.



The Tajik Chief of Defence Staff (left) attends a meeting in November 2006 with counterparts from NATO and Partner countries to discuss military-related issues of partnership and cooperation.

So far, only a few of the Central Asian Partners have chosen to take part in PARP, which is offered to Partner countries on an optional basis. Kazakhstan started participating in 2002. Kyrgyzstan decided to join the process in 2007. Uzbekistan, which had a PARP programme before 2005, is looking at restarting the process.

Kazakhstan has shared its experience of PARP in the region and has, for example, organized a regional conference on this subject. It also plans to establish a PfP Training and Education Centre that would provide language training and specialized military education to officers from throughout the region.

The Kazakh government's efforts at achieving greater interoperability with NATO troops have led to the creation of a Kazakh battalion (KAZBAT), followed by a Kazakh brigade (KAZBRIG), which have benefited from assistance from NATO Allies. (While this was not in a NATO context, KAZBAT has successfully deployed alongside Polish troops in Iraq for a demining mission.)

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have declared a number of units available for possible participation in NATO/PfP operations and exercises. Tajikistan is also seeking to enhance cooperation with the Allies in mine-clearance activities.

For those Partners pursuing defence and security sector reform, another key instrument is the Partnership Action Plan on Defence Institution Building (PAP-DIB). Launched in 2004, the PAP-DIB encourages and supports Partners in building effective and democratically-responsible defence institutions. Its overall objectives include bringing the armed forces and defence and security-sector institutions under effective democratic and civilian control; making them more accountable and transparent; and ensuring they are appropriately sized, structured and funded to meet the requirements of the new security environment.

Another priority for the Alliance is to support Partner countries through the NATO/PfP Trust Fund mechanism with demilitarization projects. These are aimed at assisting Partners with the safe destruction of stockpiles of surplus or obsolete landmines, munitions, and small arms and light weapons, as well as supporting their efforts to manage the consequences of defence reform. Funded by voluntary contributions from individual Allies and Partner countries, these projects typically involve close cooperation with other relevant organizations. In Kazakhstan, the implementation of a project to destroy 27 000 small arms and light weapons as well as 300 man-portable air defence systems is due to start in 2008. A project in Tajikistan, completed in March 2004, supported the safe destruction of the remaining stockpile of over 1200 anti-personnel landmines. This enabled Tajikistan to meet its obligations under the Ottawa Convention on the prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and their destruction.



Thanks to a Partnership for Peace Trust Fund project, large stocks of small arms and light weapons will be destroyed in Kazakhstan using available press equipment, seen here crushing 100mm ammunition cartridges.



A Kyrgyz rescue team lifts "survivors" of a flood across the river during a disaster-response exercise in Uzbekistan, April 2003.

Disaster-preparedness and response

Natural or man-made disasters can be overwhelming, even for the best-prepared countries. The repercussions of these disasters often cross borders and so can threaten the security and stability of entire regions. This is why cooperation with regard to effective disaster-preparedness and response (referred to in NATO circles as "civil emergency planning") is essential and an integral part of partnership activities.

Several of the Central Asian Partners are working to improve their national disaster-preparedness and response capabilities in cooperation with NATO. Many activities in this area are undertaken within the framework of the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC).

The EADRCC was created in 1998 to coordinate disaster-relief efforts among the EAPC countries. It has, for example, helped coordinate assistance to southern Kyrgyzstan when the government requested help after severe flooding in 2005, and after heavy snowfall had caused massive destruction in 2006.

Most Central Asian Partners participate in activities and exercises organized by the EADRCC. Exercises provide a valuable opportunity to assess capabilities in action and identify areas for greater cooperation in the future. In recent years, most EADRCC activities, including a number of exercises, have been initiated, organized and conducted in Partner countries. This reflects the high value that Partners place on cooperation in civil emergency planning, which represents the largest non-military component of PfP activities.

Uzbekistan hosted a disaster-response exercise in the Ferghana valley in 2003. The exercise scenario involved a devastating earthquake and landslides, which had caused large numbers of casualties and serious damage, leading to a call for international assistance. The exercise aimed to draw upon lessons learnt by Uzbekistan and other regional partners, including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, in responding to such natural disasters. It also served to practice EADRCC procedures and evaluate capabilities for multilateral responses.

ASSESSING SEISMIC RISK

Earthquakes pose a significant threat in highly populated areas in Central Asia. In a project sponsored by the NATO Science for Peace and Security programme, Turkish earthquake scientists have collaborated with counterparts from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan to establish risk maps for the capitals, Tashkent and Bishkek. These maps are useful for the purposes of urban planning and strengthening existing buildings.

Science and the environment

Scientists and researchers from the Central Asian countries benefit from opportunities offered under the NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme, which promotes collaboration, networking and capacity building among scientists from NATO and Partner countries. Activities supported include research, seminars, workshops and joint studies on security-related scientific issues and environmental concerns.

Collaboration is a tradition among scientists and a requirement for scientific progress. The networks created also fulfil a political goal of building understanding and confidence between communities from different cultures and traditions. Another objective is to promote the

sharing and transfer of technology to help Partner countries address their particular priorities.

Aside from projects concentrating on research in specific areas, the SPS Programme also seeks to strengthen the scientific and academic communities in the Central Asian countries. The Virtual Silk Highway project aims to improve access to the internet for research facilities in Central Asia and the Caucasus through a satellite-based network. Networking Infrastructure Grants assist Partner countries' research institutions by providing equipment that will improve the security level and quality of their telecommunications facilities.

Public information

Over the past few years, cooperation in the area of public information has increased with the Central Asian Partners. Work is ongoing with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to build networks with universities, non-governmental organizations, and the press and media to raise awareness of the Alliance and the benefits of cooperation with NATO as well as to engage civil society in dialogue on wider Euro-Atlantic security issues. Numerous activities, such as seminars, conferences and workshops, are organized by local non-governmental organizations with the support of NATO and in cooperation with state authorities.

Academics, diplomats, government officials and students from these countries are also regularly invited to visit NATO Headquarters for briefings about the Alliance. In Kazakhstan, an information centre on NATO has been opened in Almaty to improve access to relevant publications and documentation.

Cooperation in this area is less developed in the case of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. However, groups of opinion leaders and officials are occasionally invited to visit NATO Headquarters. NATO officials also travel to the region to meet relevant ministry representatives and speak at public events.

TACKLING RADIOACTIVITY

A number of projects funded under the NATO Science for Peace and Security programme in Central Asia are looking at ways to address the problem of radioactive contamination.



Together with the International Atomic Energy Agency, NATO has undertaken a study of the radioactive contamination of selected areas of a former Soviet nuclear test site in Kazakhstan. The Semipalatinsk test site is a vast area of some 20 000 square kilometres on which over 100 nuclear tests were carried out during the Soviet era. The study aims to provide suggestions for how to clean up the contaminated land so that it can be used again.

Another project is seeking to secure the effective management of uranium industry wastes in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in order to prevent health problems and environmental damage. Uranium ore mining and processing in these countries has resulted in large amounts of uranium tailings materials and waste rock deposits, often dumped in or close to inhabited areas.

A study in Turkmenistan is exploring possibilities for the safe handling of radioactive waste. The project will oversee the creation of a radiochemical laboratory and the training of Turkmen personnel.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Individual web pages on NATO's relations with each Partner:

Kazakhstan:

www.nato.int/issues/nato-kazakhstan

Kyrgyzstan:

www.nato.int/issues/nato-kyrgyzstan

Tajikistan:

www.nato.int/issues/nato-tajikistan

Turkmenistan:

www.nato.int/issues/nato-turkmenistan

Uzbekistan:

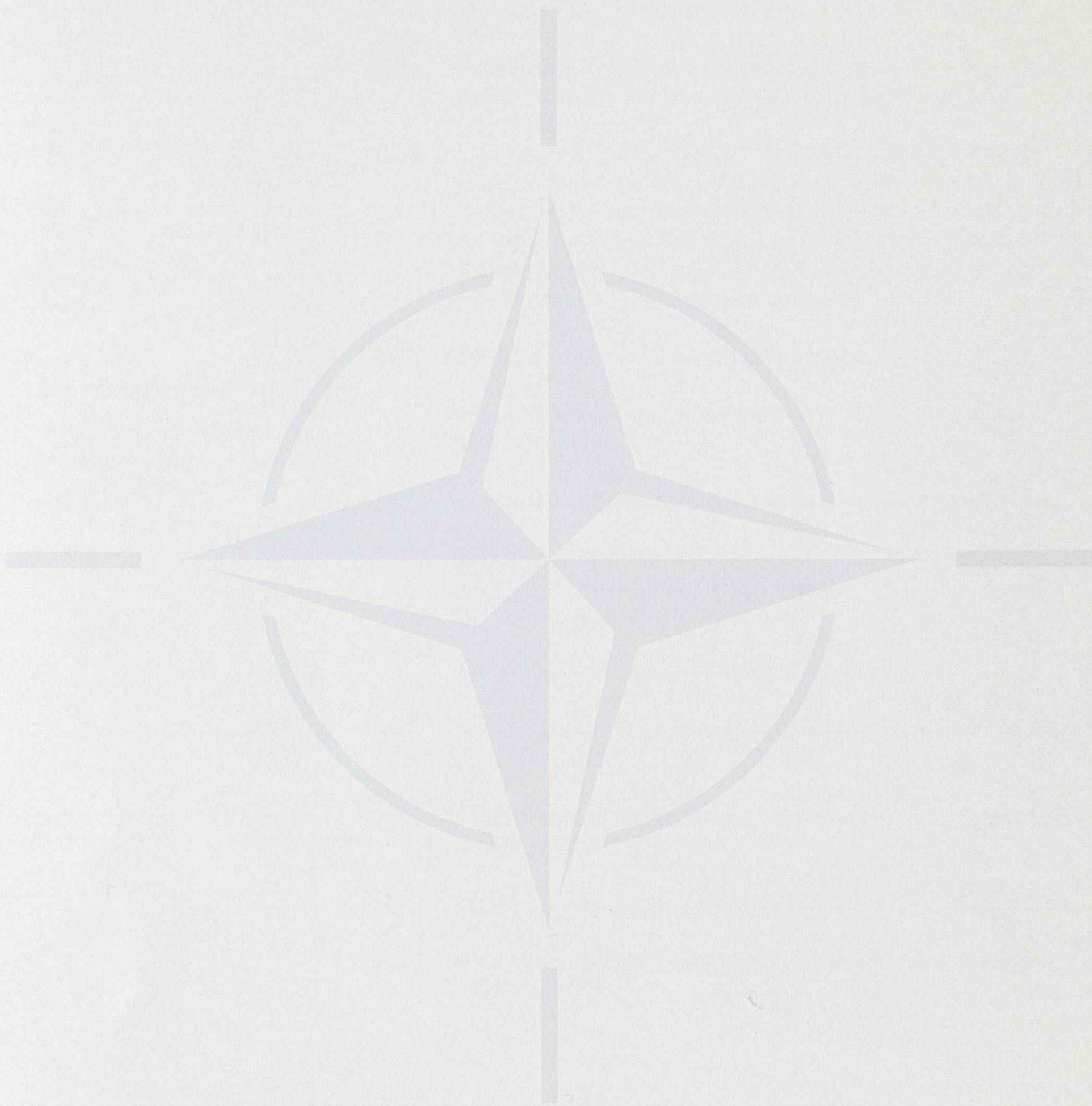
www.nato.int/issues/nato-uzbekistan

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www.nato.int/ebookshop

Milestones

- 1992** Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan join the North Atlantic Cooperation Council.
- 1994** Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan sign the Partnership for Peace (PfP) Framework Document.
- 2001** In the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, Central Asian Partners join fellow members of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in condemning the attacks and pledging to combat terrorism. Soon after, over-flight rights, bases and other assets in Central Asia are made available for the US-led coalition operation in Afghanistan.
- 2002** Tajikistan joins the Partnership for Peace.
- Kazakhstan starts participating in the PfP Planning and Review Process.
- 2003** Uzbekistan hosts a disaster-response exercise, "Ferghana 2003".
- NATO takes over the lead of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan – all Central Asian Partners support the mission.
- The Virtual Silk Highway project is completed.
- 2004** NATO's Istanbul Summit places special focus on Central Asia and the Caucasus.
- Tajikistan signs a transit agreement with NATO for operations in Afghanistan.
- 2006** Kazakhstan develops its first Individual Partnership Action Plan.
- 2007** Kyrgyzstan decides to participate in the PfP Planning and Review Process.



NATO Backgrounders provide information on different areas of Alliance policy and activity. They are published under the authority of the Secretary General and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion or positions of individual member governments.

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BGR5-ASI-ENG-1107-REV1
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