

Russia and Central Asian Allies Conduct War Games in Response to US Threats

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In-depth Report: [IRAN: THE NEXT WAR?](#)

Barely acknowledged by the Western media, military exercises organized by Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan under the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, (CSTO) were launched on the 24th of August. These war games, officially tagged as part of a counter terrorism program, are in direct response to US military threats in the region including the planned attacks against Iran.

The Rubezh-2006 exercise, is scheduled to take place from August 24-29 near the Kazak port city of Aktau:

“It will be the first joint military exercise undertaken by CSTO countries, and will involve 2,500 members drawn from various armed services of member states, with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan the principal participants. Uzbekistan, which has recently rejoined the CSTO, will send observers, while the two other pact members, Belarus and Armenia, will not be taking part .(IPWR [News Briefing Central Asia](#))

Press reports from the region describe these war games as a response to US military presence and ambitions in Central Asia:

“The growing militarisation is connected with mutual mistrust among countries in the region, say analysts. Iranian media have speculated that the United States is using Azerbaijan to create a military counterweight to Iran on the Caspian. It is possible that the exercise conducted by the CSTO - in which Russia is dominant - represents a response to concerns about United States involvement in developing Kazakstan’s navy. Observers say Russia is leaning more and more towards the Iranian view that countries from outside should be banned from having armed forces in the Caspian Sea.”

Experts say the US is trying to step up the pressure on Iran, as well as to defend its own investments in Azerbaijan and Kazakstan. It is also trying to guarantee the security of the strategically vital Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline.

A military presence on the Caspian would give the United States an opportunity to at least partially offset its weakening influence in Central Asia, as seen in the closure of its airbase in Uzbekistan, the increased rent it is having to pay for the Manas base in Kyrgyzstan, and the diplomatic scandal that resulted in the expulsion of two Americans from Kyrgyzstan.

According to analysts, genuine security in the region can be achieved only if the military interests of all five Caspian countries are coordinated. At an international conference in Astrakhan in July 2005, Russia proposed the

formation of a Caspian naval coordination group, but to date the initiative has not had much of a response.(Ibid)

Iran War Games coincide with those organized by the CSTO

The entire region seems to be on a war footing. These CSTO war games should be seen in relation to [those launched barely a week earlier by Iran](#), in response to continued US military threats. These war games coincide with the showdown at the UN Security Council and the negotiations between permanent members regarding a Security Council resolution pertaining to Iran's nuclear program. *"They are taking place within the window of time that has been predicted by analysts for the initiation of an American or an American-led attack against Iran"* (see [Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, Global Research](#), 21 August 2006):

"War games and military exercises are now well underway within Iran and its territory. The Iranian Armed Forces—the Regular Armed Forces and the Revolutionary Guards Corps—began the first stage of massive nationwide war games along border areas of the province of Sistan and Baluchistan¹ in the southeast of Iran bordering the Gulf of Oman, Pakistan, and NATO garrisoned Afghanistan to the east on Saturday, August 19, 2006. These war games that are underway are to unfold and intensify over a five week period and possibly even last longer, meaning they will continue till the end of September and possibly overlap into October, 2006". (Ibid, emphasis added)

While Iran is not a member of the CSTO, it has observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), of which China is a member.

The SCO has a close relationship to the CSTO. The structure of military alliances is crucial. In case of an attack on Iran, Russia and its CSTO allies will not remain neutral. In April, Iran was invited to become a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Sofar no concrete timetable for Iran's accession to the SCO has been set. This enlargement of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which also includes observer status for India, Pakistan and Mongolia counters US military and strategic objectives in the broader region. Moreover, China and Russia, which are partners in the SCO also have a longstanding bilateral military cooperation agreement. In August 2005, China and Russia conducted joint militart exercises.

The conduct of the CSTO war games must be seen as a signal to Washington that an attack on Iran could lead to a much broader military conflict in which Russia and the member states of the CSTO could potentially be involved, siding with Iran and Syria.

Also of significance is the structure of bilateral military cooperation agreements. Russia and China are the main suppliers of advanced weapons systems of Iran and Syria. Russia is contemplating [the installation of a Navy base in Syria on the eastern Mediterranean coastline](#). In turn, the US and Israel have military cooperation agreements with Azerbaijan and Georgia.

China War Games

In recent developments, China and Kazakhstan have initiated war games (August 24, 2006) under the auspices of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). These war games are

being held concurrently with those conducted under the CSTO, which are also being held in Kazakhstan.

India-Russia military Cooperation

India and Russia have signed on August 20th, a farreaching military cooperation agreement. Although not officially directed against the US, the purpose of this agreement is understood. The two countries have “agreed to focus on joint war games in services-to-services interaction, joint development of new weapons systems and training of Indian military personnel”, (Press Trust of India, 21 August 2006).



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