

# JOINT COUNTERACTION AGAINST THE THREAT OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN REGION ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY ORGANIZATION FORMAT (1992-2004) AND THE HISTORY OF COOPERATION OF THE ORGANIZATION WITH UZBEKISTAN IN THE FIELD OF SECURITY

Lieutenant Colonel **Sh. Z. Shukurov**  
Adjunct of the Military Academy  
General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces

## ABSTRACT

This article examines the issues of the formation of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, as well as the life experience of joint counteraction to the threat of international terrorism of the former Soviet republics on the example of the organization's format. Special attention is paid to the events in Central Asia related to the beginning of the aggravation of the situation around Afghanistan. In the work, the author highlights a number of circumstances and events that undermine the security of the countries of the Central Asian region and Russia. The article also talks about the history of the organization's cooperation with Uzbekistan in the field of security.

**Keywords:** Afghanistan, Central Asian region, USA and NATO armed forces, military cooperation, the Taliban movement, international terrorism, drug trafficking, security in the region.

### **Counteraction against the threat of international terrorism in the Central Asian region on the example of the Collective Security Treaty Organization format (1992-2004)**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the former Soviet republics faced a new threat to their security – international terrorism. None of the newly formed states in the post-Soviet space at that time had the experience of protecting their vital interests in the face of this danger, including Russia. The disintegration processes on the territory of the former USSR led to the strengthening of interethnic hostility, the weakening of political power, which allowed various extremist and terrorist organizations to conduct a large-scale expansion into the territory of the newly formed states.<sup>1</sup> The activities of terrorist organizations in the post-Soviet space in the early 90s led to the fact that the legitimately elected governments of some former Soviet republics were under threat of overthrow. For example, in the period from 1991 to 2004, 24 attempts were made by various radical Islamist groups to forcibly overthrow the government in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.<sup>2</sup> For the first time, the republics of the former USSR began to act in the direction of organizing joint counteraction to the threat of terrorism and extremism in the format of the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

First, together with the bodies of the Commonwealth, 45 documents were prepared in the CSTO, in which the problems of countering terrorism were addressed to one degree or another. An example of such work is the preparation of proposals to the Collective Security Council of a draft plan for the implementation of the Concept of Collective Security, approved by the SCB on May 26, 1995. Secondly, 24 political consultations were prepared and held in the CSTO Secretariat, the topic of which was topical issues of anti-terrorist

activities in the regions and on the borders of the former Soviet republics for the participating states. Thus, during the active hostilities in Afghanistan between the Taliban and the troops of Ahmed Shah Massoud in 1996, 9 consultations were held concerning the tense situation in this region.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, at that time, the fight against terrorism was not limited to theoretical work for the participants of the CST. The events in Kyrgyzstan related to the attempt of an armed invasion of the territory of the republic by a band of international terrorists forced the leadership of the participating countries to resort to the use of armed forces.

The operation carried out with the aim of destroying the militants became a baptism of fire for the troops of the States parties to the Treaty. The armed forces of Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan took part in the clashes. In total, 20,000 personnel, 350 armored vehicles, 150 guns and mortars, and more than 50 aircraft took part in the battles. The operation was successful and ended with the complete defeat of the invading bandits, the enemy lost 250 people killed and wounded, 25 armored personnel carriers and armored personnel carriers were captured, more than a thousand barrels of firearms.<sup>4</sup>

Important conclusions were drawn from the analysis of joint military operations against gangs. The possible options for the invasion of terrorists into the territory of the Central Asian region states were determined, the nature and areas of the bases of large gangs were clarified together with the security agencies of the countries, the initial calculation of the forces and means necessary to combat them was made, the probable locations of these units were studied. The conducted work showed that the most vulnerable areas of the Central Asian region were the south-eastern and eastern ones. The large length of the border of the former Soviet republics with Afghanistan, where the war continues, the proximity to Eastern and Asian countries whose governments were supported by Islamic terrorist groups and hostile nationalists, all these factors are supporting the escalation in the region. The countries of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan are directly located in these directions. According to the results of the consultation of the military-political leadership, it was concluded that for objective reasons, these states cannot independently maintain large military forces in places of probable aggression in order to repel terrorist threats in constant combat readiness.<sup>5</sup>

All these factors were taken into account in the activities of specialists of the CSTO bodies. This made it possible for the heads of the Council of Defense Ministers and the Joint Staff to form concrete proposals to prevent military dangers. The recommendations to the Collective Security Council were based on two important points: the immediate adoption of a decision on the creation of a collective rapid deployment force and the priority location of their deployment in the Central Asian region.

The documents that were already adopted by the Decisions of the SCB at the Minsk session and in Bishkek in October 2000 created a legal framework that allowed the Treaty to implement the proposals of the military in practice. It was based on the Regulation on the procedure for making and implementing collective decisions on the use of forces and means of the collective security system and the Agreement on the Status of formations of forces and means of the collective security system.<sup>6</sup>

On May 25, 2001, at the session of the Collective Security Council in Yerevan, a decision was made on the Collective Rapid Deployment Forces of the Central Asian Collective Security Region. For the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the post-Soviet space, it was decided in practice to create a universal multifunctional military formation,

which included the troops of fraternal peoples to protect their countries from the threat of terrorism and external aggression.<sup>7</sup> The creation of the CRDF of the CSR has become a fundamentally new approach to solving the problems of protecting the peoples of the countries from the encroachments of terrorists. It has never been possible to do such a thing in the post-Soviet space, for example, in the CIS format. There are different opinions in the media about the prospects of Collective Forces. The experts' points of view were often opposite to each other: from enthusiastic epithets to predictions about the failure of this mission, but they were united in one thing. Terrorism is a global threat, there is still no alternative defense against it, and any acceptable way to counter it has a chance of success.<sup>8</sup>

The Collective Rapid Deployment Forces of the Central Asian Collective Security Region (CRDF CSR) is a component of the coalition group of troops designed to perform tasks to ensure the military security of the states participating in the CSTO of the Central Asian Collective Security Region, including to participate in repelling external military aggression and conducting joint counter-terrorism operations.

The main tasks of the CSDB of the CSR were defined:

- 1) Operational deployment in the territories of the member States of the Central Asian region of collective security to participate in measures to stabilize the situation in the region;
- 2) Participation in repelling military aggression;
- 3) Participation in joint combined-arms counter-terrorism and special operations.

The fulfillment of the tasks assigned to the CSDB of the CSR was to be carried out in the form of participation in the conduct of combined-arms and special operations, combat operations of military units of Collective Forces according to a single plan and plan. The structure of the CSDB of the CSR included: command, ground and aviation components. The first deployment of the CSDB took place in 2002, during the period of aggravation of the situation in Afghanistan related to the actions of the NATO coalition forces. The use of permanent combat readiness units by the Treaty countries significantly reduced the time for combat coordination of crews, the availability of maneuverability by the number of forces and means allowed to increase the aviation component from Russia in the region in a short time.<sup>9</sup> Before that, in the post-Soviet space, such a level of integration in politics and economy was not achieved in any of the components of interaction between the former Soviet republics. Russian President Vladimir Putin, speaking at the annual session of the Commonwealth Security Council in 2004, stressed that the successful solution of the tasks of managing the actions of the CSDB was largely the key to maintaining peace in the Central Asian region.<sup>10</sup>

The first large-scale exercise, which took place in 2003 and was codenamed "Rubezh". CSE was conducted on the territories of the Republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The choice of the location of the exercise was not accidental. During this period, the military-political situation in the region became more complicated. Terrorist Islamic groups, financed by forces opposed to the legitimate authorities of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and reinforced by the remnants of gangs that were defeated on the territory of Afghanistan, have intensified their activities. According to the data of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, in the spring-autumn of 2003, the country's law enforcement agencies engaged in open clashes 154 times. During the same period, 46 land mines were discovered and neutralized, 5 major terrorist attacks were prevented. The troops lost 125 people killed during the fighting.<sup>11</sup> According to the plan of the exercises, their holding was supposed to have an impact on the stabilization of the situation in the region and demonstrate the strength of the

Treaty states. CSE was conducted in two phases. The first phase, which was held in Dushanbe, involved the management bodies of the Central Asian Central Bank and representatives of the general staffs of the Treaty countries, representatives of the CIS states and the Shanghai Union were invited as observers. During this phase of the exercises, staff games were held on the management of coalition forces in different combat conditions. The second phase of the exercises was attended by operational groups from the Ministries of Defense of the CAR countries, the full command of the CSDB, representatives and observers from the Commonwealth countries. The basis for the second phase of the CSE was a tactical joint exercise, which involved:

- from the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan- aac 1/35 saab, a link of front-line aviation aircraft.
- from the Armed Forces of the Kyrgyz Republic- armored group, adn Z smrb, 7 ogsb.
- from the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation- 999 AvB, reinforced oSpN obrSpN, A-50 aircraft.
- from the Armed Forces of the Republic of Tajikistan- gdshr 7 asb. <sup>12</sup>

The basis of the situation for conducting a tactical exercise is based on one of the possible options for the actions of terrorists. The troops coped with the task, destroying the imaginary enemy. The President of Tajikistan, E. Rakhmonov, who was present at the exercises, highly appreciated the results of the CSE, he said: "The terrorists should know that whatever plans they have not hatched, they will receive a worthy response from our countries to any of them and will be destroyed. <sup>13</sup> The exercises demonstrated the high field training of the troops, the ability of the command of the CSBD to successfully plan military operations and manage forces. In addition, they showed the solidarity of the Treaty States in their readiness to repel any attempt of aggression by terrorists. It is difficult to overestimate the political significance of the CSE. Extremists of various stripes, supporters of the armed overthrow of power in the region, have actually become convinced that there is an anti-terrorist force in the region that can stop them. After the exercise in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the countries, the activity of terrorist and other criminal groups has sharply decreased. Having done a large amount of work over the year, the Contract management bodies have tested the results of their work in practice. In July-August 2004, the CSE "Rubezh-2004" was planned and conducted.

The exercises were held on the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic. CSE were divided into two phases. The first one was held in Kazakhstan (Alma-Ata), it was held for 3.5 days. The operational staff of the Joint Staff of the CSE Organization, operational groups from the Armed Forces of the Treaty states participated in it, representatives of the general staffs of the CIS countries were invited as observers. The purpose of this phase of the exercises was to give practice to the CSE management bodies and military headquarters in preparing a joint operation to stabilize the situation in the CAR, as well as in managing troops during the tasks of localization and destruction of illegal armed groups. <sup>14</sup>

The second phase of the exercises took place on the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic. It was attended by: the Command of the CRDF in full, the operational staff of the Central Office of the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Kyrgyz Republic, operational groups from the Ministries of Defense of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Joint Staff and the CRDF Secretariat, representatives of the general staffs of the Armed Forces of the CIS states, the statutory and working bodies of the CIS and the SCO as observer.

Within the framework of the joint CSE "Rubezh-2004", a tactical exercise with live firing was conducted in the second phase, which involved:

- from the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan-dshr 2/35 odshbr; Su-25 link; two Mi-24;
- from the Armed Forces of the Kyrgyz Republic-armored group, adn 3 smbr; 7 ogsb KSBR, 25 obr SpN; VVB;
- from the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation – 999 AvB, reinforced oSpN, A-50;
- from the Armed Forces of Tajikistan-gdshr, 7 asb;

### **PLANS AND ACTIONS OF THE PARTIES**

The military-political situation for conducting a joint exercise is based on one of the options for its possible development. <sup>15</sup> "BLUE" (international terrorist organizations: "Al Qaeda", the "Muslim Brotherhood", "Hizb-ut-Tahrir", "the Islamic Party of Turkestan" the "East Turkestan Islamic Party" the Islamic Taliban Movement, as well as other extremist organizations). They are striving to create a powerful Muslim state-a Caliphate, which includes a significant part of the territories of the modern states of the CAR. As a result of the counter-terrorism operations conducted by the United States and its allies on the territory of Afghanistan and the operation to establish democracy in Iraq, they were defeated in an open confrontation and moved the center of terrorist activities to the territories of the Treaty states. Since the beginning of 2004, the leaders of radical Islamist organizations, in the interests of destabilizing the situation and creating conditions for seizing power, have been indoctrinating the population, and also using a policy of intimidation to attract broad segments of the population to their ranks. They organize mass rallies demanding the resignation of the legitimate government, which escalate into clashes with law enforcement agencies. In the future, they plan to provoke a retaliatory use of force by government troops in order to unleash an armed conflict and seize power. "RED" (member States of the Collective Security Treaty Organization). They strive to actively resist the spread of the ideas of Islamic extremism in the territories of the CSTO and CAR member states; take socio-political and special measures to stabilize the internal political situation, stop attempts at separatism and preserve the state integrity of the countries of the Central Asian region; fulfilling their obligations under the Treaty, provide assistance, including military assistance, to the states of the region in the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking and illegal arms trade, defending their national and political interests, strengthen the protection of the southern borders of the CIS member states, they take additional measures to maintain public order in areas under the influence of bandit leaders. The operational deployment of the Central Asian CSBD is being carried out in order to demonstrate the determination of the use of military force to defend the national interests of the CSTO member states. During the transition of gangs to active combat operations, large-scale joint special operations are carried out to eliminate terrorists operating on the territory of the Treaty countries. <sup>16</sup> During the tactical phase of the CSE, operations were actively carried out, with live firing from tanks, artillery systems, combat bombing and the use of army aviation. The result of the actions of the CSDB forces at the exercises was the complete defeat of the conditional enemy and the expulsion of its remnants from the territory of the CSTO participants. The results of the exercises showed that for the first time in the post-Soviet space, the CSTO format managed to solve the problem of creating joint military forces in response to the threat of terrorism. The annual holding of the CSE is also becoming a popular tradition of the Treaty countries. They increase the skill and combat training of the troops of the CSTO member states, strengthen the combat brotherhood and demonstrate to the population the ability of the created forces. In addition, the holding of the exercises had a decisive impact on the stabilization of the situation in the region and cooled the desire of terrorists to test the strength of the borders of the CAR states. At the present stage of the

development of the military-political situation in the post-Soviet space, the range of threats of terrorism is increasing. The circumstances require paying attention to the historical experience of joint counteraction to the threat of terrorism, this is especially relevant in the republics of the Central Asian region, where the difficult situation remains near the borders of Afghanistan. The history of cooperation of the CST organization with the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of security. After gaining independence, Uzbekistan relied on military cooperation with the Russian Federation, this was due to the fact that military-political relations and cooperation of military enterprises were unified in the military-industrial complex system. Historically, we know that it was Russia and Uzbekistan that initiated the signing of the Collective Security Treaty (CST) in Tashkent in May 1992. The CIS (the so-called Tashkent Pact), which became the first attempt to form a security system in the post-Soviet space and the foundation for its subsequent transformation into the CSTO. In particular, at that time, even with the beginning of the civil war in Tajikistan, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan closely coordinated their actions to provide military assistance to Tajik government formations.<sup>17</sup> But since the second half of the 1990s, bilateral cooperation between Uzbekistan and the Russian Federation in the military sphere has gradually become more of a protocol nature. Uzbekistan has signed a number of parallel treaties and agreements in the field of military cooperation, both with the CIS states and with foreign countries. During this period, active military contacts with the United States and other NATO countries began in parallel in a bilateral format and within the framework of the Partnership for Peace program. And at the beginning of 1999, the leadership of Uzbekistan decided to temporarily suspend membership in the collective security system within the framework of the CST. However, a few years later, against the background of a decline in the effectiveness of the United States' policy, both in Afghanistan and in the Central Asian region as a whole, there was a cooling in Uzbek-American relations in almost all spheres of activity. The turning point was the Andijan events of May 2005, after which Uzbekistan curtailed joint programs with the United States and categorically demanded the withdrawal of all units of American troops from its territory. In connection with the increased frequency, Uzbekistan made a decision to deepen all-round relations with Russia. He signed in June 2004 an agreement "On strategic partnership", and in November 2005 - agreements "On allied relations", after that cooperation between Uzbekistan and Russia officially acquired an allied character. Moreover, the 2005 treaty provided for the provision of military assistance in the event of external aggression against one of the parties. In 2006, the Republic of Uzbekistan again became a member of the CSTO, where the leading role, of course, was played by the Russian Federation. However, the interaction between Uzbekistan and Russia in the field of security at that time was not really only of a systemic nature and had a rather cyclical character.

This was largely due to the peculiarities of Uzbekistan's foreign policy course. In addition, Uzbekistan reacted extremely negatively to the "impotence and passivity" of the CSTO during the Osh events of 2010, when the interethnic conflict in the south of Kyrgyzstan created tension in relations between two members of this organization – the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. Taking into account the analysis of those circumstances, in 2012 Uzbekistan once again suspended its membership in the CSTO. Along with the continuing "sluggish" state of the Uzbek-Russian military relations, Uzbekistan began to simultaneously increase cooperation with Western countries, the United States and China. And in the same 2012, the national Parliament of the country approved the law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On approval of the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan". This Concept of foreign policy activity contains the following main provisions: Uzbekistan reserves the right to conclude alliances, enter into commonwealths and other interstate formations, as well as leave them, guided by the highest interests of the state,

people, their welfare and security, priority areas of modernization of the country, current national legislation and accepted international obligations;

Uzbekistan pursues a peaceful policy and does not participate in military-political blocs, reserves the right to withdraw from any interstate entity in the event of its transformation into a military-political bloc; Uzbekistan takes political, economic and other measures to prevent its involvement in armed conflicts and hotbeds of tension in neighboring States, and also does not allow the deployment of foreign military bases and facilities on its territory;

In accordance with the Constitution, the law "On Defense", the Military Doctrine, the Armed Forces of Uzbekistan are created exclusively to protect the state sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, the peaceful life and security of its population and do not take part in peacekeeping operations abroad. <sup>18</sup> Currently, although Uzbekistan is not an active member of the CSTO organization, the country is actively participating in the space of the Eurasian Economic Community – although so far as an observer. Nevertheless, the analysis of activities shows that over the past 5 years, Uzbekistan has significantly expanded cooperation with the CSTO member states in the field of security. And the topic of Uzbekistan's possible participation in this structure was once again developed after the speaker of the State Duma of the Russian Federation Vyacheslav Volodin, during his visit to Tashkent in mid-September, invited Uzbek parliamentarians to join the CSTO Parliamentary Assembly as observers. This gave rise to a certain part of experts and media representatives to talk about the possibility of Uzbekistan restoring its membership in this organization. So, according to the Russian political scientist, director of the International Institute of Political Expertise Yevgeny Minchenko, there are still certain constraining factors for the return of the republic to the organization, for example, one of them is a course on a multi-vector policy. There are other opinions, for example, commenting on the results of the completed multilateral strategic exercises "Center-2019", a military expert, associate professor of the Department of Political Science and Sociology of the Russian University of Economics. Plekhanova Alexander Perendzhiev believes that Uzbekistan's participation in them is a good foundation for rapprochement with the CSTO. At the same time, the republic may become one of the first to become not a member, but a partner of the CSTO. Such a status can be created for countries that do not want to be members of the organization, but want to cooperate with it. At the same time, according to Dmitry Verkhoturov, an expert at the Center for the Study of Modern Afghanistan, Uzbekistan will not rush to return to the CSTO, and there are a number of reasons for this. First, the only country from which a military threat to Uzbekistan can arise is the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. But today, the republic, which has at its disposal the most powerful army in the Central Asian region, is itself able to ensure the security of its southern flank. And the eastern flank of the defensive line, passing along the Tajik section of the border and along the Panj, is already being defended within the framework of the CSTO. Secondly, if Uzbekistan were a member of the CSTO, its policy in Afghanistan, where the state has recently been showing noticeable activity, could meet any difficulties. Probably, Tashkent would not be able to conduct political and economic activities so freely, various agreements with the Afghan government, opposition forces and individual politicians. In any case, by its membership in the CSTO, Uzbekistan would be perceived in Kabul as an ally of Russia, and not an independent political entity and partner. But it is the Republic of Uzbekistan that has been becoming a key partner of Afghanistan in a number of large-scale economic projects since 2017.

Today, Uzbekistan, systematically carrying out large-scale reforms in the national Armed Forces, is more focused on re-equipping the national army with modern weapons, while

mainly Russian-made. Also, Uzbekistan, in accordance with the agreements on strategic partnership and allied relations, acquires military-industrial complex at domestic prices, being the only CIS country outside the CSTO zone with such privileges. The above facts are quite enough to make sure that Uzbekistan is still planning to ensure its security without joining any military organizations and blocs. Moreover, full-scale participation in organizations imposes certain obligations on the members of the organization, in particular, it requires: if one of the participating countries is attacked, then others should come to the rescue. What should Uzbekistan do in this case, whose Foreign Policy Concept does not provide for the use of the national army in combat operations abroad? Moreover, according to the author, the multi-vector foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan does not isolate the country from military-political relations with both Western and eastern countries. In addition, political analyst, associate professor of the State University of Uzbekistan Farhad Tolipov believes that there is still no consensus among the CSTO members on the status of this organization. There is also no answer to the fundamental question. Is the CSTO a full-fledged military bloc like NATO or not? Therefore, without a consensus on this issue, starting to create a military force is like putting a cart before a horse.<sup>20</sup>

In accordance with the law of Uzbekistan "On the principles of Foreign Policy", the state conducts a "non-aligned" foreign policy, that is, it does not enter into military-political blocs, and at the same time the CSTO is increasingly acquiring the contours of a military bloc. In this regard, the non-participation of the Republic of Uzbekistan in military-political organizations (military blocs) gives the state the opportunity to maintain a balanced distance from the geostrategic centers of power, while simultaneously leaving itself an open geopolitical legal space for maneuver in defending national interests.

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