

Russia Seeks to Underpin Afghan Security After NATO Pullout

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia wants to play a role in keeping Afghanistan stable after the withdrawal of most NATO combat troops by maintaining government military hardware on Afghan soil, a senior military official said Wednesday.

In a meeting with foreign military attaches in Moscow, Sergei Koshelev underscored that Russia is worried about threats to its security after the pullout of most foreign forces from Afghanistan, which borders ex-Soviet states in Central Asia.

"We cannot fail to be concerned by the danger of the restoration of a regime on Afghan territory that would foster the spread of terrorism, drug trafficking and instability," said Koshelev, the Russian military's point man for foreign ties.

Russia, mindful of the 1980s war of occupation that killed thousands of its soldiers and contributed to the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, has ruled out sending troops

to Afghanistan since the U.S.-led invasion in 2001.

But it has supported U.S. and NATO operations since then by allowing transit across its territory and contributed small arms and ammunition to Afghan security forces, as well as selling helicopters and training Afghans to maintain them.

NATO is set to wrap up its combat mission in Afghanistan and most members of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) are to withdraw by the end of 2014.

"With the withdrawal of ISAF, keeping the weapons and equipment of the Afghan national security forces in repair and working condition will be of major importance," Koshelev said.

He indicated that at a conference it plans to host in late May on European security, Russia would like to discuss "the creation of repair facilities on the territory of Afghanistan to keep their military equipment in working condition."

He also said Russia wanted closer cooperation between its security alliance with Central Asia and other ex-Soviet states on the one hand and NATO on the other in combating threats that could emerge from Afghanistan.

"I am not talking about political dialogue but about the possibility of determining concrete projects the militaries would be responsible for," he said, without proposing any specific projects.

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