

Putin Approves Russian-Abkhazian Army Group

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Drills at Russia's military base in Abkhazia in March 2016. **Russian Defense Ministry Press Office**

President Vladimir Putin has signed an agreement unifying Russian military units with those of Abkhazia, a breakaway region of Georgia. The document was originally signed on Nov. 21, 2015, in Moscow.

According to the agreement, the organization and conduct of joint activities will be carried out on the basis of joint guidelines of the general staffs of the armed forces of the Russian Federation and Abkhazia. The composition of the joint group of troops will include a unified Russian military base stationed on the territory of the Republic of Abkhazia, which is contributing two separate motorized rifle battalions and artillery and aviation groups, as well as a separate special-forces detachment.

In the event of a potential threat or wartime, troops in the united group answer directly to the commander of the joint group, appointed by the Russian Ministry of Defense.

The commander of the Joint Group of Forces operates through joint command, which is

staffed by military and civilian personnel of the armed forces of both Russia and Abkhazia.✕✕The decision to use the troops of the joint group must be accepted by the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and the Chief of the Armed Forces of Abkhazia, the document says.

Financing the costs of bringing the new unit up to Russian standards falls on Moscow.✕✕The agreement was concluded for a period of ten years, with the possibility of automatic renewal for successive five-year periods.

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