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Russia to Hold Central Asia Army Drills Near Afghan Border

By AFP

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Armed forces of Tajikistan on a military parade next to Afghanistan-Tajikistan border. July 16, 2021
Nakib Murodzoda / TASS

Russia said Monday it will stage military drills next month with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan near the border with Afghanistan where the Taliban has led a lightning offensive against government troops.

The insurgents have capitalized on the withdrawal of foreign troops to launch a series of offensives across the country.

Afghan government troops and refugees have in recent weeks crossed into Tajikistan, fleeing Taliban advances.

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The joint drills will take place August 5-10 at the Kharbmaidon training ground in Tajikistan near the Afghan border, the Russian defense ministry said in a statement.

Alexander Lapin, commander of the Central Military District, said that the troops will run drills to defeat "illegal armed units that invaded the territory of an allied country".

Troops from a Russian military base in Tajikistan and the Central Military District will take part in the games, the defense ministry said.

The Taliban is now believed to control roughly half of Afghanistan's 400 districts, several border crossings, and has laid siege to a string of provincial capitals.

More than a dozen diplomatic missions in Afghanistan called Monday for "an urgent end" to the Taliban's ruthless military offensive, saying it was at odds with claims they want a negotiated settlement to end the conflict.

Russia has said the United States failed its mission in Afghanistan and blamed the withdrawal of foreign forces for the war-torn country's rapidly deteriorating stability.

The Taliban is a terrorist organization banned in Russia.

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