

Russia, China Hold Joint Anti-Terror Drills – TASS

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Sergei Medvedev/TASS

Russia and China have kicked off multinational anti-terrorism military exercises as the countries seek to fill a regional security void left by the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan, Russian state media [reported](#) Monday.

The two powers will hold the Peace Mission 2021 drills in Russia's Orenburg region near the Kazakh border from Sept. 20-24 under the banner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Related article: [Russia, Belarus Launch Massive Military Drills as NATO Watches](#)

The SCO, along with the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), has since its founding in 2001 been viewed as Russia's and China's counters to Western geopolitical dominance.

In addition to Beijing and Moscow, the SCO consists of the ex-Soviet Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, with India and Pakistan joining in 2017.

Afghanistan holds observer status in the SCO, though the Taliban — a militant group that recaptured the country from the U.S.-backed government last month after 20 years in retreat — has not been invited to the bloc's latest summit last week.

“Over 5,000 troops from nine states will demonstrate their readiness for joint operations to rout large outlawed armed gangs and neutralize terrorist threats,” the state-run TASS news agency quoted a senior Russian military officer as saying.

According to the outlet, Peace Mission 2021 will involve 5,500 troops from SCO member-states and more than 1,200 weapons and equipment in the Orenburg region's Donguz training ground.

China has [deployed](#) 558 troops and 130 vehicles and pieces of equipment to Peace Mission 2021, covering a distance of 6,300 kilometers, according to the Global Times.

These include Y-20 strategic transport aircraft, Z-19 attack helicopters and Z-8G transport helicopters, Type 08 infantry fighting vehicles, Type 11 wheeled assault gun and Mengshi off-road assault vehicle.

The biennial drills will be split into two stages with the active phase including the Russian- and Chinese-led troops leading in five operational episodes.

Peace Mission 2021 will also be the first SCO anti-terror drills for Russia's key ally and neighbor Belarus, said Col. Gen. Alexander Lapin, who leads the Russian Defense Ministry's Central Military Command.

Russia and China last month held joint Zapad/Interaction 2021 military exercises against the backdrop of regional security concerns and deteriorating ties with the U.S.

President Vladimir Putin has hinted at the possibility of a Russian-Chinese [military alliance](#), an upgrade from the current strategic partnership, in the future.

The Taliban is a terrorist organization banned in Russia.

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