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Russia Is Building 'Pragmatic' Partnership With Taliban Government, Shoigu Says

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A Taliban delegation at a Russian Foreign Ministry meeting in Moscow. **TASS**

Moscow is building "pragmatic" and "full-fledged" relations with the Taliban government in Afghanistan, Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu said Thursday at a regional security gathering.

The Taliban swept back to power in 2021 after overthrowing the U.S.-backed government and imposing an austere version of Islamic law. In 2024, President Vladimir Putin called the Taliban "allies in the fight against terrorism."

Russia was the first country to recognize the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan last July after removing the Taliban from its list of terrorist organizations and accepting its ambassador to Moscow.

Speaking at the Russia and China-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting in

Kyrgyzstan, Shoigu underscored that Moscow had established a “pragmatic dialogue” with the Taliban to “meet the goals of regional security and economic development.”

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“We’re consistently building a full-fledged partnership ranging from political and security contacts to trade, economic and cultural and humanitarian cooperation,” Shoigu was quoted as saying by the state-run TASS news agency.

He claimed up to 23,000 members of more than 20 militant groups remained active in Afghanistan and credited Kabul for its “fierce armed struggle” against the Islamic State.

Shoigu, who had served as Russia’s defense minister between 2012 and 2024, called on the United States to take “full responsibility” for its 20-year presence in Afghanistan and “assume the main burden” of post-conflict reconstruction.

He also voiced opposition to what he described as attempts by other countries to establish a military presence in Afghanistan. Russia previously said it did not harbor intentions for military deployment in the country.

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