

# Eurasia: CSTO Agrees to Increase Defense Operations on Tajik-Afghan Border

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**What Happened:** The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a Russian-led defense bloc, agreed to step up operations and troop deployments on Tajikistan's southern border with Afghanistan in an effort to prevent drug trafficking and illegal migration, TASS reported Sept. 15. Member countries also agreed to increase cooperation on exposing and neutralizing extremist and terrorist groups in the area.

**Why It Matters:** While details such as the size and start date for the expanded presence are still unclear, a reinforcement of the border is likely to help mitigate the possibility of destabilizing incidents in Tajikistan related to illegal migration or smuggling, and deter armed incursions by radical groups. Central Asian states and Russia are concerned about the security implications of an Afghanistan in which the Taliban wields broad influence, and will likely be forced to harden their borders and prepare for increased refugee flows through Central Asia.

**Background:** The CSTO is a Eurasian military alliance between Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In recent months, Tajikistan and neighboring Uzbekistan have stepped up military exercises — which often include the participation of Russia — in an effort to deter armed incursions and other destabilizing actions by extremist groups similar to the Taliban.