

cooperation. Moreover, only NATO has the capability to help train the militaries of these states and its help is being welcomed by an increasing number of former Soviet states. NATO exercises or Cooperative Best Effort 2002 have been held in Georgia.⁶³ On the non-military front, NATO is also currently financing \$2.5 million to broaden internet access across Central Asia and the Transcaucasus.⁶⁴ And since the creation of the new Russia-NATO Council, Ukraine too has expressed its desire to develop a closer relationship with NATO.

The US is already assisting with training to enhance regional stability and to increase the interoperability among NATO and PFP nations. The goal, according to Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Martin R Berndt, Atlantic Command's Director of Exercises and Joint Training, is to prepare in advance "so that if we are ever called to do a mission like this (Afghanistan), we're not meeting people for the first time".⁶⁵ Besides bases and agreement to provide training and equipment for local forces, the US has also sponsored several economic aid packages and trade agreements.

There are also other regional institutions besides NATO which are mandated to bring military integration and stability to the region. NATO should continue to reach out to these institutions, some of which it already has close relations with, and to develop ties with the others. Briefly, the pro-Western security institutions include first, the Central Asian Battalion (Centrasbat) formed by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan in December 1995 as a peacekeeping unit to provide peace and stability in Central Asia. Centrasbat has held multinational exercises in Central Asia to learn other nations' tactics in hopes of becoming a full-fledged participant in UN peacekeeping operations.⁶⁶ Second, GUUAM (Georgia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova) is a bloc of former Soviet countries formed as an anti-Russian group which has been lobbying to get into NATO. Uzbekistan withdrew from the group on 13 June, 2002.

⁶³ *AFP*, January 11, 2002.

⁶⁴ *Interfax*, February 8, 2002.

⁶⁵ Linda D. Kozaryn, "Parachutes Ready: Next Stop Kazakhstan", *DefenseLink*, http://defenseLink.mil/news/Sep1997/n09031997_9709031.html