



The Ministry of Defense
of the Republic of Azerbaijan



CENTER OF ANALYSIS
OF INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS

REPORT

ON PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS OF THE AZERBAIJANI ARMY



This report was jointly prepared by the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan
and the Center of Analysis of International Relations



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Executive Summary

This report examines peacekeeping operations, which play an important role in restoring stability after armed conflicts, maintaining ceasefires, and ensuring long-term peace, and explores the activities of the peacekeeping contingent established within the Azerbaijani Army over the years. The research work is structured into three chapters, focusing on the theoretical framework of peacekeeping operations and examining their political and military dimensions.

Chapter 1 analyzes from a theoretical perspective the modern concept of peacekeeping operations which developed in parallel with the evolution of international law, humanitarian standards, and collective security institutions. It briefly touches upon the historical background and elaborates on the nature, legal basis, implementation methods, and financing of peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, the chapter provides an overview of operations conducted by the UN, as well as by other international regional organizations and states, and explains the main types of peacekeeping operations – observation missions, multidimensional peacekeeping missions and peace-enforcement operations.

Chapter 2 explores the political aspects of Azerbaijan's role in international peacekeeping operations, underlining their important place in the country's national security approach. It demonstrates that participation in peacekeeping missions played a direct role in helping the country swiftly integrate into the contemporary system of international relations. In addition to presenting Azerbaijan as a reliable and peace-oriented actor, these experiences have helped deepen several fundamental politico-military relationships, including with Türkiye, intensify cooperation with international institutions such as NATO, and showcase the high professionalism of the Azerbaijani Army to the entire world. Most importantly, Azerbaijan's contributions in this field were consistently grounded in a commitment to international law, as well as the readiness to adopt and share responsibility for upholding regional and global security. The chapter emphasizes that these factors continue to play a leading role in Azerbaijan's international activities, with global recognition of Azerbaijan's success in peacekeeping missions serving as a powerful political signal of the country's growing global status and influence.

Chapter 3 examines the various military aspects of the peacekeeping operations in which the Azerbaijani Army has participated. It covers explanations of certain concepts used in the report, the history of and underlying reasons for the establishment of Azerbaijan's peacekeeping forces, the legal basis for the Republic of Azerbaijan's participation in peacekeeping operations, the preparation of peacekeeping units, the experience gained, and other related issues. The chapter draws on the experiences of the Azerbaijani Army personnel in several critical peacekeeping operations (Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and South Sudan), detailing their areas of responsibility, the conditions under which they served, and the tasks they carried out. First-hand insights from officers of the Azerbaijani Army, along with the opinions of high-ranking officials from partnering states shed light on the challenges and threats that were encountered and the acts of bravery that were demonstrated by Azerbaijan's peacekeeping forces. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the significance of Azerbaijan's achievements in the field, particularly as the development of the country's peacekeeping forces coincided with an extremely challenging period for the country. The obtained experience and the underlying motivation to continue supporting international security indicate significant potential for Azerbaijan to ensure broader participation in such operations in the future.

List of Abbreviations

CENTRASBAT – The Central Asian Battalion

EU – European Union

EUFOR – European Union Force

EULEX – European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo

HKIA – Hamid Karzai International Airport

IFOR – NATO Implementation Force

IPAP – Individual Partnership Action Plan

ISAF – International Security Assistance Force

KFOR – NATO Kosovo Force

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

NKIA – North Kabul International Airport

OCC E&F – NATO Operational Capabilities Concept Evaluation and Feedback Programme

PfP – NATO Partnership for Peace

SFOR – NATO Stabilization Force

UN – United Nations

UNFICYP – United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

UNMISS – United Nations Mission in South Sudan

UNMOGIP – United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan

UNSC – UN Security Council

UNSCR – UN Security Council Resolution

UNTSO – United Nations Truce Supervision Organization

Foreword

*Dear Readers,
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The National Leader of the Azerbaijani people, the great statesman Heydar Aliyev, laid the fundamental foundations of the strategic statehood and governance policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The domestic and foreign policy based on a solid foundation has been successfully continued by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, leading to major achievements in political, military, economic, and other fields, including the historic victory in the 44-day Patriotic War, which resulted in the full restoration of Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the recognition of our country as a reliable friend and partner in the international arena.

Azerbaijan's contribution to international security holds a special place in its recognition as a reliable friend and partner. The role of Azerbaijan's peacekeeping forces in these contributions is also significant.

The peacekeeping forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan were established in 1997 by the directive of the National Leader of our people, the great political leader Heydar Aliyev. This historic decision is a clear demonstration of our country's commitment to peace, international security, and stability.

The establishment of the peacekeeping forces coincided with a very difficult period for our country. Serious political and economic problems, exacerbated by Armenia's military aggression, were among the issues that our state had to address. In 1997, nearly one million refugees and internally displaced persons lived in the Republic of Azerbaijan, and 20 percent of its territory was under the occupation of Armenian armed forces. Azerbaijan directed all its resources toward resolving political and economic problems, restoring its territorial integrity and sovereignty, and improving the social conditions of people displaced from their homes and living in tents. Under such difficult circumstances, the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan was tasked with the highly important and challenging mission of creating a force with the appropriate capacities and capabilities to participate in peacekeeping operations. This, in turn, required well-coordinated steps that took into account all factors. To accomplish this task, several issues had to be resolved, including the development of the peacekeeping force's organizational structure, determination of its deployment location, staffing with personnel, training, rotation, logistical support, and transportation to peacekeeping operation areas.

Despite all difficulties, the Republic of Azerbaijan demonstrated strong will and determination and succeeded in establishing its peacekeeping forces to realize its desire to contribute to international security.

The first testing ground for Azerbaijani peacekeeping units was Kosovo. Despite participating in a peacekeeping operation for the first time, our forces were staffed with combat experience servicemen who had served in trenches. Subsequently, Azerbaijani peacekeepers continued to contribute to international security by participating in peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In the relevant operations, our peacekeeping forces risked their lives while carrying out important tasks such as protecting strategically significant facilities, force deployment bases, and events held by international and non-governmental organizations; protecting checkpoints

and patrolling; conducting surveillance; ensuring the security of the main and reserve supply routes of peacekeeping forces; escorting humanitarian aid convoys; carrying out search and rescue operations; creating a secure environment; disarming armed groups; evacuating the sick and wounded and providing them with medical assistance; ensuring public safety and order, civilian security, and freedom of movement; combating smuggling, illegal migration, transnational crime, and illicit drug trafficking; and conducting training for local military and police institutions.

In Kosovo, Azerbaijani peacekeepers prevented the resurgence of possible armed attacks and acts of violence among ethnic minorities in the Dragash district and ensured a secure environment, public safety, order, and freedom of movement.

Azerbaijani peacekeepers ensured the security of the Haditha Dam located in Iraq's Al-Anbar province, which supplies 25 percent of the country's electricity needs, and prevented attacks against it. This eliminated the need to allocate additional forces for ensuring the protection of the dam and for conducting security and stability operations in that area by the units participating in combat operations for U.S. forces.

The peacekeeping unit of the Azerbaijani Army, within the framework of the operations of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, carried out post-patrol service in the Uthil settlement of Kabul city, protected the northeastern part of the Dohan base, and guarded the state television tower of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the ISAF forces' ammunition depot in the Pol-e-Charkhi district.

Within the framework of the Resolute Support Mission, Azerbaijani peacekeepers ensured the protection of Kabul International Airport, which held great logistical importance. After the mission ended, Azerbaijani peacekeepers were the last to leave Afghanistan. As other states' peacekeepers involved in the protection of Kabul International Airport withdrew, Azerbaijani peacekeepers also fulfilled tasks related to airport protection, ensured the safe evacuation of military forces and civilian personnel, and carried out the duties assigned to them at a high level.

To achieve the strategic transportation of forces and provide logistical support for the peacekeeping contingents deployed outside the borders of the Republic of Azerbaijan, our country utilized the capabilities of its friendly and partner states.

In the operations conducted in Kosovo and Afghanistan, this support was provided to the Republic of Azerbaijan by the Republic of Türkiye, whereas in the operation conducted in Iraq, it was provided by the United States. We express our gratitude to our brotherly and strategic ally Türkiye, as well as to our friend and strategic partner the United States, for this valuable support.

The operations in which Azerbaijani peacekeepers participated further enriched their combat experience and enabled them to share their experience with other countries' peacekeepers. Azerbaijani peacekeepers have, with the highest level of dignity, fulfilled the responsible and noble missions entrusted to the country in Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Since January 2019, servicemen of the Azerbaijani Army have continued to contribute to international security as military observers in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

From 1999 to the present day, more than 3,000 servicemen of the Azerbaijani Army have participated in peacekeeping operations in various regions of the world.

The activities of the peacekeepers of the Azerbaijani Army have consistently been highly appreciated by the command of the peacekeeping forces in which they served, as well as by various countries and international organizations.

Under the special attention of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, continuous work is being carried out to ensure that our peacekeeping forces—having passed through various stages of development—meet modern requirements. The peacekeeping forces are equipped with modern weapons and equipment, and special training programs for personnel are being improved.

The turbulent geopolitical processes taking place in the world and the conflicts occurring in various regions demonstrate the growing role of peacekeepers. As a member of the international community and the United Nations (UN), the Republic of Azerbaijan supports all initiatives aimed at sustaining peace and promoting global security.

At present, the possibilities for the Azerbaijani Army's participation in various operations conducted by the UN and NATO to assist in maintaining international peace are being explored.

The political decisions related to participation in peacekeeping operations, the will demonstrated by our country, and the contributions made by our peacekeeping forces have further strengthened Azerbaijan's reputation in the world as a reliable partner and friend and have also presented it as a peace-loving country.

I hope that the report jointly prepared by the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Center of Analysis of International Relations will be of interest to readers.

I leave the evaluation of the prepared material to the readers' discretion.

Respectfully,

Zakir HASANOV

Colonel General

Minister of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan

As the world's geopolitical landscape changes, the concept of "peace" also acquires new meaning. Today, peace is not merely the cessation of military operations; it also signifies the establishment of human security, social equality, and trust. The dynamics of conflicts show that peace is not only the subject of diplomatic documents, but also an expression of political will and values.

For the Republic of Azerbaijan, these values have been a priority since the very first days of independence. The decision taken in 1997 by the National Leader, Heydar Aliyev, to establish peacekeeping forces marked the beginning of a new stage in the state's foreign policy agenda. Even under the complex geopolitical conditions of that time, this decision should be regarded not only as a military plan but also as a declaration of Azerbaijan's readiness to act as a responsible partner within the international system.

The essence of this decision was simple yet strategic: Azerbaijan is capable of protecting not only its own borders, but also the borders of peace. In the years that followed, under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev, this principle became an integral part of the country's foreign policy. Today, Azerbaijan's security philosophy is built upon the concepts of regional stability, dialogue, and mutual trust.

The activities of Azerbaijani peacekeepers represent the concrete embodiment of this philosophy. From Kosovo to Iraq, from Afghanistan to South Sudan, Azerbaijani servicemen have transformed peace from something merely preserved into something actively created. Their mission has not been limited to carrying out operational tasks; it has also meant associating the name of Azerbaijan with trust, professionalism, and humanity. It is also worth noting that, during his most recent visit to our country, Vice President James David Vance of the United States highly praised the activities of Azerbaijan's peacekeeping forces, which have successfully completed their mission in Afghanistan. He stated, "I think many Americans may not know that, for example, the Azerbaijanis were some of the last to leave Afghanistan. They were very supportive in the global war on terrorism. They fought alongside United States Marines in Afghanistan, and, in fact, earned a reputation as being some of the toughest and fiercest troops anywhere in the world."¹

This experience has demonstrated that a peacekeeping mission is the work of individuals who carry weapons on their shoulders but reconciliation in their intentions. In this sense, the Azerbaijani peacekeeper is a living symbol of military diplomacy. He builds bridges between the cultures of different peoples, restores trust after periods of tension, and prioritizes human life even in the face of danger.

The experience gained by Azerbaijan in this field has significantly influenced military development and strengthened the country's international standing. Peacekeeping operations have taught our officers the nuances of multinational cooperation, how decisions are shaped through international coordination, and how modern security approaches function in practice. Ultimately, this has all contributed to the development of Azerbaijan's politico-military governance culture.

1 President.az, "Ilham Əliyev və ABŞ-ın Vitse-prezidenti Cey. Di. Vens mətbuata bəyanatlarla çıxış ediblər", 10 fevral 2026, Elektron resurs: <https://president.az/az/articles/view/71561>

The distinctive feature of Azerbaijan's peacekeeping policy is that it does not stem solely from international obligations; it is also a natural continuation of our national identity. For us, peace is not an unjust compromise, but a value that carries moral responsibility. In Azerbaijan's history, the concepts of strength and justice have never been contradictory; instead, they have complemented one another. That is precisely why Azerbaijan is a state that has both emerged victorious in war and cherished the meaning of peace.

The new regional realities that emerged after the 44-day Patriotic War confirm this philosophy. Azerbaijan is the country that ended the war and promoted peace. This demonstrates that peace is ensured not by "declarations" but by "actions." Today, all initiatives aimed at forming an environment of sustainable cooperation and mutual trust in the region are a logical continuation of Azerbaijan's peace-oriented approach.

The importance of Azerbaijan's international peacekeeping activity is not limited solely to security dimensions. This activity is also an indicator of how a state positions itself within the global system. Through cooperation with the United Nations, NATO, and other international organizations, Azerbaijan has become an active component of the international security architecture. This reflects both the state's strategic responsibility and its diplomatic maturity.

The preparation of this report is, in essence, an important step in the process of bringing Azerbaijan's peacekeeping experience into the academic and analytical sphere. The report is not merely a collection of historical facts; it also presents an analytical overview of Azerbaijan's peace philosophy, its role in international security processes, and its contributions. It should also be added that this report on the activities of the Azerbaijani peacekeepers was prepared in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding signed on May 29, 2025, between the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Center of Analysis of International Relations. In this regard, this report can be considered the first example of cooperation between the two institutions.

Protecting peace essentially means rebuilding it anew every day. Azerbaijani peacekeepers have carried out this process through their practical actions. In various regions of the world, they have become symbols not only of security but also of trust.

I hope that this document will provide readers with a clearer understanding of the depth and multidimensional nature of Azerbaijan's peacekeeping activities and their intrinsic connection to our statehood philosophy. Azerbaijan's peace mission is not merely a set of concrete operations but has become an expression of national character—a thoughtful, responsible approach grounded in human values.

Farid SHAFIYEV

Chairman of the Center of Analysis of International Relations

Chapter 1: Peacekeeping Operations: Theoretical Framework

Peacekeeping operations are among the most important instruments used to restore stability after armed conflicts, maintain ceasefire regimes, and ensure long-term peace. They also encompass the implementation of complex issues, such as the restoration of state institutions and the return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Historically, as early as the late 19th and early 20th centuries, international commissions or forces were deployed to resolve specific crises or territorial disputes, usually based on special agreements among a limited number of states.

During the period of the League of Nations (1920–1946),² international forces were deployed to mandate territories to ensure development and public order. A notable example is the Saar territory, administered by the League of Nations for fifteen years after World War I, where an international police force ensured the peaceful conduct of a plebiscite. On the day of the plebiscite, by decision of the Council of the League of Nations, an international police force comprising soldiers from Great Britain, the Netherlands, Italy, and Sweden was deployed to this area under the supervision of the League of Nations. This ensured that a peaceful referendum was held.³ According to Paul Diehl, this force should be regarded as the first true example of an international peace observation mission.⁴

From a theoretical perspective, the modern concept of peacekeeping developed in parallel with the evolution of international law, humanitarian standards, and collective security institutions. Peacekeeping activities are based on various theoretical approaches and legal mechanisms, and their nature, objectives, and implementation methods are interpreted differently in theory and practice.

Today, peacekeeping operations are conducted by the UN, international regional organizations, and individual states.

Operations Conducted by United Nations Peacekeeping Forces

Since the establishment of the United Nations (UN) in 1945, a number of activities have been undertaken to maintain international peace and security. These include conflict prevention and mediation, peacemaking, peace enforcement, and peacebuilding, with peacekeeping operations forming an integral part of this framework.⁵

Although UN peacekeeping forces are typically deployed to support the implementation of a ceasefire or peace agreement in a specific territory, they may also be employed in the execution of the other activities mentioned above. It is well known that today's multidimensional peacekeeping operations encompass support for political processes; protection of civilians; and the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants, among other tasks. It should be noted that, when a state is unable to ensure

² United Nations Office at Geneva, *"The League of Nations"*, Available at: <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/about/league-of-nations/overview>; United Nations Library Geneva, *"The Covenant of the League of Nations"*, Available at: https://libraryresources.unog.ch/ld.php?content_id=32971179.

³ Library of Congress, *"Under the Auspices of the League, Saar Plebiscite"*, Available at: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021670571/>

⁴ Paul F. Diehl. *Peace Operations*, Polity Press, 2008, pp. 34–36.

⁵ United Nations Peacekeeping, *"Terminology"*, Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/terminology>

security and public order, UN peacekeeping forces may be authorized to use force to protect themselves, their mandate, and the civilian population.⁶

The UN serves as an institutional mechanism for peacekeeping operations. It provides political leadership and support, as well as planning, deployment, and management of operations. The UN also coordinates the activities of regional organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), humanitarian agencies, and member states involved in the process. At the same time, peacekeeping operations are based on three fundamental principles: the consent of the parties, impartiality, and the non-use of force except in cases of self-defense and defense of the mandate.⁷

It is well known that, except in cases of peace enforcement, the deployment of missions is possible only with the consent of the parties. For successful peacekeeping operations, the consent and cooperation of the host country are required. Establishing positive relations with the host government and local communities is crucial for building trust and ensuring the effective implementation of the mission's mandate.

At the same time, UN peacekeeping forces must demonstrate neutrality and impartiality, maintain an objective stance, and refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of states. They may use force only in cases of self-defense and within the framework of the relevant mandate.

The legal basis for UN peacekeeping operations is formed by Chapters VI and VII of the UN Charter.⁸ Articles 33–38 of Chapter VI, titled "Pacific Settlement of Disputes," grant the UN Security Council (UNSC) the authority to investigate disputes and engage in mediation. Articles 39–51 of Chapter VII, titled "Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression," provide for the application of economic, diplomatic, and military sanctions, as well as the use of armed force when necessary. In addition, the legal framework of peacekeeping operations includes the norms of international humanitarian law, such as the 1949 Geneva Conventions⁹ and their Additional Protocols,¹⁰ as well as the principle of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P).¹¹

Under the UN Charter, the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security lies with the UNSC. This principal body determines when and where peacekeeping operations are deployed and defines their mandates. Those mandates may include maintaining peace and security, facilitating political processes, protecting civilians, assisting with disarmament, supporting elections, and promoting human rights, among other tasks.

6 *Ibid.*

7 United Nations Peacekeeping, "What is peacekeeping", Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/what-is-peace-keeping>

8 United Nations, "United Nations Charter (full text)", Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>

9 ICRC, "The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949", Available at: <https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/external/doc/en/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-0173.pdf>

10 ICRC, "Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949", Available at: https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/external/doc/en/assets/files/other/icrc_002_0321.pdf

11 United Nations, "About the Responsibility to Protect", Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/genocide-prevention/responsibility-protect/about>

It should particularly be noted that the financing of peacekeeping operations, which requires substantial resources, is primarily the responsibility of another UN body—the General Assembly. All costs are shared among UN member states, with the General Assembly applying a special assessment scale that takes into account the relative economic capacity of each member state. However, the permanent members of the UNSC bear special responsibility for maintaining international peace and security and therefore cover a larger share of the budget.¹² For example, the approved UN peacekeeping budget for the 2024–2025 fiscal year (July 1, 2024–June 30, 2025) amounts to US\$5.6 billion. The ten largest contributors to UN peacekeeping operations in 2024–2025 were the United States (26.95%), China (18.69%), Japan (8.03%), Germany (6.11%), the United Kingdom (5.36%), France (5.29%), Italy (3.19%), Canada (2.63%), the Republic of Korea (2.57%), and the Russian Federation (2.29%).¹³

At the same time, the UN Secretary-General bears responsibility for the management of peacekeeping operations. He appoints the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, who oversees dozens of peacekeeping missions worldwide.¹⁴

Among the reforms implemented by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in eight areas related to international peace and security are efforts to strengthen gender equality within UN peacekeeping forces, improve coordination with host governments, and increase accountability for misconduct. The “Action for Peacekeeping” (A4P) initiative is also part of these reforms.¹⁵

Thus, UN peacekeeping operations constitute a unique global partnership. They unite the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Secretariat, troop- and police-contributing countries, and host governments in joint efforts to maintain international peace and security. Their strength lies in the legitimacy of the UN Charter and in the broad participation and substantial contributions of member states.¹⁶ In recognition of their achievements, the UN Peacekeeping Forces were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1988.¹⁷

However, UN peacekeeping operations today face a number of challenges. First, the nature of conflicts is constantly evolving, which usually requires flexible adaptation. In many cases, intrastate conflicts characterized by complex internal dynamics and humanitarian crises require multidimensional approaches. In such situations, peacekeeping operations must be designed not only to address traditional tasks but also to support political settlements, protect civilians, and assist state-building efforts. Moreover, the absence of clear exit strategies within the political aspects of peacekeeping operations can lead to prolonged missions with uncertain outcomes.

12 United Nations Peacekeeping, “Role of the General Assembly”, Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/role-of-general-assembly>

13 United Nations Peacekeeping, “How we are funded”, Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/how-we-are-funded>

14 United Nations Peacekeeping, “Leadership. Office of the Under-Secretary-General”, Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/leadership>

15 Council on Foreign Relations, “The Role of the UN Secretary-General. Backgrounder”, 17 September 2025, Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/role-un-secretary-general>

16 United Nations Peacekeeping, “What is peacekeeping”, Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/what-is-peace-keeping>

17 United Nations Peacekeeping, “Our history”, Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/our-history>

The legal assessment of peacekeeping operations conducted by the UN is occasionally influenced by political and geopolitical interests. For example, the process of granting mandates is often complicated by confrontations among members of the UNSC with differing geopolitical interests and political agendas, which can significantly affect the scope and duration of a mission's mandate. As a result, the application of double standards means that, despite having similar legal bases, some interventions are strongly condemned while others are defended, leading to a selective approach to legal interpretation.

Peacekeeping operations require strong political support from UN member states, particularly those contributing troops and resources. A lack of political will—manifested in disagreements among member states or their insufficient commitment to a specific mission—can undermine the effectiveness of that mission and lead to its complete or partial failure. It is beyond doubt that, in the context of ongoing wars around the world, supporting peacekeeping operations requires conscious and sustained efforts from member states.

Thus, since the dispatch of military observers to the Middle East by a decision of the UN Security Council in 1948, hundreds of thousands of military personnel, tens of thousands of UN police officers, and numerous civilians have participated within the UN peacekeeping operations.¹⁸ At the same time, more than 4,400 peacekeepers have died while serving under the UN flag during these years.¹⁹

Peacekeeping Operations Conducted by International Regional Organizations and States

Peacekeeping operations can be carried out by regional organizations, individual states, or coalitions of states without the direct leadership and large-scale involvement of the UN. Examples include the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU).

Unlike the UN, NATO primarily operates in the field of crisis management, while the EU focuses more on civilian and police missions. Examples include NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR)²⁰ and ISAF in Afghanistan,²¹ as well as the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX).²²

The ISAF mission in Afghanistan between 2001–2014 was formally conducted on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1386 of 20 December 2001.²³ The purpose of this mission was to assist the Afghan Interim Government in ensuring security in Kabul and its surrounding areas, restoring state institutions, and addressing related challenges.

18 United Nations Peacekeeping, "Data", Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/data>

19 United Nations Peacekeeping, "Our history", Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/our-history>

20 NATO, "Kosovo Force", Available at: <https://jfcnaples.nato.int/kfor/kfor>

21 NATO, "ISAF's mission in Afghanistan (2001-2014)", Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_69366.htm

22 European Union, "The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo)", Available at: <https://www.eulex-kosovo.eu>

23 United Nations, "Resolution 1386 (2001) adopted by the Security Council at its 4443rd meeting, on 20 December 2001", Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/454998?v=pdf>

Following ISAF's conclusion at the end of 2014, a new NATO mission, Operation *Resolute Support*, began operating in the country on January 1, 2015, and ceased its activities in September 2021.²⁴ This mission was also based on UNSCR 2189 of December 12, 2014.²⁵ Its objective was to develop the capacity of Afghanistan's Armed Forces and state institutions to defend the country and protect its citizens. Although certain positive results were achieved in these areas during this period, ongoing clashes with Taliban fighters prevented the establishment of full security in the country. After U.S. President Joe Biden announced on April 14, 2021, that all U.S. military forces would withdraw from Afghanistan between May 1 and September 11 that year, the situation in the country deteriorated further.²⁶ Finally, on August 15, 2021, only a few hours after President Ashraf Ghani left the country, Taliban fighters filled the void, encountering weak resistance, seizing the capital, Kabul, and soon taking control of the entire country.²⁷ Following the collapse of the Afghan Government and Afghan National Defense and Security Forces in the summer of 2021, NATO changed its primary focus to the safe evacuation of personnel from allied and partner countries, as well as its own Afghan staff.²⁸

Similarly, NATO's 78-day Kosovo Air Campaign (March to June 1999), as well as the United States' and its allies' 2003 intervention in Iraq, were conducted without a direct mandate from the UN Security Council. Many states have determined these actions to be violations of international law.

However, in the case of Kosovo, it should also be noted that, following NATO's air campaign and the decision by the government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to resolve the Kosovo crisis through political means, the UNSC adopted Resolution No. 1244 on June 10, 1999, and international civilian and security forces were deployed in Kosovo under UN auspices.²⁹

Thus, since June 1999, NATO has led the peace support operation in Kosovo. Today, approximately 4,500 military personnel from 28 countries participate in this peacekeeping operation, working to ensure that the country's civilian population lives in a stable and secure environment and that freedom of movement is protected.³⁰

At the same time, when the United States and its allies intervened in Iraq in March 2003, they justified the use of force by citing Iraq's failure to comply with disarmament requirements under previous UN resolutions, particularly Resolution No. 1441 adopted in

24 NATO, "Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan (2015-2021)", 30 May 2022, Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_113694.htm

25 United Nations, "Resolution 2189 (2014) adopted by the Security Council at its 7338th meeting, on 12 December 2014", Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/784885?v=pdf>

26 U.S. Department of War, "Biden Announces Full U.S. Troop Withdrawal From Afghanistan by Sept. 11", 14 April 2021, Available at: <https://www.war.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/article/2573268/biden-announces-full-us-troop-withdrawal-from-afghanistan-by-sept-11/>

27 Zachary Laub and Lindsay Maizland, "1999–2021: The U.S. War in Afghanistan", *Council on Foreign Relations*, Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/timelines/us-war-afghanistan>

28 NATO, "NATO and Afghanistan", Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm

29 United Nations, "Resolution 1244 (1999) adopted by the Security Council at its 4011th meeting, on 10 June 1999", Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/274488?v=pdf>

30 NATO, "NATO's Role in Kosovo", Available at: <https://jfcnaples.nato.int/kfor/about-us/welcome-to-kfor/natos-role-in-kosovo>

2002.³¹ However, following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime, the UNSC adopted several documents regulating the transitional period in Iraq. Among these, Resolution No. 1511, adopted on October 16, 2003,³² and Resolution No. 1546, adopted on June 8, 2004, deserve special mention.³³

UNSCR 1511 not only granted a mandate to the U.S.-led multinational force but also confirmed its role in supporting security and stability in Iraq. Resolution 1546, in turn, recognized the transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqi Interim Government, reaffirmed the status of the multinational force, and declared that it would operate in accordance with the requests of the new Iraqi government.

It is evident that the joint participation of armed forces from different countries plays a crucial role in the conduct of peacekeeping operations. However, this process is also accompanied by a number of challenges. These include differences in weaponry and technical equipment among national contingents, insufficient interoperability of command-and-control systems, varying levels of personnel training and standards, and other factors that may create difficulties in conducting joint operations.

Classification of Peacekeeping Operations

Peacekeeping operations have been conducted over a period of more than seventy years. They have changed in both substance and form over time, and their objectives and functions have gradually, but significantly, expanded.

From a theoretical perspective, peacekeeping operations today can be classified into three groups:

1. observation missions;
2. multidimensional peacekeeping missions;
3. peace-enforcement operations.

1. Observation Missions

The earliest peacekeeping operations, conducted during the Cold War period, are classified as observation missions. Such operations typically comprise unarmed and neutral observers. Their purpose was to monitor, without armed intervention, the implementation of ceasefires between conflicting parties, prepare reports, and play a confidence-building role.³⁴ One example is the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO),

31 United Nations, "Resolution 1441 (2002) adopted by the Security Council at its 4644th meeting, on 8 November 2002", Available at: <https://www.un.org/depts/unmovic/documents/1441.pdf>

32 United Nations, "Resolution 1511 (2003) adopted by the Security Council at its 4844th meeting, on 16 October 2003", Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/504316?v=pdf>

33 United Nations, "Resolution 1546 (2004) adopted by the Security Council at its 4987th meeting, on 8 June 2004", Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/523025?v=pdf&ln=es>

34 United Nations Peacekeeping, "Our history", Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/our-history>

established in 1949 as the UN's first observation mission in the Middle East.³⁵

As is well known, in November 1947, the UN General Assembly approved the plan for the partition of Palestine. This would create an Arab and a Jewish state in the territory, while Jerusalem would have a separate, "international" status. However, this plan was rejected by the Arab population of Palestine and by Arab states in general. As a result, after the United Kingdom renounced its mandate in Palestine on May 14, 1948, and the State of Israel was proclaimed, Palestinian Arabs, with the assistance of Arab states, launched military operations against Israel.

Consequently, on May 29, 1948, the UNSC adopted Resolution 50 (1948),³⁶ calling for the cessation of hostilities in Palestine and deciding that a UN mediator, assisted by a group of military observers, would supervise the ceasefire. In 1949, this established UNTSO in Jerusalem as the first group of military observers to monitor the ceasefire regime between Israel and Arab states.

UNTSO military observers remain in the Middle East to this day to monitor ceasefire regimes and agreements, prevent the escalation of isolated incidents, and assist other UN peacekeeping operations in the region.

The category of observation missions also includes the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP).³⁷ The foundation of this mission was laid by the first group of UN military observers deployed to the region on January 24, 1949, to monitor the ceasefire between India and Pakistan in the Jammu and Kashmir territory. These observers were to operate under the command of a military adviser appointed by the UN Secretary-General.

After the resumption of hostilities in 1971, UNMOGIP was retained in the area to observe incidents related to compliance with the conditions of the ceasefire of December 17, 1971, and to report on them to the Secretary-General. UNMOGIP continues its activities to this day.

The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), deployed since 1964 to prevent conflict between the Greek and Turkish sides and to monitor the ceasefire regime, is also in this category.³⁸ This peacekeeping operation is carried out pursuant to UNSCR 186 of March 4, 1964.³⁹ Following the military events of 1974, the UNSC slightly expanded the mandate of this force. As the Cyprus conflict remains unresolved, UNFICYP continues its activities in Cyprus to monitor the ceasefire, maintain the "green line" buffer zone, carry out humanitarian activities, and support the UN Secretary-General's mission of good offices.

35 United Nations, "United Nations Truce Supervision Organization", Available at: <https://untso.unmissions.org/>

36 United Nations, "Resolution 50 (1948) adopted by the Security Council at its 310th meeting, of 29 May 1948", Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/111999?v=pdf>

37 United Nations Peacekeeping, "UNMOGIP Fact Sheet: United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan", Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unmogip>

38 United Nations Peacekeeping, "United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus", Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unficyp>

39 United Nations, "Resolution 186 (1964) adopted by the Security Council at its 1102nd meeting, of 4 March 1964", Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/112185?v=pdf>

2. Multidimensional Peacekeeping Missions

With the end of the Cold War, the strategic context of UN peacekeeping operations dramatically changed. The UN began to implement multidimensional peacekeeping missions aimed at ensuring the implementation of comprehensive peace agreements and helping to lay the foundations for sustainable peace. Over time, as the nature of conflicts evolved, UN peacekeeping forces increasingly intervened in internal conflicts and civil wars. They were required to assist in building sustainable governance institutions, monitoring human rights, carrying out security sector reforms, and implementing the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants.⁴⁰

During this period, the number of peacekeeping operations also increased significantly. For example, between 1989 and 1994, the UNSC authorized the deployment of a total of twenty new peacekeeping operations, thus increasing the number of UN peacekeepers from 11,000 to 75,000. These missions were launched in Angola, Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique, and Namibia.

However, failures experienced in some peacekeeping operations in the early and mid-1990s prompted the UN Security Council to limit the number of new peacekeeping missions and to conduct thorough assessments to prevent the recurrence of such failures.⁴¹

In the second half of the 1990s, UN peacekeeping forces began new operations in Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia, Guatemala, and Haiti. In subsequent years, the UNSC also approved large-scale, complex peacekeeping operations in several African countries (Burundi, Chad, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea/Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, South Sudan, and Syria). Many of these operations have now completed their mandates.⁴²

Currently, 68,784 UN peacekeepers from 121 countries are participating in 11 peacekeeping operations.⁴³ This reduction in the number of peacekeeping operations does not necessarily indicate a decrease in the challenges faced by the UN. Both the establishment and implementation of operations conducted by the UN are understood to be closely linked to political considerations. At the same time, the success of peacekeeping operations depends not only on military and logistical capabilities but also on clearly defined mandates, adaptation to complex political dynamics and evolving conflict environments, the provision of strong political support, and enhanced cooperation among all stakeholders.

Moreover, modern peacekeeping operations are carried out in increasingly complex and politically sensitive environments. Whereas operations previously conducted under the relatively unified coordination of the UN were perceived as more legitimate, today, numerous missions are carried out by different international and regional coalitions, and these are controversial from the perspective of international law. Growing competition among global and regional powers, normative double standards, and the selective application of international law create serious challenges to the legitimacy and effectiveness of peacekeeping operations and call their political neutrality into question.

40 United Nations Peacekeeping, "Our history", Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/our-history>

41 *Ibid.*

42 *Ibid.*

43 United Nations Peacekeeping, "Data", Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/data>

3. Peace Enforcement Operations

Peace enforcement operations constitute another type of activity carried out in the field of maintaining international peace and security. This type of operation is implemented in more complex conflict situations and is primarily authorized by the UNSC. Such missions may be carried out even without the consent of the parties and are executed by combined military forces prepared to use force. The main objective is to halt violence, ensure the protection of human rights, and prevent potential humanitarian disasters.

Examples include NATO's Implementation Force (IFOR) and subsequent Stabilization Force (SFOR), which were deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina to enable the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement and to restore security in the region.⁴⁴

NATO's intervention played a particularly significant role in the process of ending the armed conflict that existed in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995. Initially, NATO supported the United Nations by enforcing economic sanctions, arms embargoes, and no-fly zones, and by planning emergency military measures. However, these measures failed to bring the war to an end. It was only NATO's large-scale, 12-day air campaign, conducted in September 1995, that resulted in the Dayton Peace Agreement, which formally ended the Bosnian conflict on December 20, 1995.⁴⁵

Under the terms of this agreement, 60,000 NATO peacekeepers were deployed in Bosnia as part of the IFOR mission, marking the Alliance's first major ground operation since the end of the Cold War. Military personnel from both NATO and non-NATO countries participated in this mission. In accordance with the UN mandate, the IFOR mission was tasked with ensuring the cessation of hostilities, separating the armed forces of the newly established entities—the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Republika Srpska—and placing their heavy weapons in designated secure zones, along with fulfilling other assigned tasks.

IFOR completed its mission in one year and was replaced by the SFOR mission in December 1996. In addition to supporting the return of refugees to their homes, peacekeepers ensured the security of elections, contributed to the reform of the Bosnian Armed Forces, and assisted in the apprehension of indicted war criminals.

Thus, NATO peacekeeping forces played a central role in the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement for nine years from December 1995. In December 2004, primary responsibility for the military aspects of the Dayton Peace Agreement was transferred to the European Union's EUFOR Althea operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴⁶ NATO continues to provide support to the EUFOR Althea operation within the framework of the Berlin Plus Agreements.⁴⁷

44 NATO, "Peace support operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995-2004)", 21 March 2024, Available at: <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/operations-and-missions/peace-support-operations-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina-1995-2004>

45 NATO, "Bosnia", Available at: <https://shape.nato.int/page139104827>

46 European Union, "EUFOR Bosnia-Herzegovina Military Operation ALTHEA", 30 November 2020, Available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eufor-althea/eufor-bosnia-herzegovina-military-operation-althea_und_en

47 NATO, "Relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina", 9 December 2025, Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/uk/nato-hq/topics_49127.htm?selectedLocale=en

Conclusion

From the late 1940s, when the first UN peacekeeping missions were established, to the present day, the political approach to such operations has changed considerably. Peacekeeping missions initially had a purely neutral and observational character, but, over time and with increasing complexity of the international environment, they have assumed a more explicit political dimension.

It should be noted that during the Cold War period (1946–1991), despite peacekeeping missions being conducted in a context of rivalry among major powers, the United Nations sought to maintain its neutrality. However, in the post-Cold War era, several of the peacekeeping operations conducted without a UN mandate have produced mixed outcomes in terms of international law, legitimacy, and effectiveness. Moreover, the transformation of peacekeeping operations into instruments of geopolitical interests undermines the achievement of sustainable peace.

In addition, beginning in the 1990s, peacekeeping operations started to encompass not only military but also political, humanitarian, and social dimensions. Today, the mandates of missions often include establishing democratic institutions, monitoring electoral processes, reforming law enforcement and security sectors, and protecting human rights.

Since the 2000s, the rise of multipolarity and the increasing influence of regional powers in international relations have further complicated the management of the political aspects of peacekeeping operations. Today, the success of missions is measured not only by military achievements but also by political diplomacy, coordination with partners, and the attainment of legitimacy at the local level.

The Republic of Azerbaijan, which became a member of the UN on March 2, 1992, carries out focused activities aimed at maintaining international peace and security. Over the years, the peacekeeping contingent established within the Azerbaijani Army has actively participated in a number of operations and continues to carry out its duties effectively to this day.

Chapter 2. Political Aspects of the Peacekeeping Operations of the Azerbaijani Army

After restoring its independence in 1991, the Republic of Azerbaijan began actively integrating into the international security system and, within a short period, had positioned itself as a country that contributes to global peace. As emphasized in the country's National Security Concept, "participation in peacekeeping operations conducted on the basis of mandates of relevant international organizations" is considered one of the main directions of Azerbaijan's defense policy.⁴⁸ In line with this strategic approach, the establishment of the first peacekeeping unit within the Azerbaijani Army in 1997 and a peacekeeping battalion in 2001 translated the country's intention to play a role in global peacebuilding processes into practical action. As a result, beginning in 1999, Azerbaijan's peacekeeping contingent has successfully participated in international peacekeeping missions in various conflict zones around the world, including Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, and, more recently, South Sudan.

Participation in Ensuring International Peace and Security

Following the restoration of its independence, the Republic of Azerbaijan identified making an active contribution to global security as one of its key foreign policy priorities. The country's leadership views the preservation of international peace and stability at the regional and global levels as an integral component of its security interests and sustainable development. In this regard, the participation of the Azerbaijani Army in peacekeeping missions represents a practical manifestation of Azerbaijan's peace-oriented policy. By contributing to the establishment of peace in various conflict-prone regions of the world, Azerbaijan also safeguards its national interests, as peace and stability are essential conditions for the prosperity of every country that is part of the international system.

Azerbaijan's determination to contribute to international security is reflected in both political declarations and concrete actions. For example, following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Azerbaijan unhesitatingly joined coalition forces in the global fight against international terrorism and participated in peacekeeping missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. These decisions demonstrated Azerbaijan's commitment to joining global efforts to maintain peace and security. Through its participation in peacekeeping operations, Azerbaijan has strengthened its image as a reliable partner and demonstrated that it is a responsible actor in the eyes of the international community.

At the same time, peacekeeping missions have an indirect positive impact on domestic security. Azerbaijani soldiers and officers acquire new professional skills through the experience gained during service in international missions, which enhances the overall professionalism of the national army. American expert Bruce Pannier notes that Azerbaijan's participation in peacekeeping operations provides the country with unique experience that is particularly valuable against the backdrop of the increasing number of conflicts

48 E-qanun.az, "Azərbaycan Respublikasının milli təhlükəsizlik konsepsiyası", № 2198, 23 may 2007, Elektron resurs: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/13373>

worldwide.⁴⁹ In other words, by deploying peacekeeping contingents, Azerbaijan not only assists others but also gains valuable experience for itself.

In conclusion, the desire to contribute to international security is reflected in Azerbaijan's foreign policy and military development strategy. By taking concrete steps to realize this objective and joining global missions, Azerbaijan has contributed to the cause of peace and stability worldwide. This policy strengthens the country's image as a reliable partner and enhances Azerbaijan's role within the international security architecture.

Integration into the International Relations System and Enhancement of International Standing

Azerbaijan's participation in peacekeeping operations is a key indicator of its successful integration into the international relations system. After gaining independence, Azerbaijan pursued a balanced and multi-vector foreign policy in its efforts to develop relations with neighboring regions and the Western world.⁵⁰ In this context, cooperation with global and regional organizations and participation in international missions have demonstrated the country's awareness of its responsibilities as a member of the international community. Engagement in peacekeeping missions presents Azerbaijan as a reliable and active member of the international community and enhances its political standing.

Cooperation within the framework of NATO played a key initial role in Azerbaijan's integration into the international system. After the country joined the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program in 1994, Azerbaijan–NATO relations developed on the basis of reliable cooperation. By actively participating in NATO-led peacekeeping missions (Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq), Azerbaijan also contributed to the Euro-Atlantic security system. Through this participation, Azerbaijan secured international support for its own security interests (for example, NATO has consistently expressed clear support for Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity) while simultaneously deepening political dialogue with the Alliance's leading member states.

Azerbaijan's peacekeeping activities also strengthen bilateral political relations. Azerbaijani military personnel's service within NATO or coalition forces fosters an atmosphere of mutual trust and cooperation with partner countries. One of the significant aspects of Azerbaijan's participation in Afghanistan was the recognition that "Azerbaijani soldiers served shoulder to shoulder with troops from many countries, primarily NATO members, which resulted in the strengthening of relations with those states."⁵¹ In this sense, peacekeeping missions act as an informal continuation of diplomatic channels, creating political bridges between Azerbaijan and its partners. For instance, joint activities with countries such as the United

49 Report.az, "Amerikalı ekspert: "Azərbaycan Əfqanıstanda sülhməramlı əməliyyatlarda iştirak etməklə təcrübə qazanır"", 14 noyabr 2017, Elektron resurs: <https://report.az/analitika/amerikalı-ekspert-azərbaycan-əfqanıstanda-sulh-meramli-emeliyyatlarda-istirak-etmekle-tecrube-qazanir-rey/>

50 Mətin Məmmədli, "Yeni geosiyasi reallıqlarda NATO-Azərbaycan əlaqələri", *Beynəlxalq Münasibətlərin Təhlili Mərkəzi*, mart 2024, Elektron resurs: <https://aircenter.az/uploads/tZrQRkOwf68.pdf>

51 Report.az, "Amerikalı ekspert: "Azərbaycan Əfqanıstanda sülhməramlı əməliyyatlarda iştirak etməklə təcrübə qazanır"", 14 noyabr 2017, Elektron resurs: <https://report.az/analitika/amerikalı-ekspert-azərbaycan-əfqanıstanda-sulh-meramli-emeliyyatlarda-istirak-etmekle-tecrube-qazanir-rey/>

States, Türkiye, Italy, Georgia, and Ukraine during the Iraq and Afghanistan missions enriched Azerbaijan's military-political dialogue with these states.

As a result of these activities, Azerbaijan's international reputation has also increased. The professionalism and discipline of Azerbaijani peacekeepers are highly valued and frequently praised in international media and by foreign officials. For example, former NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has repeatedly commended Azerbaijan's contribution to peacekeeping operations, particularly expressing gratitude for the country's support in Afghanistan.⁵² Such assessments contribute to the formation of Azerbaijan's positive international image and reinforce its reputation as a reliable partner.

In conclusion, the participation of the Azerbaijani Army in international missions serves Azerbaijan's integration into global politics. Through this engagement, Azerbaijan gains a voice within international organizations and coalitions, expands the circle of friendly and partner states, and—most importantly—enhances its standing by making tangible contributions to global peace as a responsible member of the international community, thereby strengthening its ability to protect its national interests more effectively.

Adaptation of the Army to International Standards and Enhancement of Combat Capability

The participation of the Azerbaijani Army in peacekeeping operations not only serves political and diplomatic objectives but also plays an important role in enhancing the professionalism of the Army. Since gaining independence, Azerbaijan has carried out consistent reforms aimed at modernizing its military and aligning it with international standards. In particular, within the framework of cooperation programs with NATO (such as PfP and the Individual Partnership Action Plan, IPAP), standards in headquarters planning, training and education systems, command and control, and logistics have been continuously improved. Participation in peacekeeping missions has enabled these standards to be applied in practice and has allowed personnel to be tested under real operational conditions.

Participation in international operations has primarily enhanced the combat readiness and professionalism of Azerbaijani military personnel. Serving shoulder to shoulder with NATO forces, Azerbaijani peacekeepers learn modern combat tactics, become familiar with staff procedures, and acquire the ability to operate within a multinational command environment. For example, the first contingent deployed to Kosovo in 1999 gained direct exposure to NATO standards and experience in joint operations, which significantly increased the professionalism of peacekeeping units. This experience was subsequently transferred to other units and had a positive impact on the overall readiness of the Army.

In addition, Azerbaijan's cooperation with the United States and other Western partners in the field of military education and training has further enhanced the capabilities of the country's armed forces. Since the early 2000s, a significant number of Azerbaijani officers have completed courses abroad under the U.S. Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and International

⁵² Apa.az, "NATO-nun Baş katibi: Azərbaycan sülhməramlıları Əfqanıstanda çox vacib missiyanı yerinə yetirdi", 17 mart 2024, Elektron resurs: <https://apa.az/xarici-siyaset/nato-bas-katibi-azerbaycan-sulhmeramilari-efqanistan-da-cox-vacib-missiyani-yerine-yetirdi-830045>

Military Education and Training (IMET) programs, and support has been provided to improve the military's material and technical base. In particular, joint activities and training exchanges conducted since 2003 within the framework of the State Partnership Program with the Oklahoma National Guard (ONG) have significantly increased the interoperability of Azerbaijani forces with NATO troops.⁵³ Through such programs, the Azerbaijani Army acquired the necessary knowledge and skills before participating in international missions.

The selection of personnel for Azerbaijani peacekeeping contingents also contributes to the overall development of the Army. The country's leadership pays special attention to selecting the most highly trained personnel for deployment to peacekeeping missions. As a result, both the selection criteria and the experience gained through service in an international environment continuously enhance the quality of personnel within the Azerbaijani Armed Forces.

Overall, participation in international peacekeeping operations not only demonstrates the significance of the Azerbaijani Army within the NATO framework but also strengthens their combat capability. Azerbaijani soldiers and officers who successfully carry out their assigned tasks in multinational missions have acquired a level of experience that enables them to compete with leading armed forces worldwide. This experience has also indirectly contributed to the success of the Azerbaijani Army in national matters such as the 2020 Patriotic War. Units that had gained years of experience in international missions demonstrated their ability to make calm decisions under real combat conditions and to plan complex operations during the 2020 war aimed at restoring Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. All of this indicates that the steps taken to align the Azerbaijani Army with international standards and enhance combat capability have been strategically effective.

Azerbaijan–Türkiye Cooperation in the Context of Peacekeeping Activities

The Republic of Türkiye has provided active military and political support to Azerbaijan's participation in peacekeeping operations. This support has facilitated the acceptance of Azerbaijani military personnel into various international missions and strengthened the country's international image. Azerbaijan's first significant peacekeeping experience was achieved specifically within the framework of cooperation with Türkiye. Overall, cooperation with Türkiye in this area has accelerated Azerbaijan's integration into the international security architecture. In this regard, military cooperation with Türkiye deserves special emphasis in terms of alignment with international standards. Through close training and educational ties with brotherly Türkiye—one of NATO's leading members—the Azerbaijani Army rapidly adopted Alliance standards. Azerbaijani peacekeeping units operated almost exclusively within Turkish battalions in major international missions such as Kosovo and Afghanistan, which facilitated compatibility in both language and tactical methods. Joint exercises and training courses with Türkiye, and officer education in Turkish military academies have enhanced the integration of the Azerbaijani Army into NATO doctrines and procedures. The formation and development of Azerbaijan's peacekeeping experience can therefore be directly attributed to military-strategic cooperation with Türkiye.

⁵³ Embassy of Republic of Azerbaijan to the United States of America, "Defense and Security Cooperation", Available at: <https://washington.mfa.gov.az/en/category/defense-and-security-cooperation>

Overall, Türkiye plays a central role as Azerbaijan's closest political and military ally in the expansion of bilateral relations. Cooperation with the Turkish Armed Forces in areas such as joint exercises, military education exchanges, and arms procurement has strengthened the Azerbaijani Army while simultaneously contributing to peace in the region. Joint Azerbaijan–Türkiye military exercises (such as the “Mustafa Kemal Atatürk” exercises and others) enhance the interoperability of the two countries' armed forces and help stabilize the regional balance of power. The Shusha Declaration signed in 2021 formally sealed the relationship between Azerbaijan and Türkiye as allies, thus demonstrating that military cooperation has reached its highest level.

Expansion of the Azerbaijani Army's Military Relations

Over recent decades, Azerbaijan has significantly expanded its international ties not only in the economic and political spheres, but also in the military domain. Participation in peacekeeping operations has been both a cause and a consequence of this expansion. That is, on the one hand, the country mobilized existing opportunities for military cooperation to join international missions, while on the other hand, participation in those missions created new bridges of cooperation. As a result, the Azerbaijani Army today possess experience of cooperation with the armed forces of many countries worldwide, which increases the flexibility and adaptability of the nation's military.

Relations built on the NATO platform deserve particular attention. Since the late 1990s, Azerbaijan has actively participated in various NATO programs (PfP, the Planning and Review Process, IPAP, etc.). Multinational exercises, courses, and staff meetings held within this framework have led to close communication between Azerbaijani officers and their counterparts in the Alliance and the development of mutual trust. Each year, more than 200 Azerbaijani representatives participate in various NATO-related events, which establishes a broad network for Azerbaijan's military diplomacy. In particular, Azerbaijan's hosting of meetings in Baku between high-ranking NATO, Russian, and U.S. military officials on several occasions between 2017 and 2020 demonstrates that Azerbaijan is perceived as a reliable partner.

Azerbaijan's military relations with the United States, European nations, Israel, Pakistan, Georgia, and other countries are also expanding. With the United States, there are joint working groups in the fields of defense and security and a format for bilateral defense consultations, within which issues such as cybersecurity, opportunities for participation in peacekeeping missions, and English-language training are discussed.⁵⁴ For example, during the Azerbaijan–U.S. defense consultations held in Baku in December 2018, strengthening Azerbaijan's capacity to participate in UN peacekeeping missions was a specific topic. This demonstrates Azerbaijan's desire to expand its role not only through NATO but also within the UN framework, and that international partners are interested in cooperation to this end.

The expansion of military relations is observed not only at the inter-state level, but also within regional multilateral formats. In recent years, Azerbaijan has played an active role in peace and security initiatives in the region. For example, within the framework

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

of the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Georgia trilateral military cooperation format, joint military exercises and meetings are held, which contributes to strengthening stability in the South Caucasus.⁵⁵ In addition, as the chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, Azerbaijan adopted an active position on issues of peace and security on international platforms. This indirectly enhances the country's standing in peacebuilding efforts.

The extensive network of contacts gained through peacekeeping missions also facilitates the integration of the Azerbaijani Army into any international operation. Azerbaijani peacekeepers already have experience serving under the command of different countries—for example, under Türkiye in Kosovo, NATO in Afghanistan, and the UN in South Sudan. This has formed a unique, multidimensional background of experience within the Army. Today, Azerbaijani officers are able to find common ground with armed forces operating under different doctrines and to work within a unified command structure. Due to expanded military ties, the Azerbaijani Army is becoming a more flexible force prepared for modern challenges.

Azerbaijan's peacekeeping forces have accumulated rich experience by participating in a total of five international missions carried out in Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, and South Sudan. Each mission had its own military characteristics and political context. The following sections present separate analyses of the course of these operations, the role of the Azerbaijani contingent, and the diplomatic-political considerations behind participation.

1. Kosovo: The First Peacekeeping Mission and Core Principles

Azerbaijan's debut in international peacekeeping missions took place in Kosovo in 1999. The deterioration of the situation in the Balkans in the late 1990s and the escalation of ethnic conflict resulted in NATO intervention. In June 1999, pursuant to UNSCR 1244, a multinational peacekeeping force under NATO leadership—Kosovo Force (KFOR)—was deployed in Kosovo. Azerbaijan coordinated its decision to join this mission with its strategic ally, Türkiye. The deployment of Azerbaijan's peacekeeping platoon within the Turkish Battalion in Kosovo was formalized by an agreement signed between Ankara and Baku on October 20, 1999. The Azerbaijani parliament ratified the agreement promptly, and Azerbaijani military personnel were sent abroad on a peacekeeping mission for the first time.

The activities of the Azerbaijani contingent in Kosovo were highly appreciated by the international coalition command. During a meeting with Azerbaijan's Minister of Defense, former NATO Secretary General George Robertson specifically noted the role of the Azerbaijani unit and expressed gratitude for the discipline and effectiveness of Azerbaijan's peacekeepers. At that time, international media also published positive remarks regarding the balanced conduct of Azerbaijani soldiers with respect to local Albanian and Serbian communities and their participation in humanitarian assistance. This brought Azerbaijan additional diplomatic credit.

After the Kosovo parliament unilaterally declared independence in February 2008, the Azerbaijani government faced a complex decision. Since Azerbaijan is, as a matter of

⁵⁵ Tech Fusion, "Azerbaijan's Role in International Peacekeeping Missions", 15 October 2024, Available at: <https://tech-fusion.tistory.com/9>

principle, opposed to separatism (due to Armenia's similar actions in Garabagh), it did not recognize the Republic of Kosovo, and the fate of its peacekeepers there became an issue. As a result, in April 2008, Azerbaijan fully withdrew its platoon from Kosovo. This step was supported by the Azerbaijani public, as national interests and a principled position required the country to demonstrate its commitment to the principle of territorial integrity in international law. Nevertheless, through its contribution to maintaining peace in Kosovo for eight years, Azerbaijan had already gained respect in the international arena. Even after the withdrawal, the country's peacekeeping image was not damaged—on the contrary, all sides understood that the Azerbaijani military contingent had withdrawn due to the country's principled stance.

The political outcome of the Kosovo mission for Azerbaijan was positive. By assisting in maintaining peace in a distant region for the first time, the country demonstrated that it is a responsible member of the international community. At the same time, the mission deepened practical cooperation with NATO and strengthened military coordination with Türkiye. The high level of professionalism demonstrated by Azerbaijani soldiers built trust for participation in subsequent missions. In this sense, the Kosovo operation became a "testing ground" for Azerbaijan's peacekeeping forces, and the Azerbaijani Army passed that test with distinction.

2. Afghanistan: Long-Term Commitment and Strategic Partnership

The longest-duration peacekeeping activity of the Azerbaijani Army is linked to two missions carried out in Afghanistan: NATO's ISAF operation and the non-combat Resolute Support Mission. Azerbaijan participated in ISAF starting in 2002, later continued its activities under the Resolute Support Mission, and became recognized as one of the coalition's most loyal partners.⁵⁶ The Afghanistan commitment occupies a special place in Azerbaijan's foreign policy and military experience.

This long mission ended with the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan in August 2021 and the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban. Azerbaijani peacekeepers remained until the final moment and actively participated in evacuation operations. In particular, under an agreement between Baku and Ankara, Azerbaijani servicemen, together with Turkish forces, ensured security at Kabul airport until the end and assisted in the evacuation of diplomats and civilians. The Azerbaijani contingent was one of the last NATO partner countries to leave Afghanistan when the remaining military personnel returned home on August 26, 2021. Thus, Azerbaijan stood firm until the very end of this 19-year continuous mission and remained faithful to its commitment in the fullest sense.

NATO officials highly appreciated Azerbaijan's role in the Afghanistan mission. NATO representatives repeatedly noted that Azerbaijan contributed to the success of operations in Afghanistan not only through its troops but also by providing logistical support via the Northern Distribution Network. In fact, 40% of supplies transported to Afghanistan passed through Azerbaijan's air and seaports. This further increased Azerbaijan's strategic significance for NATO in geographic and transportation terms. In 2018, during a meeting with President Ilham Aliyev in Brussels, former NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

particularly emphasized Azerbaijan's activities in Afghanistan and expressed gratitude.

The Afghan government also repeatedly expressed its appreciation to Azerbaijan, and friendly relations emerged between the two countries. It should be noted that the participation of Azerbaijan, as a Muslim country, was also positively received by the Afghan people; this factor facilitated communication between peacekeepers and the local population.

The Afghanistan mission made very significant contributions to Azerbaijan's defense and foreign policy. From a military perspective, Azerbaijani officers gained real operational experience under the command of the most powerful state—the United States—and mastered modern combat and intelligence methods. Politically, Azerbaijan deepened its relations with the Western security system and proved itself a reliable partner. During these years, attitudes toward Azerbaijan within NATO structures changed markedly in a positive direction. NATO summit documents began to express support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, and senior officials demonstrated greater understanding of Azerbaijan's justified position regarding a peaceful resolution of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict. Undoubtedly, the dedicated participation of Azerbaijan's peacekeeping forces in Afghanistan played an important role in these developments.

Thus, the Afghanistan mission constitutes one of the most notable chapters in the history of Azerbaijan's peacekeeping forces. For nearly 20 years, Azerbaijan served global security with great determination and sacrifice. The activities of Azerbaijani soldiers in this mission entered national military history as a source of pride. At the same time, this experience elevated the Army to a new stage of professionalism, expanded international ties, and served the strategic interests of the Azerbaijani state.

3. Iraq: Partnership in a Global Coalition and Strategic Significance

In 2003, the Iraq issue was among the most widely discussed topics on the international agenda. Coalition forces, led by the United States, launched an intervention in Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime and, within the framework of several UN Security Council resolutions, a multinational force was formed to restore stability in the post-conflict period. When deciding to join this global coalition, Azerbaijan considered both its international obligations and its national interests. On the one hand, after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Azerbaijan took a firm stance in the fight against terrorism, while, on the other hand, participation in this mission was seen as important for strengthening strategic partnership ties with the United States and Western countries. Accordingly, on May 7, 2003, the Milli Majlis (National Assembly) of the Republic of Azerbaijan approved the participation of a contingent of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces in peacekeeping operations in Iraq as part of the international coalition forces.⁵⁷

In recognition of the dedicated service of the Azerbaijani contingent in Iraq, the U.S. military leadership sent them off with special awards and expressions of gratitude. In December 2008, a formal farewell ceremony was held near the Haditha Dam to mark the completion

⁵⁷ E-qanun.az, "Azərbaycan Respublikası Silahlı Qüvvələri kontingentinin beynəlxalq koalisiya qüvvələri tərkibində İraqda sülhməramlı əməliyyatlarda iştirak etməsinə razılıq verilməsi haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikası Milli Məclisinin Qərarı", № 432-IIQR, 7 may 2003, Elektron resurs: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/14811>

of the Azerbaijani unit's mission. U.S. Marine Corps command and Iraqi officials attended this ceremony. In his address, U.S. Colonel Patrick Malay praised the Azerbaijani soldiers and stated: "Many Americans may not know Azerbaijan, but the work that this country's soldiers have done in Iraq deserves special respect in the world. Azerbaijani soldiers took part in protecting the critically important Haditha Dam. This facility supplies 25% of Iraq's electricity needs."⁵⁸ These words reflect recognition of the professionalism of Azerbaijani soldiers and the global significance of the country's contribution. Indeed, by participating in the protection of Iraq's energy infrastructure, Azerbaijan made an important contribution to regional stability.

Overall, more than 1,000 Azerbaijani military personnel served in Iraq on a rotational basis between 2003 and 2008. This is a substantial figure, indicating that Azerbaijan contributed a relatively significant share, considering its size, to the coalition mission. U.S. media noted that "Azerbaijan—a small country about the size of the U.S. state of South Carolina—has closely and successfully participated over the past five years in protecting a vital facility in Iraq's Anbar region."⁵⁹ Such assessments confirmed that the Azerbaijani Army were regarded as a reliable force, even beyond their immediate region.

From a political perspective, the Iraq mission had a positive impact on Azerbaijan's relations with the United States and the West. The support provided by Azerbaijan to the coalition contributed to the development of important partnership relations between Azerbaijan and the United States, including in the field of energy security. For example, when the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan oil pipeline was inaugurated in 2006, the United States highly valued Azerbaijan's role; the positive context created by Azerbaijan's activities in Iraq played a meaningful part in that perception. Confidence in relations with NATO also increased—Azerbaijan's consistent participation in both Kosovo and Iraq made it a reliable partner of the Alliance.

In conclusion, the participation of Azerbaijan's peacekeeping forces in Iraq can be considered a success, both militarily and politically. Azerbaijan gained prestige as part of the global coalition against terrorism, the Army acquired valuable experience, and the country strengthened its position as a loyal friend and a state that fulfills its international commitments.

4. South Sudan: A New Mission Under the UN Flag

Azerbaijan's peacekeeping activity has not been limited to the NATO framework; it has also included UN-mandated missions. The most vivid example is Azerbaijan's decision, in 2018, to join the UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan. This step expanded the geographic scope of Azerbaijan's peacekeeping efforts and demonstrated that the country is not indifferent to global issues.

Although Azerbaijan's contingent in South Sudan is small, it consists of professional personnel. In January 2019, two Azerbaijani Army officers arrived in Juba, the capital of South Sudan, and began service at the headquarters of the United Nations Mission in South

58 Ədalət Verdiyev, "Ən qaynar nöqtələrdə: Azərbaycan sülhməramlı qüvvələri", Ordu.az, 16 dekabr 2017, Elektron resurs: <https://ordu.az/az/news/124180/en-qaynar-noqtelerde--azerbaycan-sulhmeramli-quvveleri-%E2%80%93-herbi-ekspert>

59 *Ibid.*

Sudan (UNMISS). They serve as military observers within the international peacekeeping contingent and perform functions such as monitoring the situation in the region, supervising compliance with the ceasefire, and mediating between parties to the conflict. This role requires special training and diplomatic skills, which is why it is encouraging that Azerbaijani officers perform their duties effectively.

Initial official information and assessments regarding the participation of Azerbaijani peacekeepers in South Sudan are positive. The leadership of the UN mission welcomed Azerbaijan's contribution and noted that it could serve as an example for other post-Soviet countries. The government of South Sudan also welcomed the initiative of Azerbaijan—a Muslim country—in contributing to peace in Africa. This aligns with Azerbaijan's reputation within the framework of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as the Muslim world is also sensitive to conflicts in Africa. Azerbaijani military personnel stand out for their discipline and impartial stance. Although there is no language barrier with local communities (as they communicate in English), the neutrality of Azerbaijani observers and their sensitivity to humanitarian issues have not gone unnoticed by the UNMISS leadership. In March 2025, an Azerbaijani peacekeeper was awarded a UN medal for service in South Sudan, which reflects high appreciation of the contingent's performance.⁶⁰

The political significance of Azerbaijan joining the South Sudan mission lies in the fact that, for the first time, the country is participating in a peacekeeping operation on the African continent under a UN mandate. This demonstrates Azerbaijan's readiness to contribute to peace wherever there is a need, without imposing geographic limitations. This step also brings moral and political credibility to Azerbaijan, which has chaired the Non-Aligned Movement (2019–2023), by demonstrating that the country does not merely make statements but also takes practical action. Moreover, during the UN Secretary-General's visit to Azerbaijan in 2019, special gratitude was expressed for Azerbaijan's contribution to the peacekeeping mission. It appears that Azerbaijan also has a positive view of future participation in other missions under the UN umbrella (for example, in Africa or the Middle East). In addition, the discussion of "strengthening Azerbaijan's capacity to participate in UN peacekeeping missions" during the U.S.–Azerbaijan bilateral defense consultations in 2018 provides grounds for such an expectation.

The South Sudan mission is also a test for the Azerbaijani Armed Forces in an entirely new environment. Africa's climate, local cultural features, and UN bureaucratic procedures are all new areas of learning for Azerbaijani officers. This experience constitutes new knowledge for relevant structures within the Azerbaijani Army. For example, working with a multinational officer corps at UN Headquarters further improves staff training for Azerbaijani service members. After returning home, officers serving in UNMISS will share their experience and make a valuable contribution to training future peacekeeping units.⁶¹

At present (as of 2026), the mission of Azerbaijani officers in South Sudan continues successfully. Although small in numbers, this participation is significant in substance. Azerbaijan has contributed to strengthening peace in one of the world's newest states. In the future, Azerbaijan may also consider joining UN peacekeeping operations with a

60 Report.az, "Azərbaycan sülhməramlısı Cənubi Sudanda fəaliyyətinə görə təltif edilib", 1 may 2025, Elektron resurs: <https://report.az/herbi-xeberler/azerbaycan-sulhmeramlisi-cenubi-sudanda-fealiyyetine-gore-teltif-edilib/>

61 Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United States of America, "Defense and Security Cooperation", Available at: <https://washington.mfa.gov.az/en/category/defense-and-security-cooperation>

larger contingent. For example, if relations with the African Union expand, opportunities could emerge to participate in other countries (Mali, the Central African Republic, etc.) with engineering units or military medical personnel. The UN path that began with South Sudan will undoubtedly continue and will further enhance the country's global image.

Conclusion

As noted earlier, Azerbaijan's international peacekeeping contingent has carried out important activities across different continents and in various formats, generating multifaceted benefits. First, by participating in peacekeeping operations, the country has made a significant contribution to international security and has acted as a responsible member of the international community. Every mission in which Azerbaijani peacekeepers have taken part—whether under the NATO umbrella in conflict zones in Kosovo and Afghanistan, or under a UN mandate in South Sudan—has served the establishment of stability and peace. Through this path, Azerbaijan has also strengthened its national interests, including its image as a peace-oriented and reliable partner in the international arena.

Second, participation in peacekeeping operations has accelerated Azerbaijan's integration into the international system, deepened its politico-military ties with individual states, and ultimately increased Azerbaijan's influence. Through cooperation with institutions such as NATO and the UN, Azerbaijan has—albeit indirectly—been involved in global decision-making processes (from a military perspective). Contributions to operations have been highly valued by allies and partners, bringing Azerbaijan additional dividends in the diplomatic sphere. In particular, positive assessments of the professionalism of Azerbaijani soldiers at the international level (by NATO Secretaries General, U.S. officials, and others) are a source of national pride and an integral part of the state's foreign policy achievements.

Third, peacekeeping missions have provided a strong impetus for the internal development and professionalization of the Army. Officers and soldiers who have served in real conflict zones transfer the experience they gained to the rest of the Army, thereby improving its overall combat readiness. If the Azerbaijani Army is today recognized as one of the most prepared in the region, international experience has played a major role in this. Joint exercises and operations with foreign partners have functioned as a kind of "practical academy" for the military. Peacekeeping missions also play an important role in aligning Azerbaijan's military capabilities and approach with those of its global partners and allies.

Fourth, participation in international missions demonstrates the country's readiness to share responsibility for regional and global security. This not only has a positive impact on Azerbaijan's image, but in some cases also brings concrete political dividends. For example, activity on the NATO platform has returned benefits such as support for territorial integrity and technical and financial assistance for reforms in the military sector.⁶² Also, Azerbaijan's contribution to the UN mission as the chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement has increased the country's prestige among the countries of the Global South. This reemphasizes the main point raised in this report—that the motivation behind Azerbaijan's peacekeeping

⁶² *Ibid.*

activity is based on deep strategic thinking.

In the future, against the backdrop of possible geopolitical changes in the world and in our local geography (for example, the realities that emerged after the 2020 Patriotic War), Azerbaijan's role in international peacekeeping missions may take new directions. Currently, the country is engaged in peacebuilding and alleviating the humanitarian consequences of the former Garabagh conflict. In this context, Azerbaijan itself is becoming a key actor preserving peace in the region. However, it can be assumed that Azerbaijan will again participate in NATO and UN missions in the new geopolitical conditions—primarily because, based on the experience gained and the trust created, new challenges may await the country. For example, it is possible that the numbers of Azerbaijani peacekeepers in some UN missions will increase in the future, or they will participate in NATO's external operations if the need arises again.

In general, the participation of the Azerbaijani Army in international peacekeeping operations can be considered a great success of the state in both military and political terms. This participation is an important component of the country's security concept, which has so far proven itself effective. Azerbaijan has demonstrated that it is ready to take responsibility for peace and does so professionally. Across a vast geography, the Azerbaijani flag carried by the peacekeepers conveys this message to the world: Azerbaijan is a supporter of peace and is ready to do everything in its power for global stability. Acting on this principle, Azerbaijan will continue to make its valuable contributions to international security in the future.

Chapter 3. Military Aspects of the Peacekeeping Operations of the Azerbaijani Army

Terms Used in the Report (UN Infantry Battalion Manual) ⁶³

Peacekeeping platoon: It consists of approximately 30-40 personnel, is considered the smallest maneuver element of a UN infantry battalion and by implementing tasks within the scope of the peacekeeping mandate, is capable of conducting limited tactical actions, including patrols, presence, and limited-area security activities. The unit is equipped with light weapons and light group weapons.

Peacekeeping company: It consists of approximately 100-150 personnel, is composed of several platoons, and is the main tactical element of the battalion. By implementing tasks within the scope of the peacekeeping mandate, it maintains security in a designated sector and implements all tactical activities. Such activities include conducting patrols, convoy/escort, cordon and search, as well as establishing / conducting checkpoint, observation post, and operating base activities. The unit is equipped with light weapons, light group weapons, and mortars.

Peacekeeping battalion: It consists of approximately 750-850 personnel, and is the main tactical unit, combining several companies and support elements. It is capable of completing all mandated tasks over a wider area of responsibility. It conducts activities such as protection of civilians, supporting disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, as well as conducting cordon and search, casualty evacuation, and all other tactical activities. The unit is equipped with light weapons, light group weapons, mortars, and a limited number of light armored/transport vehicles.

Peacekeeping brigade: It is the largest tactical unit consisting of two or more battalions and a headquarters company or detachment. It contains approximately between 2,500 and 5,000 personnel. It operates at the tactical level within its designated area of responsibility, commanding and guiding subordinated battalions and units. The main responsibilities of the peacekeeping brigade are to conduct command and control and execute Force Headquarters operations orders in close cooperation with other mission components and partners in the sector, in accomplishment of the mission mandate. It is a military formation organized and equipped to carry out peacekeeping tasks – such as maintaining a ceasefire, protecting civilians, and supporting stability in conflict or post-conflict areas – on the basis of international mandates.

Establishment of the Peacekeeping Forces of the Azerbaijani Army

The establishment of peacekeeping forces within the Azerbaijani Army began with the Republic of Azerbaijan's accession to NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. On May

⁶³ United Nations, "United Nations Infantry Battalion Manual (UNBAM), Second edition", January 2020, Available at: [https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/\\$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Military/2020.01%20UNBAM%20Infantry%20Battalion%20Manual_JAN%202020.pdf](https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Military/2020.01%20UNBAM%20Infantry%20Battalion%20Manual_JAN%202020.pdf)

4, 1994, the National Leader of the Azerbaijani people, Heydar Aliyev, signed the NATO PfP Framework Document. On April 23, 1996, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan presented Azerbaijan's PfP Presentation Document to the NATO Secretary General.

In the PfP Framework Document, one of the main objectives of cooperation with NATO was defined as developing the appropriate capabilities and maintaining the readiness to contribute to operations conducted under UN leadership and/or under the responsibility of the OSCE, considering the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Another stated objective of the document was the development of military relations with NATO in order to carry out joint planning, training and exercises for participation in missions such as peace support, search and rescue, and humanitarian operations.⁶⁴

To implement these objectives, the Republic of Azerbaijan began the necessary preparatory work to allocate a lightly armed infantry company. In 1997, a peacekeeping company was established. From that year onward, personnel of Azerbaijan's peacekeeping forces began actively participating in various international exercises and courses conducted in this field to improve their professional level of training. Peacekeeper training conducted in accordance with NATO standards produced high results during missions.

For Azerbaijan, the peacekeeping forces generation process was not easy. Experiencing a difficult historical period, Azerbaijan faced serious political and economic problems exacerbated by Armenia's military aggression in Garabagh. By 1997, 20 percent of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan had been occupied by the Armed Forces of Armenia. As a result of the occupation, nearly one million people were forced to leave their native lands and became refugees and internally displaced persons. Under these circumstances, all of Azerbaijan's resources were directed toward addressing these problems.

Nevertheless, Azerbaijan declared its intention to contribute to international peace and security and took practical steps toward this goal. Despite the challenging situation, the Ministry of Defense was assigned the difficult task of establishing peacekeeping forces. To generate the new forces, a number of key issues had to be resolved, including developing the staffing structure, determining the place of dislocation, filling positions with personnel, training the personnel, ensuring their rotation, and providing material supply and technical support to them. Implementing these activities required taking carefully considered steps.

Despite the military-political processes unfolding in the South Caucasus and surrounding regions and the challenges it faced, Azerbaijan succeeded in creating its peacekeeping forces in order to realize its intention to contribute to international security.

Legal Basis for the Participation of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Peacekeeping Operations

The legal basis for the participation of the Republic of Azerbaijan in peacekeeping operations is formed by the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, its laws and other normative legal acts, the National Security Concept, the Military Doctrine, and other

⁶⁴ NATO, "Partnership for Peace: Framework Document", Official Texts, 11 January 1994, Electronic resource: <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/official-texts/1994/01/11/partnership-for-peace-framework-document>

conceptual documents in the field of national security, as well as international treaties to which the Republic of Azerbaijan is a party.

The National Security Concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan identifies “the establishment of military operational forces, interoperable with the forces of NATO states” as well as “participation in peacekeeping response operations conducted on the basis of mandates of relevant international organizations for the purpose of crisis management” as among the main directions of the defense policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan.⁶⁵

According to the Military Doctrine of the Republic of Azerbaijan, measures to be implemented within defense policy during peacetime include continuing cooperation with the international community and its security structures related to the prevention of wars and armed conflicts, and the support or restoration of peace, as well as supporting the efforts of the international community in combating all forms of terrorism. The Military Doctrine defines peacekeeping, humanitarian, and other operations as among the tasks in which the Armed Forces will participate.⁶⁶

The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan” also states that, on the basis of Azerbaijan’s international obligations, participation in operations aimed at supporting (restoring) peace and security and the performance of other duties arising from those obligations constitute one of the main tasks of the Armed Forces in peacetime.⁶⁷

Under the Military Doctrine, special designated formations and units assigned for participation in peacekeeping, humanitarian, and other operations, undergo a separate training program. For this purpose, within the scope of multilateral and bilateral cooperation with partner armed forces, measures such as improving interoperability and the capability for joint action, as well as ensuring the training of the Azerbaijani contingent participating in peacekeeping operations in accordance with UN standards and procedures and their material supply and technical support are implemented.

The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On the Participation of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Peacekeeping Operations” define the types of peacekeeping, humanitarian, and other operations to which the peacekeeping contingent of the Republic of Azerbaijan may be assigned.⁶⁸

According to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On the Participation of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Peacekeeping Operations,” the military and civilian personnel sent by the Republic of Azerbaijan to participate in peacekeeping operations are recruited on a voluntary basis. Before being assigned to the peacekeeping contingent, they undergo special training in accordance with established procedures. The law states that the decision to deploy Azerbaijani military personnel outside the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan

65 E-qanun.az, “Azərbaycan Respublikasının milli təhlükəsizlik konsepsiyası”, № 2198, 23 may 2007-ci, Elektron resurs: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/13373>

66 E-qanun.az, “Azərbaycan Respublikasının Hərbi doktrinası”, № 1029-IIIQR, 8 iyun 2010, Elektron resurs: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/19722>

67 E-qanun.az, “Azərbaycan Respublikasının Silahlı Qüvvələri haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikasının Qanunu”, № 955-VQ, 29 dekabr 2017, Elektron resurs: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/37672>

68 E-qanun.az, “Azərbaycan Respublikasının sülhməramlı əməliyyatlarda iştirakı haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikasının Qanunu”, № 1000-IIIQ, 11 may 2010, Elektron resurs: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/19857>

to participate in peacekeeping operations is the responsibility of the Milli Majlis (National Assembly) of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and that such a decision constitutes the legal basis for the use of military personnel outside the country in each specific case.

Training of Peacekeeping Forces

The Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan pays special attention to the selection of personnel for the peacekeeping forces. Markers for the selection of soldiers and military officers for peacekeeping forces are physical fitness, education, a high level of intellectual capacity, tall stature, good health, and foreign language skills.

After the completion of NATO's Resolute Support Mission, one of the last to leave Afghanistan was an officer of the Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping contingent, Major Jasarat Abdullayev. In an interview with the *"Azərbaycan Ordusu"* newspaper, he touched upon the selection of personnel for participation in peacekeeping operations, stating: "One of the main priorities of our state in NATO-led operations is the engagement of advanced personnel. Special attention was given to the selection of personnel who would participate in peacekeeping operations. Military servicemen with high physical performance, good health, foreign language skills, and a high intellectual level were given the opportunity to take part in such an important mission."⁶⁹

The training of the Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping forces is conducted in accordance with national special training programs that reflect the specific characteristics of the peacekeeping operations and missions in which they will participate. In this process, the capabilities of friendly, partner, and allied countries, as well as international organizations, are also utilized.

Members of the Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping forces undergo comprehensive specialized training. Personnel to be deployed to peacekeeping operations are selected on a voluntary basis from among the most capable servicemen. Military personnel wishing to participate in peacekeeping operations and missions submit an official application through the appropriate channels. During the selection process, factors such as high psychological and physical endurance, bravery, courage, determination, agility, and the ability to overcome mission-related difficulties are taken into account. Within this process, servicemen undergo relevant evaluations and medical examinations.

During training, peacekeepers are instructed in international legal norms, rules of conduct and safety during peacekeeping operations, and the history, customs, traditions, and culture of the host country, along with physical training exercises and drills.

In addition, in accordance with the annual combat training plan approved by the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan, regular training exercises are conducted to enhance the level of professionalism of peacekeeping personnel, and the combat, moral-psychological, physical, medical, and specialized preparedness of units are assessed. Only the most highly-trained military personnel are deployed to peacekeeping operations and missions. Each individual is interviewed separately by the military unit commander. Since

69 Fuad Cəfərov. Mahmud Möhbəliyev, *"Sülhməramlı missiyamızı layiqincə yerinə yetirdik"*, Mod.gov.az, 4 sentyabr 2021, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/pre/37496.html>

2017, professional contract-based servicemen have been recruited into these units, and all necessary conditions have been created to increase their level of readiness during training.

The training of the Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping contingent is aimed at instilling the skills and capabilities required for servicemen to successfully achieve assigned tasks, survive in difficult conditions and situations, and return safely to their homeland. The distinctive features arising from peacekeepers' training programs distinguish them from other military personnel. Explaining these differences, First Lieutenant Samir Yusubov, an officer of the Azerbaijani peacekeeping contingent who served in Afghanistan, stated: "A serviceman of a peacekeeping battalion must also stand out for his awareness and reconnaissance skills. He must be able to anticipate factors that could pose a threat to security and take swift and effective measures to prevent potential incidents. He must continuously work on himself in order to thoroughly absorb the instructions provided, correctly assess the operational environment, be well acquainted with the area of responsibility, and prevent dangers that may arise during service in a timely manner."⁷⁰

Since the establishment of the Peacekeeping Unit in 1997, its personnel have participated in exercises such as "Cooperative Banners" in Norway (1997), "Cooperative Best Effort" in Macedonia (1998), "Peace Bridge" in Türkiye (1998), "Central Asian Battalion (CENTRASBAT)" in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan (1998), "Cooperative Best Effort" in Canada (1999), CENTRASBAT in Kazakhstan (2000), and others. Participants in these exercises gained extensive experience and specialized knowledge for the future conduct of humanitarian and peacekeeping operations.

As military cooperation of the Azerbaijani Army expanded, new opportunities emerged for studying and adapting the peacekeeping training experiences of various countries and international organizations to national characteristics. The Azerbaijani Army made use of these opportunities to support the implementation of the Republic of Azerbaijan's commitments to contributing to international peace and security. In subsequent years, the Azerbaijani Army extensively utilized the opportunities provided by bilateral military cooperation plans signed between the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan and foreign defense institutions, as well as various NATO cooperation mechanisms.

Within the framework of preparation for peacekeeping operations, Azerbaijani peacekeeping personnel participated in numerous international exercises and their planning conferences, such as "Cooperative Longbow/Lancer," "REGEX," "Saber Junction," "Steadfast Jackal," "Combined Resolve," "Eternity," "Trident Jackal," "Combined Endeavor," and "Agile Spirit" in Türkiye, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Moldova, Italy, Albania, Romania, Greece, Norway, the United States, Ukraine, Switzerland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jordan, Morocco, Qatar, and other countries.

In addition, peacekeeping personnel receive training through various courses covering peacekeeping operations, crisis management, joint operations, logistics support, environmental protection during operations, military observer, staff officers, multinational operational headquarters, counterterrorism, defense against weapons of mass destruction, force planning, force protection, and civil–military cooperation.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

The Azerbaijani Army also utilize courses conducted by mobile training teams of NATO and different foreign countries, visiting Azerbaijan for the preparation of its peacekeeping personnel. However, the focus of the training process is not limited solely to personnel who will participate in peacekeeping operations as equal emphasis is placed on enhancing the knowledge, skills, and professionalism of the instructors who train them. For this purpose, instructors are also sent to various training-of-trainers courses conducted in foreign countries within the framework of cooperation mechanisms.

To participate in peacekeeping operations and achieve operational interoperability with the forces of other countries, the Azerbaijani Army joined NATO's Operational Capabilities Concept Evaluation and Feedback Programme (OCC E&F) in 2004 and declared one company to the OCC Pool of Forces. Currently, units from all branches of the Azerbaijani Army have been successfully integrated into this program. In 2015, a battalion-level unit was declared to the Pool of Forces, followed in subsequent years by a reconnaissance company, an Mi-17 helicopter pair, and a Maritime Interdiction Operations boarding team.

The Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan effectively utilizes the broad capabilities of NATO's OCC program in preparing the peacekeeping contingent and increasing its combat readiness and interoperability.

Participation in Peacekeeping Operations

1. Kosovo Force (KFOR) Operation

The KFOR operation began on June 10, 1999, based on UNSCR 1244, following a 78-day NATO air campaign that started on March 24, 1999. This operation is the longest in NATO's history and is still ongoing. During this operation, more than 200 peacekeepers have lost their lives.⁷¹

The initial objectives of the operation were to prevent armed clashes, establish a secure environment, ensure public order, rule of law, disarm the Kosovo Liberation Army, support international humanitarian efforts, and coordinate with international civilian organizations. Later, additional objectives were assigned to the participating forces.

Initially, 50,000 troops from 30 countries, including NATO members and non-members, participated in KFOR.⁷² As the security situation improved, troop numbers were gradually reduced. By the end of 2003, the number of personnel participating in KFOR was decreased to approximately to 17,500 people.⁷³

The main headquarters of the peacekeeping forces in Kosovo was located in Pristina. Under its command, there were five multinational brigades, with their own headquarters. The forces were formed as following: Central (led by the United Kingdom, based in Pristina), South (led by Germany, based in Prizren), North (led by France, based in Kosovska

71 Forcesnews, "The NATO task force that's been keeping the peace in Kosovo for 25 years", 12 June 2004, Available at: <https://www.forcesnews.com/services/army/kfor-nato-task-force-thats-been-keeping-peace-kosovo-25-years>

72 Ministry of National Defence of Poland, "KFOR", Available at: <https://www.gov.pl/web/national-defence/kfor>

73 NATO, "NATO's role in Kosovo", Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_48818.htm

Mitrovica), East (led by Italy, based in Peć), and West (led by the United States, based at Camp Bondsteel, near Ferizaj/Uroševac).

On July 2, 1999, the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted Decision No. 697-IQR approving "The deployment of a platoon of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces as part of a battalion of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Türkiye under NATO's overall command in the Kosovo region of Yugoslavia and its participation in relevant operations".⁷⁴

From September 1999 to March 2008, a peacekeeping contingent of one platoon of 34 personnel (1 officer, 1 warrant officer, and 32 soldiers) of the Azerbaijani Army participated in NATO-led peace support operations in Kosovo.⁷⁵ The Republic of Azerbaijan was among the first countries to join this operation. After completing two months of special training in Azerbaijan, the assigned personnel participated in a two-week joint training exercise with the Turkish battalion in Ankara. By July 1999, preparation of the peacekeeping contingent in Azerbaijan was complete.

Under the "Agreement between the Government of Republic of Azerbaijan and the Government of Republic of Turkey on the Activities of the Azerbaijani Platoon to be Deployed to Kosovo within the Turkish Battalion Task Force", signed in Baku on July 28, 1999, the Azerbaijani peacekeeping platoon served in the Dragash district of Kosovo as part of the Turkish Battalion Tactical Task Force, within the KFOR South multinational brigade.⁷⁶ The platoon was stationed in the town of Dragash, 35 km south of the city of Prizren, near the borders with North Macedonia and Albania.

During the signing ceremony, Türkiye's former military attaché to Azerbaijan, Major General Sadık Ercan, described Azerbaijan's participation in peacekeeping operations in Kosovo as a major step for the Azerbaijani Armed Forces and noted the growth of its international prestige.⁷⁷

Over the course of the service of the peacekeeping platoon of the Azerbaijani Army in the peacekeeping operation in Kosovo, 362 Azerbaijani servicemen participated, including 10 officers, 7 warrant officers, and 345 soldiers. Personnel were rotated every six months.⁷⁸

Following Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence, on March 4, 2008, the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted the decision on the "Withdrawal of the Platoon of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan from the Kosovo Region of the Former Yugoslavia"⁷⁹. In April 2008, the platoon was fully redeployed to Azerbaijan.

74 E-qanun.az, "Azərbaycan Respublikası Silahlı Qüvvələri təqımının Türkiyə Cümhuriyyəti Silahlı Qüvvələri taborunun tərkibində və NATO strukturlarının ümumi komandanlığı altında Yuqoslaviyanın Kosovo regionunda yerləşdirilməsinə və müvafiq əməliyyatlarda iştirak etməsinə razılıq verilməsi haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikası Milli Məclisinin Qərarı", № 697-IQR, 2 iyul 1999, Elektron resurs: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/14899>

75 Mod.gov.az, "Beynəlxalq sülhməramlı əməliyyatlarda iştirak", Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/mdb-cer-civesinde-emekdasliq-027/>

76 Mod.gov.az, "Müdafiə Nazirliyinin məlumatı", 28 iyul 1999, Available at: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/mudafie-nazirliyinin-melumati-44722.html>

77 Ibid.

78 Mod.gov.az, "Beynəlxalq sülhməramlı əməliyyatlarda iştirak", Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/mdb-cer-civesinde-emekdasliq-027/>

79 E-qanun.az, "Azərbaycan Respublikası Silahlı Qüvvələri təqımının keçmiş Yuqoslaviyanın Kosovo regionundan geri çağırılması haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikası Milli Məclisinin Qərarı", № 553-IIIQR, 4 mart 2008, Elektron resurs: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/14899>.

Throughout the deployment of the Azerbaijani peacekeeping contingent, its logistical support and transportation to and from the operational area were provided by the Republic of Türkiye.

The Azerbaijani platoon's area of responsibility in the Dragash district included 18 settlements inhabited by Albanian and Gorani ethnic groups, as well as 14 km of the Kosovo–North Macedonia border and 7 km of the Kosovo–Albania border.

In accordance with the operational plan, the platoon conducted post and patrol duties at eighteen locations; border patrols; observation missions; search of personnel or vehicles at permanent and mobile checkpoints; convoy escort of humanitarian assistance columns; and protection of events organized by international and non-governmental organizations, in accordance with norms and principles of international law. Additionally, the Azerbaijani platoon conducted joint "Module-150" search and patrol operations with peacekeeping contingents from the United States, Germany, Austria, Türkiye, and Greece.

The area of responsibility of the Azerbaijani peacekeeping platoon, situated 1,100 meters above sea level, was mountainous and cold. Hence, it required heightened caution in planning and execution activities.

Peacekeepers coming from various countries were typically deployed in the most ethnically mixed regions, facing sensitive and, in some cases, problematic situations arising from cultural and religious differences. The military personnel of the Azerbaijani Army knew from their training that ignoring cultural and religious differences would not only affect the effectiveness of the mission but could even lead to conflict with the local population. The fact that 95% of the population in Kosovo is Muslim created a certain bond between Azerbaijani military personnel and the local population in terms of religious affinity. Members of the Azerbaijani Army respected local customs and traditions and managed to establish good relations with the local population.

The joint Turkish–Azerbaijani unit also regularly organized medical examinations for local residents. The population saw this as a great opportunity to benefit from free medical services provided by professional doctors.⁸⁰

KFOR, which was formed from forces from more than 30 countries with different capabilities, equipment, standards, operational procedures, and training received, was characterized by inconsistencies. There were significant differences in command-and-control procedures, cultures, religions, customs and traditions at the joint bases where peacekeepers from different countries were deployed.

Having grown up in a tolerant, multicultural and multiconfessional society, the personnel of the Azerbaijani peacekeeping contingent, during their service in an environment of cultural and religious differences, managed to establish friendly and professional relations with the peacekeeping forces of other countries, implemented the necessary measures to ensure mutual interoperability, and gained good experiences.

Amirbey Bakhishov, an officer of the Azerbaijani Army who participated in the peacekeeping operation in Kosovo, stated in an interview with the "*Azərbaycan*" newspaper: "Since 1997,

⁸⁰ KFOR Chronicle, "*Azerbaijan Contingent in KFOR*", Edition 5, May 31, 2006

we have been training in accordance with NATO standards, thus serving in Kosovo was not that difficult for us. The material and technical support, as well as military equipment of the Turkish company was at a high level. During our time in Kosovo, we gained more practical experience and fully understood the peacekeeping activities. The city of Dragash, where we were located, and the surrounding area were inhabited by Muslims. Our relations with the local population were also established at a high level. They highly appreciated our peacekeeping activities."⁸¹

During the deployment, there were several indicators of the appreciation felt for the role of Azerbaijan and the good relations established with the local population. These included the ceremonial unveiling of a bust of the Great Leader Heydar Aliyev in the city of Dragash on May 10, 2006;⁸² the celebration of Azerbaijan's Independence Day on May 28;⁸³ as well as other events organized by Azerbaijani peacekeepers. High-ranking military personnel representing the forces of NATO member states, representatives of local government agencies, and the local population all participated in these events.

The contributions of the Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping platoon to the KFOR operation included:

- demonstration, through the post-patrol service it carried out, of the presence of peacekeeping forces in the district, thereby preventing the resumption of military operations in the Dragash district, creating a safe environment, and maintaining public law and order;
- participation in the controlling civil disturbances occurring in the district, prevention of acts of violence between ethnic minorities, and ensuring freedom of movement;
- ensuring reliable protection of the border sections with North Macedonia and Albania passing through the Dragash district, and carrying out measures to combat smuggling, illegal migration, transnational crime, and illicit drug trafficking. As a result of these measures, weapons, ammunition, illicit drugs, and other illegal items were repeatedly discovered and handed over to the relevant authorities.
- participation in the disarmament of the Kosovo Liberation Army, regularly searching personnel and weapons in military units belonging to them within the area of responsibility. The platoon prevented civilians from entering mined areas and managed security during the neutralization of detected mines.
- assisting internally displaced persons to safely return to their homes and, through international organizations, providing humanitarian aid to 18 settlements located within its area of responsibility. The platoon also assisted international organizations and non-governmental organizations in their activities.

The contributions made by the Republic of Azerbaijan to the establishment of peace, security, and stability in Kosovo remain highly appreciated by states around the world, international organizations, and the KFOR command.

81 *Azərbaycan Qəzeti*, "Azərbaycan sülhməramlılarının döyüş hazırlığı NATO standartlarına tam uyğundur", 30 may 2009

82 *Ibid.*

83 KFOR Chronicle, "87th Anniversary of Establishment of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic", Edition 6, June 30, 2005

The Head of NATO Forces' Planning Group, Admiral Guido Venturoni, during meetings he held while visiting Baku on April 26-28, 2000, highly praised the participation of the military personnel of the Azerbaijani Army in the peacekeeping operation in Kosovo.⁸⁴

In October 2002, during a visit to the Republic of Azerbaijan, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe – Commander of U.S. Forces in Europe, General Joseph Ralston, assessing Azerbaijan's partnership, stated: "After the collapse of the socialist bloc, NATO's 'Partnership for Peace' program was created, and Azerbaijan was one of the first states to join cooperation with it and to begin carrying out a peacekeeping mission. The high-level service of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces' peacekeeping platoon within the Turkish battalion in Kosovo, as well as the conduct of the 'Cooperative Determination 2001' exercises in Baku last year, show that Azerbaijan is an excellent partner."⁸⁵

During his March 2007 visit to Azerbaijan, the former NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the South Caucasus and Central Asia, Mr. Robert Simmons, expressed gratitude for the fact that units of the Azerbaijani Army were fighting shoulder to shoulder with NATO against international terrorism in Afghanistan and Kosovo.⁸⁶

The Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping platoon returned to the country on April 15, 2008. During their service in the peacekeeping operation in Kosovo, the Azerbaijani Army personnel demonstrated a high level of professionalism. This professionalism was always highly appreciated, and they were awarded NATO operation participation medals and other decorations. During the official farewell ceremony for the peacekeeping contingent of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the representative of KFOR Multinational Task Force South, Colonel Georg Macker, highly praised the professionalism, discipline, and dedication of Azerbaijani servicemen, and especially emphasized their contribution to ensuring stability in the region and the development of international cooperation.⁸⁷

The professionalism of the Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping contingent that served in Kosovo were repeatedly positively assessed, including by NATO's senior leadership. In November 2017, the former NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg expressed that he highly appreciated Azerbaijan's participation in NATO's peacekeeping missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan during his meeting with the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Mr. İlham Aliyev, who was paying a working visit to Belgium.⁸⁸

2. International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Operation

The operations of ISAF in Afghanistan began in August 2002 on the basis of UNSC Resolution 1386 of December 20, 2001,⁸⁹ and at the request of the Government of Afghanistan. Under

84 Qasımlı, M. C. *Azərbaycan Respublikasının xarici siyasəti (1991–2003)*. 2 hissədə, II hissə. Bakı: Mütərcim, 2015.

85 Mod.gov.az, "Müdafiə Nazirliyinin məlumatı", 17 oktyabr 2002, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/mudafiye-nazirliyinin-melumati-44289.html>

86 Mod.gov.az, "Müdafiə Nazirliyinin məlumatı", 15 mart 2007, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/mudafiye-nazirliyinin-melumati-43491.html>

87 *Alman Silahlı Qüvvələrinin Balkanlardakı qəzeti*. N465, 2008 (Feldzeitung der Bundeswehr für den Balkan)

88 Mod.gov.az, "Prezident İlham Əliyev Brüsseldə NATO-nun Baş katibi Yens Stoltenberq ilə görüşüb", Press Release, 23 noyabr 2017, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/prezident-ilham-eliyev-brusselde-nato-nun-bas-katibi-yens-stoltenberq-ile-gorusub-video-20758.html>

89 United Nations, "Resolution 1386 (2001) adopted by the UN Security Council at its 4443rd meeting", December 20,

the resolution, nearly 5,000 troops were to be deployed in and around the city of Kabul. Pursuant to UNSCR 1510 of October 13, 2003,⁹⁰ ISAF operation began to cover all of Afghanistan, expanding to the north and west of the country in 2003–2005 and to the south and east in 2005–2006.⁹¹

The purpose of the ISAF operation was to create the necessary conditions for the Government of Afghanistan to restore its full authority over the country and to build the relevant capabilities and capacities for the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, including in the fight against international terrorism.

The ISAF operation ended in December 2014 after the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces assumed full responsibility for ensuring security in the country.

From 2002 to 2014, a total of 130,000 personnel from 50 countries participated in the ISAF operation.⁹² The forces in Afghanistan were divided into following regional commands: Central (Kabul), South (Kandahar), North (Mazari-Sharif), East (Bagram), and West (Herat).

On November 15, 2002, the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted a decision “On granting consent to the deployment of the peacekeeping contingent of the Azerbaijani Army in Afghanistan under the overall command of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Türkiye and NATO structures, and to its participation in relevant operations.”⁹³

The peacekeeping contingent of the Azerbaijani Army, consisting of one platoon, began operations in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan as part of ISAF in November 2002 with 22 personnel (1 officer, 1 warrant officer, and 20 soldiers) in operations to establish and maintain peace. Personnel were rotated every six months.

At the Bucharest Summit, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Mr. İlham Aliyev, declared the intention to double the number of the peacekeeping contingent. In accordance with the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted in this regard, on January 15, 2008, Azerbaijan’s peacekeeping contingent in Afghanistan was increased to 45 personnel.⁹⁴ On October 2, 2008, the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted a decision⁹⁵ to increase the peacekeeping contingent in Afghanistan, and from February 19, 2009, its numbers

2001, Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/454998?v=pdf>

90 United Nations, “Resolution 1510 (2003) adopted by the Security Council at its 4840th meeting”, October 13, 2003, Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/503843?v=pdf#files>

91 UK House of Commons, “The International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan”, 9 February 2009, Available at: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN04854/SN04854.pdf>

92 NATO, “NATO and Afghanistan”, Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm

93 E-qanun.az, “Azərbaycan Ordusunun sülhməramlı kontingentinin Türkiyə Respublikası Silahlı Qüvvələrinin və NATO strukturlarının ümumi komandanlığı altında Əfqanıstanda yerləşdirilməsinə və müvafiq əməliyyatlarda iştirak etməsinə razılıq verilməsi haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikası Milli Məclisinin Qərarı”, № 378-IIQR, 15 noyabr 2002, Elektron resurs: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/11351>

94 E-qanun.az, “Azərbaycan Ordusunun sülhməramlı kontingentinin Türkiyə Respublikası Silahlı Qüvvələrinin və NATO strukturlarının ümumi komandanlığı altında Əfqanıstanda yerləşdirilməsinə və müvafiq əməliyyatlarda iştirak etməsinə razılıq verilməsi haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikası Milli Məclisinin 2002-ci il 15 noyabr tarixli 378-IIQR nömrəli Qərarına əlavə edilməsi barədə Azərbaycan Respublikasının Qanunu”, № 451-IIIQD, 19 oktyabr 2007, Elektron resurs: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/11351>

95 E-qanun.az, “Azərbaycan Respublikası Silahlı Qüvvələri təqımının Türkiyə Cümhuriyyəti Silahlı Qüvvələrinin taborunun tərkibində və NATO strukturlarının ümumi komandanlığı altında Əfqanıstanda yerləşdirilməsinə və müvafiq əməliyyatlarda iştirak etməsinə razılıq verilməsi haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikası Milli Məclisinin Qərarına dəyişiklik edilməsi barədə Azərbaycan Respublikası Milli Məclisinin Qərarı”, № 673-IIIQR, 2 oktyabr 2008, Elektron resurs: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/16428>

doubled to 90 personnel. On October 5, 2010, in order to increase its military contribution to the ISAF operation, Azerbaijan sent four additional officers to the mission – two military doctors and two engineer-sappers – thus increasing the size of the peacekeeping contingent to 94 personnel.⁹⁶

The peacekeeping contingent of the Army of the Republic of Azerbaijan operated within the Turkish battalion in the ISAF operation. Logistical support for the contingent and its transportation to the area of operations was provided by Türkiye.

A peacekeeping company of the Azerbaijani Army served in Kabul as a company within the Turkish Battalion Tactical Task Force under the Central Regional Command of ISAF. The first and second platoons carried out post and patrol duties in the settlement of Uthil and guarded the northeastern section of the “Doghan” base. The third platoon guarded the state television tower of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and the fourth platoon guarded the ISAF ammunition depot in the Pol-e Charkhi district.

In addition, military doctors provided medical services to ISAF personnel as well as to the local population. On a daily basis, military doctors examined and treated 30-40 local residents. Engineer-sappers, as part of the Turkish Armed Forces peacekeeping contingent’s mine-clearance team, carried out activities to detect and neutralize mines and unexploded ordnance.

Despite the hot climate conditions, peacekeeping personnel always carried out their duties properly, on the basis of the norms and principles of international law.

The main contributions of the Azerbaijani Army’s peacekeeping unit to the ISAF operation were:

- conducting post and patrol duties in its area of responsibility, thereby demonstrating the presence of NATO forces to the civilian population and preventing clashes between religious sects;
- preventing strategically important infrastructure – such as the ammunition storage and the state television tower – from terrorist groups;
- continuously monitoring the section of the Kabul–Jalalabad highway passing through its area of responsibility and ensuring the safe passage of convoys;
- ensuring the security of mosques and other places of worship in its area of responsibility and creating a safe environment for the conduct of religious ceremonies;
- organizing various training for Afghan Army personnel on the protection of critical infrastructure;
- two military doctors of the Azerbaijani Army’s peacekeeping contingent providing medical assistance at a clinic in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to both the local population and the soldiers of the peacekeeping contingent;
- assisted internally displaced persons return safely to their homes and provided humanitarian assistance to civilians in its area of responsibility through international

⁹⁶ Mod.gov.az, “Beynəlxalq sülhməramlı əməliyyatlarda iştirak”, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/mdb-cer-civesinde-emekdasliq-027/>

organizations. It assisted international organizations and non-governmental organizations in their activities.

The peacekeeping company carried out its tasks within the framework of the norms and principles of international law. It worked in cooperation with international and non-governmental organizations operating in the settlement of Uthil. The unit earned the trust and respect of the local population and consistently established good relations with them. For their professionalism and timely fulfillment of assigned tasks, Azerbaijani peacekeepers were repeatedly awarded certificates of honor, individual personnel were rewarded by the senior management, and the leadership of the Ministry of Defense received numerous letters of appreciation.

In an article titled "Peacekeeping Mission" published in the newspaper "*Azərbaycan*" on May 31, 2009, Zulfuqar Zulfuqarov, an officer of Military Unit No. "N," who was awarded a special medal by NATO command for exemplary military service in Afghanistan, stated: "The Azerbaijani peacekeeping platoon is also engaged in improving the combat readiness of Afghan servicemen. Comprehensive assistance is provided to them in organizing the fight against terrorism. Relations with the local population have also been established at a fairly normal level. Since Afghans are Muslims, they show us great trust and confidence. It is not accidental that food products and other humanitarian goods are distributed to the population precisely with the help of our platoon."⁹⁷

During their time in Afghanistan, Azerbaijani peacekeepers constantly faced various threats. Raids on the area they guarded, explosive devices installed, and suicide attackers were among the daily dangers surrounding them.

In 2007, terrorists attacked the state television tower of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, which was guarded by the third platoon of the Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping unit. The Azerbaijani peacekeeping platoon repelled the attack and neutralized the terrorists.⁹⁸

In 2013, a suicide terrorist detonated an explosive device at a checkpoint controlled by the United Kingdom's peacekeeping contingent near the Doghan base, followed by attempts by other terrorists to attack the base. The first platoon of the Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping unit attacked the terrorists by maneuvering from the flank and, in coordination with the UK peacekeepers who were under attack, neutralized the terrorists.⁹⁹

When a group of Azerbaijani peacekeeping personnel was moving in a vehicle convoy from the Doghan base to rotate the guard personnel at the ISAF ammunition depot located in the Pul-e Charkhi district, a suicide terrorist detonated explosive on a motorcycle he was riding; however, the explosion failed to damage the vehicles or to harm the personnel.¹⁰⁰

In a letter to the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated May 26, 2008, General Dan McNeill (U.S. Army), Commander of NATO's International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, noted with satisfaction the exemplary conduct demonstrated by Azerbaijani peacekeepers, stating: "...Your troops in Afghanistan, regardless of where

97 *Azərbaycan qəzeti*, "Sülhməramlı missiya", 31 may 2009

98 Müdafiə Nazirliyinin Beynəlxalq Hərbi Əməkdaşlıq İdarəsi, "Raport", 09 oktyabr 2025-ci il, 55 (2025-ci il) nömrəli iş, səh. 103-119

99 *Ibid.*

100 *Ibid.*

they are deployed, contribute to security every day, and they have demonstrated great flexibility and heroism in accomplishing every task. They are remarkable representatives of Azerbaijan. They have been so before and will continue to be so in the future. It is an honor for me to command them as part of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.”¹⁰¹

The Azerbaijani peacekeeping forces were among the few participating countries in Afghanistan whose populations were predominantly Muslim, and this factor facilitated daily contact with the local population.¹⁰²

The activities of the Azerbaijani peacekeeping contingent were consistently highly appreciated by officials at various levels. During his visit to Azerbaijan in November 2003, General Charles Wald, Deputy Chief of Staff of the U.S. European Command, speaking about Azerbaijan’s contributions to the fight against international terrorism, stated: “We attach special importance to relations with Azerbaijan, which is among the countries of strategic significance for the United States, and we are interested in expanding military cooperation with your country. At a time when terrorism and non-traditional military threats are increasing in the world, the security of our friends is very important to us. In this regard, we highly appreciate Azerbaijan’s active participation in the fight against international terrorism, as well as in peacekeeping operations carried out in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq.”¹⁰³

Also, the U.S. Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Reno Harnish, said: “This event has further strengthened the determination of the American people to fight international terrorism. We highly value the efforts of our friends, including the state of Azerbaijan, in this matter. The presence of a platoon of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces in Afghanistan is a real proof of Azerbaijan’s support for America in the fight against international terrorism. The United States considers Baku its close friend....”¹⁰⁴

In July 2006, Major General Harry Wyatt, Commander of the Oklahoma National Guard of the United States, visited Azerbaijan. On July 27 of the same year, during a meeting with the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan, he thanked the Azerbaijani people and state for Azerbaijan’s active participation in the fight against global terrorism, stating: “We regard the service of units of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces together with the U.S. Armed Forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo as a great success of the Azerbaijani people. You have excellent Armed Forces and very disciplined soldiers. You can be proud of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces.”¹⁰⁵

NATO’s former Special Representative for the South Caucasus and Central Asia, Mr. Robert Simmons, visited the Republic of Azerbaijan in March 2007. On

101 Mod.gov.az, “Müdafiə Nazirliyinin məlumatı”, 18 iyul 2008, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/mudafie-nazirliyinin-melumati-43117.html>

102 *Coalition Bulletin*, Volume 43, July 2007

103 Mod.gov.az, “Müdafiə Nazirliyinin məlumatı”, 21 noyabr 2003, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/mudafie-nazirliyinin-melumati-44212.html>

104 Mod.gov.az, “Müdafiə Nazirliyinin məlumatı”, 11 sentyabr 2003, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/mudafie-nazirliyinin-melumati-44199.html>

105 Mod.gov.az, “Müdafiə Nazirliyinin məlumatı”, 27 iyul 2006, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/mudafie-nazirliyinin-melumati-43648.html>

March 15 of the same year, during a meeting with the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan, he expressed his gratitude for the fact that units of the Azerbaijani Army fought shoulder to shoulder with NATO against international terrorism in Afghanistan and Kosovo.¹⁰⁶

In June 2008, at a meeting held at the U.S. Central Command, Deputy Commander of Coalition Forces General McCarthy, speaking about the activities of Azerbaijani peacekeepers, noted that their service was even better than that of U.S. Marines.¹⁰⁷

On May 21, 2009, the Commander of U.S. Forces in Europe, General John Craddock, who was visiting Azerbaijan, met with the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan. During the meeting, he expressed satisfaction with Azerbaijan's contributions to the international security system and with the high level of service of the Azerbaijani peacekeeping contingent in Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan.¹⁰⁸

The Minister of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Colonel General Zakir Hasanov, received a delegation of congressmen led by Mr. Ed Royce, Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, on April 19, 2014. During the meeting, the congressmen stated that they highly appreciated the successful cooperation regarding Afghanistan.¹⁰⁹

On March 19, 2014, the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Colonel General Zakir Hasanov, received a delegation led by Mr. Zazar Ahmad Osmani, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. During the meeting, Mr. Zazar Ahmad Osmani particularly emphasized the contribution of the Peacekeeping Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan to operations under the International Security Assistance Force.¹¹⁰

Ahead of the First International Caspian Energy Forum in April 2014, former U.S. Ambassador to Azerbaijan, Richard Morningstar, talking to journalists in Baku, expressed the United States' appreciation for Azerbaijan's commitment regarding Afghanistan's post-war development. The ambassador stated: "We highly appreciate every step and every kind of assistance Azerbaijan has provided on the Afghanistan issue. As an example of such assistance, I can point to the Azerbaijani servicemen serving in that country. At the same time, I would like to note Azerbaijan's major transit role in terms of transporting food and other cargo."¹¹¹

106 Mod.gov.az, "Müdafiə Nazirliyinin məlumatı", 15 mart 2007, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/mudafie-nazirliyinin-melumatı-43491.html>

107 Azertag.az, "Command of Coalition in Iraq Forces praise Azerbaijani peacekeepers", June 15 2008, Available at: https://azertag.az/en/xeber/command_of_coalition_in_iraq_forces_praise_azerbaijani_peacekeepers-575568.

108 Mod.gov.az, "Müdafiə Nazirliyinin məlumatı", 21 may 2009, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/mudafie-nazirliyinin-melumatı-42542.html>

109 Mod.gov.az, "Azərbaycan Respublikasının müdafiə naziri ABŞ konqresmenlərindən ibarət nümayəndə heyətini qəbul edib", 19 aprel 2014, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/azerbaycan-respublikasının-mudafie-naziri-abs-kongresmenlerinden-ibaret-numayende-heyetini-qebul-edib-11974.html>

110 Mod.gov.az, "Azərbaycan Respublikasının müdafiə naziri Əfqanıstan İslam Respublikasının Xarici İşlər nazirini qəbul edib", 19 mart 2014, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/azerbaycan-respublikasının-mudafie-naziri-efqanıstan-islam-respublikasının-xarici-isler-nazirini-qebul-edib-15567.html>

111 Riçard Morninqstar: "ABŞ Əfqanıstanın müharibədən sonrakı inkişafı üzrə Azərbaycanın üzərinə götürdüyü öhdəliyi yüksək qiymətləndirir», News.milli.az, 23 aprel 2014, Elektron resurs: <https://news.milli.az/politics/262797.html>

3. NATO's Non-Combat Resolute Support Mission

At the NATO Lisbon Summit held in 2010, a Declaration on an Enduring Partnership between NATO and Afghanistan was adopted, and an initial list of activities was approved in April 2011. In this context, the main areas of activity included strengthening capacity in the defense and security sector, increasing transparency to combat corruption, professional military education programs, development of the civil aviation sector; providing higher education institutions with internet access, training in civil emergency planning and emergency preparedness, and supporting public diplomacy efforts.

At the Chicago Summit held in 2012, support was expressed for expanding the Enduring Partnership and a Joint Declaration on Afghanistan was adopted, expressing consent to establish a NATO-led non-combat training, advice, and assistance mission in Afghanistan after 2014.

On November 6, 2012, Azerbaijan was recognized as a potential operational partner for NATO's post-2014 mission in Afghanistan and was involved in the planning process of the mission named Resolute Support, including the drafting of its Operational Concept and the Operational Plan.

At the Wales Summit in 2014, it was decided that, from 2015 onward, NATO's support to Afghanistan should cover three pillars: the Resolute Support Mission, financial support for the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, and the Enduring Partnership. The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, declared at the Chicago and Wales summits and during a visit to NATO Headquarters that Azerbaijan's support to Afghanistan would continue after 2014. The main elements of this support were a military contribution to the Resolute Support Mission, civilian training, transit, and financial support for the Afghan National Security Forces.

The post-2014 Resolute Support Mission, that was carried out under a new operational plan and with a different mandate, was a non-combat mission, conducted with a force ten times smaller than ISAF (approximately 13,000 personnel). Thus, smooth transition between the two operations was ensured: NATO transferred several operational tasks that had not been completed during ISAF to the Resolute Support Mission, and its command structure was based on that of ISAF. At the same time, Azerbaijan's contribution to the Resolute Support Mission was identical to its participation in ISAF in terms of force composition, deployment, the functions it performed (force protection), and the chain of command to which it was subordinate. Rotations of the Resolute Support Mission forces were also carried out as a continuation of ISAF (without a full withdrawal and redeployment, and in line with the previous rotation principle).

The transition process from the ISAF operation that began in 2011 was completed in December 2014. The non-combat Resolute Support Mission began on January 1, 2015. Its purpose was to provide training, advice, and assistance to Afghanistan's National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) and state institutions in combating terrorism and ensuring security.

In May 2015, 13,199 troops from 42 countries were participating in the non-combat Resolute Support Mission.¹¹² However, the number of contributing countries and personnel changed during the mission. In October 2019, 39 countries were contributing to the mission with 17,178 personnel.¹¹³ In February 2021, 9,592 personnel from 36 countries were continuing their activities within the framework of the mission.¹¹⁴

Military forces in Afghanistan were organized as the Central, South, North, East, and West Regional Commands, and the North International Airport Command in order to protect NATO deployment bases and to provide additional training, advice, and assistance to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces.

On January 12, 2015, and on April 9 of the same year, an agreement was signed in the form of an exchange of letters between the NATO Secretary General and the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan on ensuring the participation of the Republic of Azerbaijan in NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan.¹¹⁵ In reality, the Azerbaijani peacekeeping contingent of 94 personnel began service in the Resolute Support Mission on January 1, 2015, in accordance with the six-month rotation plan.¹¹⁶

The Azerbaijani Army peacekeeping contingent that had participated in ISAF was transferred from the Dohyan base to the NATO force deployment area at Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA) in Kabul. Initially, after brief preparatory training with 94 personnel, it took over the task of guarding the northern and eastern sections of the airport, as well as checkpoints, from the Jordanian peacekeeping battalion. The peacekeeping unit's personnel learned the necessary standard operating procedures and organized their activities accordingly.

In Baku, on April 18, 2015, a Protocol was signed between the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Government of the Republic of Türkiye regarding the Azerbaijani unit that would operate within the units of the Turkish Armed Forces under the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan.¹¹⁷ The Protocol regulated the activities of the Azerbaijani peacekeeping contingent within the Turkish Armed Forces contingent.

Recognizing the importance of the Resolute Support Mission for Afghanistan's security and sustainable development, including for regional and global security, from January 9,

112 NATO, "Resolute Support Mission (RSM): Key Facts and Figures", May 2015, Available at: https://www.nato.int/content/dam/nato/webready/documents/factsheets/rsm-placemat-pdfs/2015/20151007_2015-10-rsm-placemat.pdf

113 NATO, "Resolute Support Mission (RSM): Key Facts and Figures", October 2019, Available at: https://www.nato.int/content/dam/nato/webready/documents/factsheets/rsm-placemat-pdfs/2019/20191022_2019-10-RSM-Placemat.pdf

114 *Ibid.*

115 E-qanun.az, "NATO-nun Əfqanıstandakı Qətiyyətli Dəstək Missiyasında Azərbaycan Respublikasının iştirakının təmin edilməsi haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikasının müdafiə naziri ilə NATO-nun Baş katibi arasında məktublar mübadiləsi formasında Sazişin təsdiq edilməsi barədə Azərbaycan Respublikasının Qanunu", 30 sentyabr 2015-ci il, № 1309-IVQ, Elektron resurs: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/31242>

116 Mod.gov.az, "Beynəlxalq sülhməramlı əməliyyatlarda iştirak", Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/beynelxalq-sulhmeramli-emeliyyatlarda-istirak-027/>

117 E-qanun.az, "Azərbaycan Respublikası Hökuməti ilə Türkiyə Respublikası Hökuməti arasında Əfqanıstanda 'Qətiyyətli Dəstək' missiyası çərçivəsində Türk Silahlı Qüvvələrinin bölmələrinin tərkibində fəaliyyət göstərəcək Azərbaycan böliyü ilə bağlı 2015-ci il aprelin 18-də Bakı şəhərində imzalanmış Protokolun təsdiq edilməsi haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidentinin Fərmanı", № 530, 22 may 2015, Elektron resurs: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/30047>

2018, Azerbaijan increased its peacekeeping contingent in the country by 30 percent¹¹⁸ (adding 26 personnel, including 4 staff officer positions); and raised the total number to 120.¹¹⁹ From that date, the contingent consisted of 15 officers, 6 warrant officers, and 99 soldiers.

The peacekeeping contingent of the Azerbaijani Army fulfilled the task of the protection of the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul. HKAI was divided into two parts: one used by military forces, the other by civilians. Accordingly, both civilian and military aircraft operated from the airport. HKAI had significant strategic importance for the transportation of personnel and cargo. The duties of Azerbaijani peacekeepers included protection of the NATO force deployment area at HKIA, inspecting vehicles, persons, and cargo entering the airport, ensuring security, and conducting search operations in the event of terrorists infiltrating the base. More than 5,000 personnel from NATO and non-NATO states were stationed at the airport.¹²⁰

Officers served in two headquarters: the North International Airport Command and the Central Regional Command. Officers on duty in the Joint Combat Operations Center of both headquarters monitored daily operational activities on a rotational basis and organized coordination between the tactical activities of companies and other units. The Force Protection Battalion responsible for guarding the airport was formed of Azerbaijani, Turkish, Albanian, Portuguese, and Polish peacekeepers. The battalion commander was appointed from the Turkish Armed Forces, and the deputy battalion commander from the Azerbaijani Army. The military medical staff provided medical services at the military hospital to mission personnel contributing to Operation Resolute Support, embassy staff, representatives of other international organizations, and the local population.

Participation in the Resolute Support Mission required Azerbaijani peacekeepers to be vigilant and attentive. Since Kabul Airport was strategically important, terrorists regularly attempted attacks there. In addition, developments under various scenarios in the course of explosions in the city required constant readiness.

During attacks in Kabul that resulted in casualties, Azerbaijani peacekeepers, in accordance with their duties, took part in ensuring the safe evacuation of the wounded. The injured were evacuated from the incident site to Kabul airport, where they were handed over at checkpoints to a medical evacuation team that would transport them to the hospital. Azerbaijani military doctors also occasionally participated in the medical evacuation. During evacuations, to prevent possible attacks and sabotage at the airport gates, Azerbaijani peacekeepers reinforced their checkpoints and switched to an enhanced security regime. For reinforcement, support from the Turkish peacekeeping contingent's Quick Response Force was utilised.

118 Mod.gov.az, "Azərbaycan Respublikasının müdafiə naziri general-polkovnik Zakir Həsənov: Azərbaycan ilə NATO arasında 25 illik dayanıqlı tərəfdaşlıq mövcuddur», 3 may 2019, Available at: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/azerbaycan-respublikasinin-mudafie-naziri-general-polkovnik-zakir-hesenov-azerbaycan-ile-nato-arasinda-25-illik-day-26704.html>

119 Mod.gov.az, "Beynəlxalq sülhməramlı əməliyyatlarda iştirak", Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/mdb-cer-civesinde-emekdasliq-027/>

120 Azertag.az, "Azərbaycan beynəlxalq sülhməramlı əməliyyatlara mühüm töhfə verir", 17 noyabr 2017, Elektron resurs: <https://azertag.az/xeber/azerbaycan-beynəlxalq-sulhmeramli-emeliyyatlara-muhum-tohfe-verir-1112650>

In December 2015, the Spanish Embassy in Kabul was attacked by terrorists.¹²¹ Some of the injured were evacuated to the hospital at the nearby HKIA. Doctors from the Azerbaijani peacekeeping contingent provided the necessary medical assistance to seriously wounded persons and succeeded in saving their lives.

Information published on the official website of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan about the professionalism of Azerbaijani doctors stated: "Medical Service Captain Shukur Abdullayev and Medical Service Captain Gunduz Akbarov demonstrated professionalism in providing qualified medical assistance to people injured during the terrorist attack carried out against the Embassy of the Kingdom of Spain in Afghanistan on December 11, 2015. As a result of the terrorist attack that led to loss of life, some of the wounded were evacuated to the medical point where our officers served. Our military doctors, while providing prompt medical assistance to seriously wounded persons, also carried out a successful surgical operation and managed to save the life of an Afghan citizen. The professionalism shown by our servicemen in difficult and severe conditions was also highly appreciated by the NATO's command of the Turkish Armed Forces in Afghanistan. Both of our officers were also presented with letters of appreciation signed by the Turkish Task Force Commander, Division General Cahit Bakır."¹²²

On January 20, 2018, there was an attack on the Intercontinental Hotel located in the center of Kabul. At least 40 people were killed during the attack.¹²³

First Lieutenant Mahir Mammadov, who served as a liaison officer at the operations center of Kabul North Airport, noted in his report on the incident: "Information was received about an armed attack on the 'Intercontinental' hotel located in the city center. Afghan special forces led the operation, and NATO special forces units were also involved. The operation lasted twelve hours. The base's readiness level was raised to Degree 1. The gates were reinforced. Entry and exit to the base were restricted. The main task of the base was to prevent any incident that could arise and to ensure the safe entry of wounded servicemen into the base. The evacuation of wounded Afghan servicemen to the base was carried out in the form of a handover at the gates in accordance with instructions, meaning that, the wounded were handed over at the gates to the base's 'Role-2' evacuation team. Throughout the operation, the personnel on duty at the gates organized their duties exemplarily both in evacuating dozens of Afghan servicemen and in protecting the base."¹²⁴

These are only a few of the episodes that Azerbaijani peacekeepers faced daily during their service in Afghanistan.

As for relations with the local population, it should be noted that Azerbaijani peacekeepers did not encounter difficulties in communicating with locals while serving in Afghanistan.

121 BBC, "Spanish embassy attack in Kabul: Special forces at scene," 11 December 2015, Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-asia-35075184>.

122 Mod.gov.az, "Əfqanıstandakı sülhməramlılarımızın iki zabiti müdafiə nazirinin əmrinə əsasən mükafatlandırılıb", 7 yanvar 2016, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/efqanıstandakı-sulhmeramlılarımız-iki-zabiti-mudafie-nazirinin-emrine-esasen-mukafatlandirilib-12622.html>

123 The Telegraph, "Kabul hotel attack death toll almost doubles", January 25 2018, Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/01/25/kabul-hotel-attack-death-toll-almost-doubles/>.

124 Müdafiə Nazirliyinin Beynəlxalq Hərbi Əməkdaşlıq İdarəsi, "Raport", 09 oktyabr 2025-ci il, 55 (2025-ci il) nömrəli iş, səh. 103-119

Azerbaijani peacekeeping officer Major Subhan Shairov noted on this matter that there were no problems in communication, because the historical ties between the Afghan people and the Azerbaijani people are very strong, and people share the same religion.¹²⁵

In 2018, talks with the Taliban on regulating the security situation in Afghanistan, that were intensified by the Administration of U.S. President Donald Trump, yielded results two years later. In February 2020, an agreement was reached between the United States and the Taliban in Doha, Qatar. Under the agreement, the Taliban would not allow Afghan territory to be used against the United States and its allies, the United States would reduce its forces to 8,600 within 135 days, U.S. and NATO forces would withdraw from Afghanistan within 14 months, and from March 10, 2020, negotiations would begin to achieve a comprehensive and lasting peace within Afghanistan.¹²⁶

On April 14, 2021, NATO defense and foreign ministers decided to withdraw the forces participating in the Resolute Support Mission from Afghanistan over several months starting on May 1.¹²⁷ At the Brussels Summit held on June 14, 2021, allies reaffirmed this decision at the level of heads of states and governments.¹²⁸

A change of power occurred in the Republic of Afghanistan on August 15, 2021. After this event, a mass evacuation from Afghanistan began. Azerbaijani peacekeepers ensured the safe evacuation of hundreds of people from HKIA, including the staff of the UN and other international organizations. Among them were also about 100 French citizens.¹²⁹ Together with Turkish peacekeepers, Azerbaijani peacekeepers evacuated people from the country in complete safety. During the evacuation, the evacuees were also provided with food and water.¹³⁰

During August 2021, more than 120,000 people were evacuated from Kabul International Airport by coalition forces through hundreds of aircraft flights.¹³¹ This is considered the largest evacuation operation in NATO history.¹³²

During the non-combat Resolute Support Mission, the United States and coalition forces suffered more than 3,500 losses.¹³³ In connection with the end of the mission, the peacekeeping forces of the Azerbaijani Army returned to their home country on August 27, 2021.

125 Azertag.az, "Azərbaycan beynəlxalq sülhməramlı əməliyyatlara mühüm töhfə verir," 17 noyabr 2017, Elektron resurs at: https://azertag.az/xeber/azerbaycan_beynelxalq_sulhmeramli_emeliyyatlara_muhum_tohfe_verir-1112650.

126 Govinfo.gov, "Comprehensive Peace Agreement: Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan Between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan Which Is Not Recognized by the United States as a State and Is Known as the Taliban and the United States of America", 29 February 2020, Available at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/GOVPUB-S-PURL-gpo132866>

127 NATO, "NATO and Afghanistan", Official Website, Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm.

128 *Ibid.*

129 News.milli.az, "Azərbaycanın beynəlxalq sülhə və təhlükəsizliyə növbəti töhfəsi", 27 avqust 2021, Available at: <https://news.milli.az/politics/975418.html>

130 News.milli.az, "Əfqanıstanda Türkiyə hərbiçiləri ilə birlikdə son günə qədər təhlükəsizliyi təmin etdik – Sülhməramlı", 27 avqust 2021, Available at: <https://news.milli.az/politics/975411.html>

131 NATO, "NATO and Afghanistan", 31 August 2022, Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm.

132 *Ibid.*

133 Associated Press, "US and Taliban sign deal aimed at ending war in Afghanistan", 29 February 2020, Available at: <https://apnews.com/general-news-491544713df4879f399d0ff5523d369e>

The main contributions of the Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping contingent to the non-combat Resolute Support Mission were:

- ensuring the protection of civilian and military personnel of the contributing countries to the non-combat Resolute Support Mission stationed at HKIA;
- conducting search of personnel, vehicles, and cargo entering through the northern terminal of HKIA;
- ensuring the safe transport of military assistance, delivered to the airport for the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, in coordination with representatives of the U.S. Air Force.

On April 19, 2014, the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Colonel General Zakir Hasanov, received a delegation of congressmen led by Mr. Ed Royce, Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs. During the meeting, the congressmen expressed a high level of appreciation for the countries' successful cooperation related to Afghanistan.¹³⁴

The Minister of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Colonel General Zakir Hasanov, met with a delegation led by Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Transformation of NATO, General Mirko Zuliani, on March 9, 2016, during his visit to Azerbaijan. At the meeting, General M. Zuliani expressed gratitude to the Azerbaijani side for the contribution of Azerbaijani peacekeepers to international security within the framework of operations in Afghanistan.¹³⁵

On May 21, 2016, the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Colonel General Zakir Hasanov, met with Anna Fotyga, Chair of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Security and Defence and former Foreign Minister of Poland, who was visiting Azerbaijan. At the meeting, Ms. Fotyga expressed her deep gratitude to Azerbaijan for its contribution to peacekeeping operations and for the professional execution of the mission in Afghanistan.¹³⁶

At a briefing in Baku in December 2016, U.S. Transportation Command Commander General Darren McDew, who was visiting Azerbaijan, made a statement highly appreciating the service of Azerbaijani peacekeepers in Afghanistan: "During my visit to Afghanistan, in my meeting with the leader of peacekeeping operations there, he told me that Azerbaijan plays an exceptional role in these operations. He asked me to convey gratitude to Azerbaijan's leadership for its contributions to peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan. I believe that as a result of Azerbaijan's role, security and stability will be preserved both in the region and in various countries around the world."¹³⁷

134 "Mod.gov.az, "Azərbaycan Respublikasının müdafiə naziri ABŞ kongresmenlərindən ibarət nümayəndə heyətini qəbul edib", 19 aprel 2014, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/azerbaycan-respublikasinin-mudafie-naziri-abs-kongresmenlerinden-ibaret-numayende-heyetini-qebul-edib-11974.html>

135 Mod.gov.az, "Müdafiə naziri NATOnun Müttəfiq Transformasiya Komandanının müavini ilə görüşüb", 9 mart 2016, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/mudafie-naziri-nato-nun-muttefiq-transformasiya-komandaninin-muavini-ile-gorusub-12692.html>

136 Mod.gov.az, "Müdafiə naziri Avropa Parlamentinin müdafiə və təhlükəsizlik alt komitəsinin sədri ilə görüşüb", 21 may 2016, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/mudafie-naziri-avropa-parlamentinin-mudafie-ve-tehlukesizlik-alt-komitesinin-sedri-ile-gorusub-13058.html>

137 *Azərbaycan Ordusu qəzeti*, №3 (2120), 14 yanvar 2017

Within the framework of a meeting of defense ministers on UN peacekeeping operations held in London on September 8, 2016, Minister of Defense Colonel General Zakir Hasanov met the UK Minister of State for Defence and Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords, Lord Howe, in the House of Lords.¹³⁸ During the meeting, Azerbaijan's participation to date in peacekeeping operations, including the mission carried out in Afghanistan, was highly appreciated. During the same event, at a meeting between Minister Zakir Hasanov and the UK Secretary of State for Defence, Michael Fallon, Azerbaijan's participation in peacekeeping operations was also particularly noted.¹³⁹

In 2017, the garrison commander of HKAI, Brigadier General Murat Selchuk Chol, sent a letter of appreciation to Minister of Defense Colonel General Zakir Hasanov. In the letter, he expressed satisfaction with the exemplary level of service demonstrated by Azerbaijani peacekeepers and noted that, as a result of their efforts, Azerbaijani servicemen made a major contribution to ensuring security and to the success of the force protection group.¹⁴⁰

The Chief of Staff of NATO Land Command, Division General Erhan Uzun, visited Azerbaijan in June 2017 and met with Azerbaijani peacekeepers. At the meeting, Division General Uzun specifically noted Azerbaijan's efforts in establishing international peace and security, and highly appreciated Azerbaijan's cooperation with NATO, its contribution to international peacekeeping operations, and the professionalism of Azerbaijani servicemen in peacekeeping operations.¹⁴¹

In 2017, former NATO Secretary General Lord George Robertson, during a meeting with the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan, thanked Azerbaijan for the role of its peacekeeping contingent and emphasized that "among more than 40,000 peacekeeping servicemen in Kosovo, the Azerbaijani contingent holds a special position."¹⁴²

During a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Jeyhun Bayramov, within the framework of a visit to the region by Erika Olson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State of the United States for Caucasus Affairs, Regional Conflicts, and Southern European Affairs, Azerbaijan's support for ensuring security in Afghanistan within the framework of NATO's peacekeeping mission was highly appreciated, and gratitude was expressed in this regard.¹⁴³

On September 7, 2017, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee General Petr Pavel,

138 Mod.gov.az, "Azərbaycanın sülhməramlı əməliyyatlarda fəaliyyəti yüksək qiymətləndirilib", 8 sentyabr 2016, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/azerbaycanin-sulhmeramli-emeliyyatlarda-fealiyyeti-yukseki-qiymetlendirilib-13527.html>

139 Azərbaycan Ordusu qəzeti, № 70 (2085), 10 sentyabr 2016

140 Mod.gov.az, "Azərbaycanın sülhməramlı əməliyyatlarda fəaliyyəti yüksək qiymətləndirilib", 8 sentyabr 2016, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/azerbaycanin-sulhmeramli-emeliyyatlarda-fealiyyeti-yukseki-qiymetlendirilib-13527.html>

141 Mod.gov.az, "NATO nümayəndəsi Azərbaycan sülhməramlıları ilə görüşüb", 1 iyun 2017, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/nato-numayendesi-azerbaycan-sulhmeramli-lari-ile-gorusub-18765.html>

142 Ədalət Verdiyev, "Ən qaynar nöqtələrdə: Azərbaycan sülhməramlı qüvvələri", *Ordu.az*, 16 dekabr 2017, Elektron resurs: <https://ordu.az/az/news/124180/en-qaynar-noqtelerde--azerbaycan-sulhmeramli-quvveleri-%E2%80%93-herbi-ekspert>

143 Azertag.az, "Azərbaycan-ABŞ ikitərəfli münasibətlərinin inkişaf perspektivləri müzakirə olunub", 6 noyabr 2021, Available at: <https://azertag.az/xeber/azerbaycan-abs-ikiterefli-munasibetlerinin-inkisaf-perspektivleri-muzakire-olunub-1919544>.

emphasizing that Azerbaijan is a reliable partner of the Alliance, highly appreciated the country's participation in the fight against terrorism, its significant contribution to cargo transport for peacekeeping operations, and the professionalism demonstrated by Azerbaijani peacekeepers in operations conducted in Afghanistan.

While visiting Azerbaijan on September 26, 2017, the former NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia, James Appathurai, emphasized Azerbaijan's reliable partnership with the organization and its major contribution to the peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan, and expressed gratitude to Azerbaijan on behalf of the organization he represented.¹⁴⁴

In July 2019, a delegation led by Vice Admiral Colin Kilrain, Commander of NATO Special Operations Headquarters, visited the Republic of Azerbaijan. On July 3 of the same year, during a meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Defense, Vice Admiral Colin James Kilrain, emphasizing that Azerbaijan is a reliable partner of the Alliance, highly valued the country's contribution to peacekeeping operations carried out in Afghanistan.¹⁴⁵

Mr. İlham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, received U.S. Senator Steve Daines, a member of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on May 29, 2025. During the meeting, Senator Daines, recalling that U.S. and Azerbaijani soldiers served shoulder to shoulder in Afghanistan and that the Azerbaijani peacekeeping forces responsible for the security of HKIA were the last military contingent to leave Afghanistan emphasized the important role played by Azerbaijani servicemen in evacuating civilians and military personnel from there and expressed separate gratitude for this.¹⁴⁶

It should be noted that, to date, the NATO Secretary General has awarded three officers of the Azerbaijani Army with the NATO Meritorious Service Medal, considered NATO's most prestigious decoration. Two of them received this medal for their exceptional service in peacekeeping operations conducted in Afghanistan.¹⁴⁷

One of these officers is Major Rahim Huseynov, who participated in the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan from January 21, 2020 to August 12, 2020, served at HKIA as Deputy Commander and Commander of the North Kabul International Airport (NKIA) Force Protection Group battalion, and was later killed in the 44-day Patriotic War.

In his award commendation, General Austin Scott Miller, Commander of the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan and of U.S. Forces, noted while evaluating his meritorious service that Major Huseynov served in extremely difficult conditions shaped by threats of attacks on the airport and challenges created by the coronavirus epidemic. As a result of his great efforts, he contributed to ensuring the security of the airport gates. Under

144 News.milli.az, "NATO Azərbaycan kimi etibarlı tərəfdaşla əməkdaşlıqda israrlıdır", 24 noyabr 2017, Elektron resurs: <https://news.milli.az/politics/601936.html>

145 News.milli.az, "NATO-nun Xüsusi Əməliyyatlar Qərargahının komandanı Bakıya gəlib", 3 iyul 2019, Elektron resurs: <https://news.milli.az/politics/768026.html>

146 President.az, "İlham Əliyev ABŞ Senatının Xarici Əlaqələr Komitəsinin üzvünü qəbul edib", 29 may 2025, Elektron resurs: <https://president.az/az/articles/view/69012>

147 Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to NATO, "Partnership Staff Post", Available at: <https://nato-pfp.mfa.gov.az/en/category/partnership-staff-post>

his leadership, activities such as transferring more than ten seriously wounded coalition personnel to the airport's "Role-2" hospital for urgent medical intervention without delay, and conducting medical and security checks of more than 250 local representatives required during the epidemic period, were successfully carried out by NKIA. These activities were necessary to keep NKIA's operational performance at a high level and to ensure the continuous functioning of the main landing and unloading aerodrome of the operational theater.¹⁴⁸

Another Azerbaijani officer, who was awarded the NATO Meritorious Service Medal, is Teyfur Rustamov, who participated in the ISAF mission in 2013 and currently holds the rank of Colonel. In his recommendation for the medal, Lieutenant General Giorgio Battisti (Italian Army), serving as Chief of Staff of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, wrote that Major Teyfur Rustamov, who served as Force Protection Commander of the "Daghan" camp in Kabul, ensured the security of the Pul-e-Charkhi ammunition depot and made a high-level contribution to the success of multinational activity. He distinguished himself with exceptionally meritorious service while supporting military operations against terrorist aggression in Afghanistan. He faced very difficult situations, consistently achieved high results, and, thanks to his effort and determination, carried out all tasks assigned to him quickly and effectively.¹⁴⁹

4. Peacekeeping Operation in Iraq as Part of the International Coalition Forces

The international coalition forces' peacekeeping operation in Iraq began on March 20, 2002, on the basis of UNSCR 1441.

From 2003 to 2009, a total of 150,000 personnel from 37 countries participated in the coalition forces' peacekeeping operation in Iraq.¹⁵⁰ In order to neutralize terrorist organizations and establish peace in the country, the Coalition Forces in Iraq were organized in the form of Multinational Task Forces: Central, South, North, East, West, Southeast, Northwest, and Northeast.

On May 7, 2003, the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan, based on the submission of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, adopted a decision granting consent for a contingent of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan to participate in peacekeeping operations in Iraq as part of the international coalition forces.¹⁵¹

148 Mod.gov.az, "Tabor komandirinin layiq görüldüyü 'NATO-nun Layaqətli Xidmət Medalı' şəhidin ailəsinə təqdim edilib", 20 fevral 2021, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/tabor-komandirinin-layiq-gorulduyu-nato-nun-leyaqetli-xidmet-medali-sehidin-ailesine-teqdim-edilib-video-34950.html>

149 Müdafiə Nazirliyinin Beynəlxalq Hərbi Əməkdaşlıq İdarəsi, "NATO-nun Brüsseldəki Qərargah-mənzilinin Hərbi Komitəsi yanında Azərbaycan Respublikası Silahlı Qüvvələrinin nümayəndəsi – Azərbaycan Respublikasının NATO-dakı missiyasının hərbi məsələlər üzrə müşavirinin 16 nömrəli 04 aprel 2021-ci il tarixli raportu", 35/1 (2021-ci il) nömrəli iş, səh. 181–182

150 Stephen A. Carney, *Allied Participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, CMH Pub 59–3–1, First Printing, Washington, D.C., Center of Military History, United States Army, 2011, Available at: <https://history.army.mil/portals/143/Images/Publications/catalog/59-3-1.pdf>

151 E-qanun.az, "Azərbaycan Respublikası Silahlı Qüvvələri kontingentinin beynəlxalq koalisiya qüvvələri tərkibində İraqda sülhməramlı əməliyyatlarda iştirak etməsinə razılıq verilməsi haqqında" Azərbaycan Respublikası Milli Məclisinin Qərarı, № 432-IIQR, 7 may 2003, Elektron resurs: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/14811>

Former NATO Secretary General John Robertson visited the South Caucasus region in May 2003. During meetings held as part of his visit to Azerbaijan on May 15 of that year, the possibility of Azerbaijan's participation in the peacekeeping operation in Iraq was discussed, among other issues.¹⁵²

On June 3, 2003, in order to participate in the coalition forces' operation in Iraq, an agreement on the "status of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan in Iraq" was signed between Azerbaijan and Iraq.¹⁵³ In addition, because the Azerbaijani peacekeeping contingent would travel to Iraq through the territory of Kuwait, on the same date, an agreement on the "status of Azerbaijani Forces in Kuwait" was also signed between the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Government of the State of Kuwait.¹⁵⁴

A peacekeeping contingent of the Azerbaijani Army, consisting of one unit with 151 personnel (15 officers, 16 warrant officers, and 120 soldiers), served in Iraq as part of the International Coalition Forces from August 15, 2003, to December 7, 2008. Personnel were rotated every six months. With 11 rotations in Iraq, more than 1,000 Azerbaijani peacekeepers served there.¹⁵⁵

In connection with the expiration of the mandate of the Multinational Force stationed in Iraq, and in accordance with UNSCR Resolution No. 1790 of December 18, 2007, the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted Decision No. 714-IIIQR of November 14, 2008, on recalling the contingent of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan from Iraq. Due to the withdrawal of Coalition Forces from Iraq, on December 7, 2008, the peacekeeping unit returned in full strength from Iraq to Azerbaijan.¹⁵⁶

The Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping unit served first in Ramadi and later near the Al Anbar province within the Multi-National Force – West as part of the Multi-National Force – Iraq. The main tasks of the peacekeeping unit were the protection of strategic facilities, post and patrol duty, guarding the coalition forces' deployment base, and inspecting vehicles, local persons, and transported property entering the base.

Initially, the peacekeeping unit organized the protection of the coalition forces' deployment base in the city of Ramadi. Later on, by decision of the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, it was placed under the control of the U.S. Marines located near the province of Al Anbar. The Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping unit carried out post and patrol duty in its area of responsibility around Al Anbar and guarded the Haditha hydroelectric power station in Baghdad.

Teyfur Rustamov, an officer of the Azerbaijani Army who served in Iraq, stated in an interview with the newspaper "Azərbaycan": "According to the designated areas of responsibility,

152 Qasımlı, Musa, *Azərbaycan Respublikasının diplomatiya tarixi/Azərbaycan Respublikasının xarici siyasəti (1991–2003): 2 hissədə, II hissə*, Bakı: Mütərcim, 2015.

153 *Ibid.*

154 Azərbaycan Respublikası Küveyt Dövlətindəki səfirliyi, "İkitərəfli münasibətlər", Elektron resurs: <https://kuwait.mfa.gov.az/az/category/ikiterefli-munasibetler-haqqinda>

155 Gunnery Sgt. Jason Bortz, "Small country, big mission; Azerbaijanis complete tour in Iraq", United States Marines Corps, 3 December 2008, Available at: <https://www.1stmardiv.marines.mil/News/Article/Article/541823/small-country-big-mission-azerbaijanis-complete-tour-in-iraq/>

156 E-qanun.az, "Azərbaycan Respublikası Silahlı Qüvvələri kontingentinin İraqdan geri çağırılması haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikası Milli Məclisinin Qərarı", № 714-IIIQR, 14 noyabr 2008, Elektron resurs: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/15650>

Azerbaijani peacekeepers provide security for the southern part of the facility. The barracks of the U.S. Marine battalion were also included in our area of responsibility. Here, twelve main and auxiliary posts were established, conditions at the posts were organized in line with high standards, and personnel were equipped with body armor, night-vision devices, ballistic goggles, medical and other necessary supplies.¹⁵⁷

The need for security measures stemmed from the fact that Iraq's infrastructure was a constant target for insurgents. The Haditha hydroelectric power station was strategically important because it supplied 25% of Iraq's electricity needs. The Haditha Dam and power station, which is 57 meters high and 8,700 meters long¹⁵⁸, form the largest installation on the Euphrates River, and it is one of the main sources supplying Baghdad with electricity, as well as an element contributing to the economic development of Al Anbar province. Blowing up the hydroelectric facility could have caused major problems in energy and water supply.

From military perspective, destroying the reservoir would have created obstacles to coalition movements and negatively affected the advantage they had gained over insurgents in military operations. Roads and railways passed alongside the Haditha facility, and coalition forces made extensive use of these routes in conducting military activities. For this reason, coalition commanders were concerned that insurgents might attack and blow up the Haditha reservoir. Flooding that would result from the blow-up of the reservoir would have made coalition movement impossible.¹⁵⁹

Throughout history, critical problems such as troop shortages in conducting military operations were among the problems to be solved by commanders. Protecting vital infrastructure such as the Haditha facility from insurgents required allocating and deploying additional forces there. At the same time, countries participating in the Iraq operation were also sending forces to the ISAF operation in Afghanistan and therefore could not allocate additional forces to Iraq. In a monograph titled "Operation Iraqi Freedom" prepared for the U.S. Air Force, experts from the RAND Corporation, using the numbers of forces allocated to the operation in Kosovo as a benchmark, concluded that, after the main combat operations in Iraq ended, 526,000 troops would be required in the immediate postwar period to address security-related issues.¹⁶⁰ The same monograph noted that the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, General Eric Shinseki, also believed, based on his experience in the Balkans and research published for the Army, that approximately 400,000 troops would be required to ensure security after the main combat operations.¹⁶¹

Under conditions of limited personnel, relocating forces from one area to another could have affected the course of operations. By ensuring the security of one of Iraq's key infrastructure components, Azerbaijani soldiers removed the need for U.S. forces to conduct security and stability operations in the Hit–Haditha corridor and other parts of Al

157 *Azərbaycan qəzeti*, "Sülhməramlı missiya", 31 may 2009

158 Yasameen Hameed, Redvan Ghasemlounia, Thamer Ahmed Mohammed, Abdulwahab Al-Ansi, "Emergency action plan for Haditha dam failure scenario, Al-Anbar, Iraq", *Future Technology*, Vol. 4 (2), May 2025, pp. 1-10, Available at: <https://fupubco.com/futech/article/view/254/159>

159 Walter L. Perry, Richard E. Darilek, Laurinda L. Rohn, Jerry M. Sollinger, "Operation Iraqi Freedom: Decisive War, Elusive Peace", *Rand Corporation*, 2015, p. 208, Available at: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1200/RR1214/RAND_RR1214.pdf

160 *Ibid*, p. 53.

161 *Ibid*.

Anbar province.¹⁶² At the same time, Azerbaijani peacekeepers protected the hydroelectric facility and contributed to preventing its destruction and preserving it for the Iraqi people, for whom it was so important.

In accordance with the peacekeeping plan, the Azerbaijani unit carried out post and patrol duty in the area of the Al Anbar province, inspected vehicles and pedestrians by organizing fixed and mobile checkpoints along movement routes, guarded the Haditha facility, conducted daily inspections of local workers and vehicles at the power station, and escorted local workers and vehicles within the facility. In addition, officers of the Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping unit conducted training sessions for Iraqi Army and police personnel on organizing protection. One Azerbaijani officer served as a liaison officer at coalition headquarters in Baghdad. His duty was coordinating the peacekeeping unit's administrative matters with the higher headquarters.

After the fall of the previous regime in Iraq, major cities and state institutions fell into the hands of insurgent forces, and violence against civilians increased. One of the most difficult tasks facing coalition forces was restoring public order and security within Iraq. In 2004-2006, the number of attacks against coalition forces increased, their geographic scope expanded, and they became more violent. By June 2004 alone, insurgents had carried out more than 13,000 attacks against U.S. and coalition forces as well as against Iraqi infrastructure.¹⁶³ In late 2006, U.S. President George Bush decided to deploy five army brigades, consisting of 20,000 personnel, to Iraq, starting in January 2007.¹⁶⁴

An Azerbaijani Army officer, who participated in the operation in Iraq, describing the operational environment there, stated: "Because the peacekeeping operation in Iraq was implemented by force, the situation here was distinguished by its complexity. Supporters of the former regime created serious problems for coalition forces in conducting peacekeeping operations. Finding and neutralizing terrorists and suicide attackers hiding among the local population was also difficult. In this respect, conducting any peacekeeping operation in Iraq was challenging. While carrying out any operation, we tried to ensure that Iraqi citizens did not suffer harm, and we strictly observed international norms on human rights."¹⁶⁵

In 2004, a police station in Al Anbar, located in the area of responsibility of the Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping unit, was seized by terrorists. A platoon from the peacekeeping unit conducted combat operations to clear the police station, which was liberated from the terrorists. As a result of the combat operation, a large quantity of weapons and ammunition was seized and handed over to the relevant authorities.¹⁶⁶

162 Stephen A. Carney, *Allied Participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, CMH Pub 59-3-1, First Printing, Washington, D.C., Center of Military History, United States Army, 2011, Available at: <https://history.army.mil/portals/143/Images/Publications/catalog/59-3-1.pdf>

163 Walter L. Perry, Richard E. Darilek, Laurinda L. Rohn, Jerry M. Sollinger, "Operation Iraqi Freedom: Desicive War, Elusive Peace", *Rand Corporation*, 2015, p. 208, Available at: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1200/RR1214/RAND_RR1214.pdf

164 Stephen A. Carney, *Allied Participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, CMH Pub 59-3-1, First Printing, Washington, D.C., Center of Military History, United States Army, 2011, p.24, Available at: <https://history.army.mil/portals/143/Images/Publications/catalog/59-3-1.pdf>

165 *Azərbaycan qəzeti*, "Sülhməramlı missiya", 31 may 2009

166 Müdafiə Nazirliyinin Beynəlxalq Hərbi Əməkdaşlıq İdarəsi, "Raport", 09 oktyabr 2025-ci il, 55 (2025-ci il) nömrəli iş, səh. 103-119

The fact that the Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping unit guarded the Haditha facility and was co-located at the same base as U.S. Marines increased threats to their lives and required greater vigilance during service. For a certain period, the base was subjected to mortar fire almost daily. Insurgents attempted several times to raid the Haditha facility. However, each time, these attempts were skillfully prevented by servicemen of the Azerbaijani peacekeeping forces. Analysis of the times and impact locations of mortar rounds showed that the coordinates were being passed to the terrorists by civilian workers employed at the facility.

In an interview sharing his memories of the Iraq operation, Major Mark Winn, a U.S. Marine who served at the Haditha reservoir, said regarding the leakage of information: "Some time earlier, during a raid conducted to identify persons suspected of insurgency, a map of the reservoir was found with the locations of American and Azerbaijani guards and even the commander's room marked."¹⁶⁷ Under a specially prepared plan of measures, civilians who were passing information to insurgents were apprehended and handed over to the relevant authorities.

Teyfur Rustamov, an officer of the Azerbaijani Army who served in the peacekeeping force in Iraq, stated: "There were several attempts to destroy the hydroelectric power station we guarded, and for this purpose, civilians working at the station were used. However, the servicemen of our unit prevented these attempts in time. A group of civilians working at the station, acting in collusion with terrorists, helped them by facilitating mortar attacks on the fuel depot at the hydroelectric station. Members of this group were identified and neutralized, thanks to the professionalism of Azerbaijani peacekeepers."¹⁶⁸

Explosive materials and devices were among the dangers faced by Azerbaijani peacekeepers. The Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping unit used weapons and equipment from the U.S. Marines' arsenal, including heavy weapons and armored vehicles.

Light armored high-mobility vehicles, such as HAMMER, used during post and patrol duty, no longer met requirements amid growing threats. On multiple occasions, personnel of the peacekeeping unit faced danger due to the detonation of roadside explosive devices. Taking this into account, within a short time the armor of HAMMER, was strengthened and their technical capabilities were improved.

Checkpoints where the Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping contingent served were among the terrorists' targets. At a checkpoint where Azerbaijani peacekeepers were conducting searches, a suspicious package was discovered. When the improvised ordnance disposal (IOD) team examined it, it was determined that the package contained an explosive device. Due to a technical malfunction in the device, the terrorists could not detonate the package by remote control.¹⁶⁹

Speaking about one of the dangerous episodes they faced during service in Iraq, Teyfur Rustamov stated: "Another case concerns preventing attempts to plant explosive materials

¹⁶⁷ Doug Struck, "The coolest posting in a hot war zone", *NBC News*, 8 August 2004, <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna5637694>

¹⁶⁸ *Azərbaycan qəzeti*, "Sülhməramlı missiya", 31 may 2009

¹⁶⁹ Müdafiə Nazirliyinin Beynəlxalq Hərbi Əməkdaşlıq İdarəsi, "Raport", 09 oktyabr 2025-ci il, 55 (2025-ci il) nömrəli iş, səh. 103-119

in tunnels on the station's territory as well as on the main road leading to the station. In April 2005, our servicemen observed three persons laying mines on the main road leading to the station. As a result of immediate measures taken, that group was neutralized and the road's security was ensured."¹⁷⁰

The main contributions of the Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping company to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) were:

- conducting post and patrol duty in the area of the Al Anbar province, which demonstrated the presence of coalition forces to the civilian population and ensured freedom of movement;
- preventing strategically important infrastructure in areas near the Al Anbar province from terrorist groups;
- preventing the civilian population from facing sectarian violence and problems related to insurgents;
- continuously monitoring the main and alternative supply routes of coalition forces deployed in western Iraq and ensuring the safe passage of convoys;
- ensuring the security of mosques and other places of worship in the unit's area of responsibility and creating a safe environment for religious ceremonies;
- providing training to the Iraqi Army and Iraqi police on protecting strategic facilities;
- ensuring the security of the Haditha facility and its auxiliary structures, which supplied 25% of Iraq's electricity;
- ensuring the security of civilian organizations engaged in the restoration of power lines and infrastructure;
- by successfully fulfilling its tasks, supporting the Iraqi government in completing the political transition.

During their service, personnel of the peacekeeping contingent gained solid combat experience and enhanced its military skills. Despite operating in a different climate, it fulfilled its service duties. It earned the trust and respect of the local population in Al Anbar province and consistently built good relations with them. For their professionalism and timely execution of tasks, the peacekeepers were repeatedly awarded certificates of honor, individual personnel were rewarded by the command, and the leadership of the Ministry of Defense received numerous letters of appreciation. One officer of the Azerbaijani peacekeeping unit was awarded the U.S. Army Commendation Medal, and nine officers were awarded the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal.

On November 11, 2008, the Azerbaijani Army's peacekeeping unit completed its service and returned to Azerbaijan.

In September 2004, Mr. Steven Pifer, Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of State of the United States for European and Eurasian Affairs, visited Azerbaijan. During a meeting with the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan on September 20, 2004, he expressed gratitude for Azerbaijan's active participation in the anti-terror coalition in Iraq.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ *Azərbaycan qəzeti*, "Sülhməramlı missiya", 31 may 2009

¹⁷¹ Mod.gov.az, "Məlumat", 21 sentyabr 2004, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/mudafie-nazirliyinin-melumatı-44073.html>

At a meeting held at Central Command, Deputy Commander of Coalition Forces General McCarthy said: "The soldiers of the Azerbaijani peacekeeping units are serving at a very high level in the region, and their service is superior to that of the American Marines there."¹⁷² In a combat readiness competition held among servicemen represented in the security forces in Iraq, Azerbaijan placed third after the United States and Canada.¹⁷³

In April 2006, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, visited the United States. On April 28, 2006, after meeting with U.S. President George Bush, both heads of state made statements to the press. In his statement, U.S. President George Bush thanked President Ilham Aliyev for sending a peacekeeping contingent to Iraq.¹⁷⁴

On December 9, 2008, U.S. President George Bush in his letter of appreciation to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, regarding the end of the mission in Iraq, expressed the deep gratitude of the United States to the government and people of Azerbaijan for supporting multinational forces in Iraq with its servicemen since 2003, and especially highly appreciated the protection of the Haditha Dam in Al Anbar province by those forces. In his letter, he wrote: "At a time when Azerbaijani servicemen are completing their long-term service in Iraq, I express the deep gratitude of the United States to the government and people of Azerbaijan for supporting multinational forces in that country with their servicemen since 2003. I particularly appreciate the protection of the Haditha Dam in Al Anbar province by those forces. Despite great difficulties, the desire of the Azerbaijani people to support the establishment and strengthening of a democratic government in Iraq is an example of their strong will. Azerbaijanis can be proud of their participation in successful operations carried out to help safeguard freedom in Iraq...".¹⁷⁵

An article dedicated to Azerbaijani peacekeepers in issue 43 of the *Coalition Bulletin* noted that the organizational and daily activities of the Azerbaijani peacekeeping unit at the Haditha Dam were at a very high level. Vigilant execution of security-related duties prevented terrorists bringing explosive devices into the area of responsibility of Azerbaijani troops at the Haditha Dam.¹⁷⁶

The bulletin, reflecting the details of the contribution of the Azerbaijani servicemen to the military operations conducted by the Coalition Forces, further notes that, by ensuring a high level of security at the Haditha Dam, the Azerbaijani peacekeeping unit created favorable conditions for Coalition and U.S. forces. This allowed them to focus fully on fighting the enemy without worrying about one of Iraq's main sources of electric power.¹⁷⁷

At a meeting held in Baku in January 2008 with peacekeepers who had completed service in Iraq and returned home, U.S. Ambassador to Azerbaijan Ann Derse highly appreciated their service, stating: "As Marine commanders have said, your service in Iraq contributed

172 Azertag.az, "Command of Coalition in Iraq Forces praise Azerbaijani peacekeepers", 15 June 2008, Available at: https://azertag.az/en/xeber/command_of_coalition_in_iraq_forces_praise_azerbaijani_peacekeepers-575568

173 *Azərbaycan Ordusu*, № 41 (1957), 30 may 2015

174 *Respublika*, № 094 (2639), 30 aprel 2006

175 *Xalq qəzeti*, № 277 (26042), 12 dekabr 2008

176 *Coalition Bulletin*, Volume 43, July 2007

177 *Ibid.*

directly to saving the lives of Marines. Your defense of the Haditha Dam was extremely important because this part of Iraq's infrastructure is a significant part of Iraq's future."¹⁷⁸

At the end of 2008, the influential U.S. newspaper *Los Angeles Times* wrote about Azerbaijani forces that had completed their peacekeeping mission in Iraq and returned home: "The Azerbaijanis are going home. When other nations hemmed and hawed about joining the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq, the Republic of Azerbaijan did not hesitate. For more than five years, Azerbaijani soldiers have provided security for the Haditha Dam in Anbar province, guarding the perimeter, protecting the 630 Iraqi employees as they arrived at work, and keeping a watchful eye on Lake Qadisiya to the north and the Euphrates River to the south. With 11 rotations, more than 1,000 troops from the Caspian Sea nation served at the dam, a major source of hydroelectric power and thus a tempting target for insurgents."¹⁷⁹

5. The United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS)

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was established in 2011, pursuant to UNSCR 1996, immediately after South Sudan gained independence. The main objective of the mission is to stabilize this newly established state, prevent armed conflict, protect civilians, and support the establishment of long-term peace.

As a result of many years of civil war, South Sudan faced serious infrastructure problems, a humanitarian crisis, and political instability. Under these conditions, the role of UNMISS has not been limited solely to peacekeeping activities, it has also taken important steps toward state-building and the restoration of public institutions.

The mandate of UNMISS is regularly updated in line with the geopolitical situation of the period and the actual conditions in South Sudan. According to the most recent mandate adopted in May 2025, the core functions of UNMISS are the protection of civilians, protection of human rights and monitoring of violations, support for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, promotion of political dialogue between the government and armed opposition forces, institutional capacity building, and support for security sector reforms.

Within this mandate, UNMISS forces have conducted peacekeeping patrols in many regions of South Sudan, established observation posts, and escorted humanitarian assistance within UN Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites.

Pursuant to Decision No. 368 of the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated November 30, 2018, two servicemen of the Azerbaijani Army have been participating in the United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Republic of South Sudan as "military observers" on an annual rotation basis since January 2019. Azerbaijani military observers have served in UNMISS sectors in Juba (the capital), Torit, Malakal, Kuajok, Bor, and Bentiu.

¹⁷⁸ Today.az, "Azerbaijani peacekeepers returning from Iraq awarded in Baku", 24 January 2008, Available at: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/42597.html>

¹⁷⁹ Azertag.az, "Azərbaycan - qəhrəman övladlar vətəni", 10 dekabr 2008, Elektron resurs: https://azertag.az/xeber/los_anceles_tayms_azerbaycan_qehreman_ovladlar_veteni-426494

Servicemen of the Azerbaijani Army deployed to South Sudan as military observers are trained through NATO's PfP program, as well as through the UN Military Observer course and others conducted in various countries.

Within the framework of the UNMISS mission, the primary duties of international military observers are to support the peace process in South Sudan, monitor compliance with the ceasefire regime, conduct patrols, monitor and assess the security situation in conflict-affected areas, collect information on military activities and armed clashes, engage with local armed groups and community leaders to reduce tensions, assess the security needs of the civilian population, listen to their complaints, collect information on human rights violations and refer them to relevant structures, coordinate with local police, civilian authorities, and other UN agencies, and prepare reports for the United Nations.

Azerbaijani military observers perform these duties unarmed, demonstrate neutrality and impartiality, and establish effective cooperation with the local population, law enforcement, security, and other state bodies, as well as international actors operating within their areas of responsibility.

Contributions of Azerbaijani Military Observers to the UNMISS Mission:

Through their activities within the UNMISS mission, Azerbaijani military observers contribute to the establishment of stability and long-term peace in South Sudan. On the basis of their objective and impartial reporting, the United Nations and other international partners can make informed decisions, which facilitates stabilization in the region and the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. In this way, they play an important role in reducing tension, building trust, and promoting sustained dialogue between the parties to the conflict.

Azerbaijani officers demonstrate a high level of professionalism during this mission, cooperate closely with military personnel from other countries, and gain the trust of the local population. To enhance their knowledge of regional security issues and local cultural characteristics, they regularly participate in specialized UN training programs while serving in the host country.

Azerbaijan's contributions to UNMISS have also been highly appreciated by the United Nations. Azerbaijan's successful activities in this field are presented as an example to other countries and create a foundation for broader participation in the future.

In March 2019, the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and Head of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, during his meeting with the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Colonel General Zakir Hasanov, having a business visit to the United States, highly commended Azerbaijan's contributions to peacekeeping operations to date particularly its mission in Afghanistan and praised the participation of Azerbaijani servicemen in the Republic of South Sudan as a continuation of support for international security.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ Mod.gov.az, "Azərbaycan Respublikasının müdafiə naziri BMT Baş katibinin müavini ilə görüşüb", 27 mart 2019, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/azerbaycanin-mudafie-naziri-bmt-bas-katibinin-muavini-ile-gorusub-26244.html>

Participation in the mission serves to enhance the reputation of the Republic of Azerbaijan as a reliable partner in the international arena and within the framework of the United Nations.

Azerbaijani military observers serving within UNMISS, like their counterparts from other countries, face serious challenges. These challenges are physical, psychological, and operational in nature.

Because UNMISS observers operate in unstable regions, they face security risks and armed confrontations. Clashes between local armed groups occur frequently in South Sudan. Since observers are unarmed, such conflicts pose a serious threat to their lives.

Restrictions on access to certain areas represent another challenge faced by military observers. In some cases, local authorities or armed groups do not allow observers to enter specific regions. This limits their ability to monitor ceasefire compliance and collect information.

Poor infrastructure and unfavorable natural conditions also negatively affect the activities of military observers. The poor condition of roads leading to villages and remote areas makes timely patrols difficult. In addition, heavy rains and flooding hinder access to certain regions.

Cultural and language differences also affect the process of establishing contacts with local communities and collecting information. In some cases, the assistance of interpreters is required, which further slows down the work of military observers.

Distrust among the local population is another negative factor affecting the observers' activities. Some representatives of the local population do not trust military observers and approach them with caution. This lack of trust in observers leads to the limitation of their access to information.

Logistical and supply issues are among the challenges, which military observers must address. Especially, observers conducting missions far from their headquarters face serious difficulties. Limited availability of fuel, food, communication equipment, and medical support reduces the effectiveness of their operations.

Psychological tension and stress are other characteristics of the environment in which military observers operate. Constant exposure to danger and working in a conflict zone place significant psychological pressure on observers. Over long-term service, this can affect their motivation and the quality of their performance.

Despite all these challenges, Azerbaijani observers perform their duties within the UNMISS mission with honor, making a tangible contribution to enhancing Azerbaijan's international standing.

Major Ilkin Khalilov, an officer of the Azerbaijani Army who served as a military observer in the UNMISS mission, noted in his report submitted to the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan that during a ferry patrol conducted between November 2 and 20, 2022, they encountered illegal armed groups who threatened them and demanded food and fuel. However, as a result of negotiations, these demands were not met. The officer

also noted that, during a ferry patrol conducted by another UNMISS group in August of the same year, illegal armed groups had succeeded in forcibly seizing 1,700 liters of fuel and 5 tons of food.¹⁸¹

Another serviceman of the Azerbaijani Army serving as a military observer in the UNMISS mission, Major Mehman Garagozov, demonstrated a high level of professionalism in the performance of his duties. For successfully evacuating members of a long-range patrol from a conflict zone while displaying great courage and bravery and risking personal life, thereby demonstrating exemplary dedication, he was awarded a medal and a certificate of honor by the UNMISS Force Commander, Lieutenant General Mohan Subramanian, in May 2025.¹⁸²

In addition, in 2023, the Azerbaijani Army for the first time deployed a female serviceperson to a peacekeeping operation. Major Latifa Rustamova was awarded both a UN medal and a letter of commendation for her exemplary military service in South Sudan.¹⁸³

Conclusion

The establishment and formation of the peacekeeping forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan coincided with a very difficult period for the country. Even though Azerbaijan, with 20 percent of its territory under occupation, urgently needed military forces on the front lines, it consistently demonstrated its willingness to contribute to international security. At the same time, Azerbaijan contributed to peace and security in Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, and South Sudan. Azerbaijan is one of the few countries in the world that contributed to international peace and security while its own territories were under occupation. Thus, Azerbaijani servicemen simultaneously fought on five fronts working to establish peace abroad, in places such as Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, and South Sudan, while also fighting for the liberation of Azerbaijan's occupied territories. Despite the occupation of its own lands, Azerbaijan spared no effort to ensure peace and security in other states.

At the same time, the Republic of Azerbaijan's active participation in international peace-support efforts and in coalition partners' operations against international terrorism turned it into an actor with a significant impact on the security environment and substantially increased the likelihood of the country becoming a target of terrorist organizations.¹⁸⁴

Despite these risks, Azerbaijan's active participation in NATO peacekeeping operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq made a major contribution to the development of Azerbaijan–NATO relations.¹⁸⁵

181 Müdafiə Nazirliyinin Beynəlxalq Hərbi Əməkdaşlıq İdarəsi, "BMT-nin Cənubi Sudan Respublikasındakı missiyasında hərbi müşahidəçinin raportu", 23.11.2022-ci il tarixli, 9/17 nömrəli iş, səh. 201-202

182 Mod.gov.az, "Cənubi Sudanda fəaliyyət göstərən zabitimiz təltif edilib", 1 may 2025, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/cenubi-sudanda-fealiyyet-gosteren-zabitimiz-teltif-edilib-54595.html>

183 *Azərbaycan Ordusu qəzeti*, №70 (2782), 16 sentyabr 2023

184 E-qanun.az, "Azərbaycan Respublikasının Hərbi doktrinası", № 1029-IIIQR, 8 iyun 2010, Elektron resurs: <https://e-qanun.az/framework/19722>

185 Mətin Məmmədli, "Yeni geosiyasi reallıqlarda NATO-Azərbaycan əlaqələri", *Beynəlxalq Münasibətlərin Təhlili Mərkəzi*, mart 2024, Elektron resurs: <https://aircenter.az/uploads/tZrQRkOwf68.pdf>

The Kosovo operation was the first experience for Azerbaijani peacekeepers. Participation in peacekeeping operations contributed to increasing the level of interoperability with the forces of other countries and enabled the exchange of experience for Azerbaijani peacekeepers. One of the features that distinguished Azerbaijani peacekeepers from the servicemen of some other countries was their prior familiarity with real combat conditions. First Lieutenant Seymur Yusifli, who participated in NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, noted: "While some countries participating in peacekeeping missions have armies that have never experienced real combat conditions, we participated in these missions as a state that was itself involved in a military conflict."¹⁸⁶

After the completion of NATO's Resolute Support Mission, Azerbaijani peacekeepers were among the last to leave Afghanistan. Azerbaijani peacekeepers ensured a high level of security for the evacuation of civilian and military personnel departing Afghanistan. Moreover, as the forces of other countries responsible for the security of Kabul International Airport withdrew from Afghanistan, the fulfillment of their duties – alongside their own – fell on the shoulders of Azerbaijani peacekeepers.

The Azerbaijani Army participated for approximately 10 years in KFOR, 6 years in Iraq as part of Coalition Forces, 13 years in ISAF, and 7 years in the Resolute Support Mission. Among these operations, ISAF was the longest in terms of duration. In 2003-2008, the Azerbaijani Army simultaneously took part in three peacekeeping operations – in Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan – located on two different continents in the world. Statistical analysis of the number of personnel shows that, during 2003-2008, the Azerbaijani Army was able to deploy and rotate a force equivalent to two units, consisting of 279 servicemen, simultaneously to these three operations. This is by no means an easy task for a country in a state of war.

Azerbaijan's contributions to international peace have enabled the country to be recognized as a responsible and reliable partner in the contemporary system of international relations. The activities of Azerbaijani military observers within the framework of UNMISS are a real and effective example of these contributions.

Thus, of the five peacekeeping operations in which the Azerbaijani Army have participated overall, three jointly conducted with Türkiye, one with the United States, and one with the United Nations peacekeepers. Both of these states possess some of NATO's strongest armed forces. Participation in peacekeeping operations not only enhances the experience of Azerbaijani peacekeepers but also further strengthens bilateral military cooperation and positively affects Azerbaijan's international standing.

Azerbaijan's peacekeeping activities have elevated its cooperation with international organizations such as the United Nations and NATO, as well as with a number of foreign states, to a qualitatively new level, and have contributed to increasing the country's international prestige and recognition as a reliable partner.

Participation in peacekeeping operations has also contributed to enhancing the combat capability of the Azerbaijani Army and the professionalism of its personnel. During the 44-day Patriotic War, servicemen from Azerbaijan's peacekeeping units were among the units

186 Fuad Cəfərov. Mahmud Möhbəliyev, "Sülhməramlı missiyamızı layiqincə yerinə yetirdik", Mod.gov.az, 4 sentyabr 2021, Elektron resurs: <https://mod.gov.az/az/pre/37496.html>

of the Azerbaijani Army that took part in the heaviest fighting and played an important role in achieving victory.

Through the peacekeeping activities it has carried out on three continents, the Republic of Azerbaijan continues to demonstrate that it works to ensure not only its own security but also that of the international community. Our officers, who have served with honor in complex and challenging peacekeeping missions in Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, and South Sudan, demonstrate both the professionalism of the army and the people's commitment to peace. These activities prove the sustainable nature of Azerbaijan's contributions to international peace and security and further strengthen the country's international standing. In the future, Azerbaijan possesses both the political and military potential to ensure broader participation in this field.

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This report was jointly prepared
by the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan
and the Center of Analysis of International Relations



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