

Moldova-Transdniestria

Demands for Russia to withdraw troops stationed in Transdniestria increased during 2007, and a lack of meaningful negotiations sponsored by the Joint Control Commission (JCC) meant there was little hope for a solution to the fifteen-year conflict. Western countries increased pressure for a solution to the conflict, especially via greater participation in the EU for Moldova, while Russia's support of the 2006 referendum in favor of independence did not result in formal recognition of Transdniestria in 2007.

Geographically isolated within Moldova by the Dnestr River, and historically and linguistically tied to Ukraine and Russia, Transdniestria declared its independence from Moldova in September 1990. The collapse of the Soviet Union was followed by full-scale conflict between Dniestrian militias and the Moldovan government. Fighting raged throughout early 1992. By July, a Moscow-Chisinau peace agreement was reached, mandating a cease-fire, Russian recognition of Moldova's territorial integrity, and provisions for Dniestrian independence should Moldova join Romania. The agreement also established a 140-mile security zone along the Dnestr River, patrolled by a joint peacekeeping force composed of Russian, Transdniestrian, and Moldovan units.

Operations of the joint peacekeeping force have been overseen by the Joint Control Commission, composed of Russian, Moldovan, Transdniestrian, Ukrainian, and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) representatives. Since September 2005, the JCC has also included US and EU representatives as observers. In addition to monitoring the activities of the peacekeeping force, the

Joint Control Commission (JCC) Peacekeeping Force

• Authorization Date	21 July 1992
• Start Date	July 1992
• Head of Mission	Colonel Anatoly Zverev (Russia)
• Strength as of 30 September 2007	Troops: 1,174 Military Observers: 10

JCC is responsible for overseeing the return of internally displaced persons and refugees, and for brokering confidence-building measures. An EU border assistance mission, in place since December 2005, is mandated to monitor the Transdniestrian section of the common border with Ukraine and Moldova.

The first meeting of the new "5 + 2" JCC arrangement was halted when Transdniestria suspended its participation in the negotiations in March 2006 after Ukraine imposed a joint border customs regime with Moldova. At the request of Transdniestria, Russia sent additional troops to the region, 1,200 of whom remained stationed there during 2007. With Russia's withdrawal of troops from Georgia already under way by the beginning of 2007, negotiations over the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty focused mainly on the Russian presence in Transdniestria. In April, President Vladimir Putin suspended Russia's obligations under the treaty, a decision that effectively foreclosed the possibility of withdrawal of Russian troops from Transdniestria in 2007, bringing negotiations to a halt.

Moscow-Chisinau relations did witness a possible positive development as Russia announced that it would end the economically

crippling wine and meat ban on Moldova at the outset of 2007. But delays in lifting the ban through the summer left the region's poorest country facing another year in dire economic straits.

Of note during 2007 was Europe's increased involvement in the region. In February, the EU increased pressure on Transdnestrian leaders by reissuing a visa ban against those members of the Transdnestrian leadership considered responsible for the lack of cooperation in finding a political settlement.

The EU's European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument, published in February, also laid out a strong role for the European Union and European Commission in Moldova's efforts to end the conflict in Transdnestria, including assistance on customs and border issues and specific assistance on demilitarization. Without JCC-sponsored talks during the year in review, however, little progress was made toward resolving the dispute over Transdnestria.