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Moldova-Transdniestria

The dispute between Moldova and Transdniestria remained frozen during 2009 despite the formation of a pro-EU membership government in Moldova after eight years of communist rule. With negotiations on Transdniestria's status at a standstill, the new Moldovan government called for the dissolution of the military peacekeeping operation on the disputed border and its replacement with civilian observers under the auspice of an international mandate. Meanwhile, Transdniestrian authorities called on ally Russia to redouble its commitment of peacekeepers to protect Transdniestria's unilateral independence. Divisions over the future role of peacekeepers were indicative of the deeper differences stymieing progress toward resolution.

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 in response to fears that Moldova would merge with Romania upon the collapse of the Soviet Union. A full-scale conflict ensued between Dniestrian militias and the Moldovan government that lasted until a cease-fire was reached in July 1992 with Russian oversight. The Moscow-Chisinau peace agreement mandated 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, to be 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 (JCC), consisting of representatives from Russia, Moldova, Transdniestria, Ukraine, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Since September 2005, the JCC has also included representatives from the United States as well as EU observers. In addition to monitoring the activities of the peacekeeping force, the JCC is responsible for overseeing the return of internally displaced persons and refugees, and for undertaking 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 "5 + 2" JCC arrangement (Russia, Ukraine, the OSCE, the United States, the European Union, Moldova, and Transdniestrian authorities) was halted when Transdniestria suspended its participation in the negotiations in March 2006 in response to more stringent customs regulations imposed by Ukraine and Moldova.

In April 2008, then-president Vladimir Voronin met the leader of the breakaway Transdniestrian region for the first time in seven years. Seeking to build on the momentum from the summit, the EU declared in May that it was ready to do "absolutely everything" to support the conflict resolution process with Transdniestria.

Joint Control Commission (JCC) Peacekeeping Force

• Authorization Date	21 July 1992
• Start Date	July 1992
• Head of Mission	Colonel Aleksey Tumashov (Russia)
• Strength as of 30 September 2009	Troops: 1,278

However, the outbreak of war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 over South Ossetia slowed progress significantly, and with both sides sticking to their positions, 2009 saw no movement toward resolution. As of 30 September 2009, peacekeeping contingents in and around the separatist territory numbered 1,278, where they served as peacekeepers as well as guardians of 20,000 tons of ammunition.

With the EU-aspiring government in place after Moldova's contested 2009 election cycle,

it was hoped that resolving the dispute with Transdniestria would take on a new salience in relation to closer ties to the West. But at the end of 2009, the parties remained as divided as ever, with Moldovan prime minister Vlad Filat stating that settling the Transdniestria dispute was at best a medium-term task and perhaps even a long-term task.