

Georgia's Role in Afghanistan Evacuation Efforts

Throughout years, Georgia actively participated in the NATO-led operations in Afghanistan – the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Resolute Support Mission (RSM). At the peak of the operation ISAF in 2012-2014, Georgia had up to 1500 military personnel on the ground. As part of the RSM mission, Georgia had deployed 857 personnel under different Allied commands being the largest per-capita contributor to the mission and the single largest non-NATO provider of manpower. During these missions Georgia's airspace and its territory was used as a transit route to Afghanistan.

At the final stage of the RSM mission, we supported withdrawal of the NATO and partner forces from Afghanistan providing the host nation support and full transit opportunities through our territory.

Today, when the tragic events in Afghanistan put us in danger of a large-scale humanitarian crisis, Georgia is once again actively involved in the management of humanitarian and evacuation processes.

Since August 14, three C-17 Globemaster III military transport aircrafts of the Heavy Airlift Wing (HAW), operating as part of the Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC) program, have been deployed to the Tbilisi Airport. The aircrafts have been conducting regular flights on the route Tbilisi-Kabul-Tbilisi to evacuate military and civilian personnel from Afghanistan. As for now, up to 20 flights have been conducted from Kabul to Tbilisi and approximately 2500 people have been evacuated.

Inside the Tbilisi International Airport, special facility was designated by Georgian side to allocate evacuated personnel before the departure to the NATO member states via charter flights. During the transit operation the embassies of the member states and Georgian authorities provide evacuees with the first medical aid, food and other necessities. To ensure processing of the evacuated refugees, several member states have deployed their military and civilian personnel to the Tbilisi Airport.

At the military base, adjacent to the Tbilisi International Airport, Georgian Defence Forces installed the large multi-purpose tents to host evacuees during the long delays before the departures.

Norway deployed the team of the Norwegian Armed Forces to support the transit operation in Georgia. The team was assigned at the military base of the Georgian Defence Forces, adjacent to the Tbilisi Airport. At the same location, Norway installed a Role 1 aid station with a capacity of receiving 35 patients and provide them with first aid if necessary.

Georgian side established an interagency task force, which was responsible for supporting the transit operation with all necessary measures.

Since various international organizations and partner states are carrying out urgent humanitarian evacuation of employees and their family members from Afghanistan, Georgia, as a trustworthy member of the international community, has decided to engage in this process.

Accordingly, the Georgian side agreed to assist several international organizations, namely the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Open Government Partnership (OGP), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) in evacuation of their staff. Evacuees will be provided with the temporary accommodations on the territory of Georgia.

Current developments in Afghanistan threaten the regional and global security environment. Contributing to the international humanitarian efforts in the times of great difficulties once again demonstrates the importance of Georgia as a regional actor, as well as a reliable stakeholder that can ensure the security and stability of the region. In addition, it strengthens Georgia's role with the regional security context and positions the country as a strategic partner to the Transatlantic Alliance, promising enhanced cooperation and increased interoperability. Being part of this mission is a giant step on the path towards NATO membership as it proves that Georgia is able to handle matters of collective defense and security in a successful and responsible manner.