

First US supplies to Afghanistan go through Russia

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The first American cargo intended for NATO forces in Afghanistan has passed through Russian territory and is now heading through Kazakhsatan and Uzbekistan.

NATO uses rail route through Russia.

“On Monday the first train with US non-military cargo left the territory of Russia and is now moving through Kazakhstan. Agreements concerning co-operation in Afghanistan [deliveries of non-military cargo for ISAF], reached in April 2008 at the Russia-NATO summit in Bucharest, are being fulfilled,” said Russian Foreign Ministry representative Igor Lyakin-Frolov.

The train was loaded in Riga and contains non-lethal cargo such as “uniform and food intended for NATO military in Afghanistan”, said the Russian Foreign Ministry.

The US plans to send between 20 and 30 shipments through Latvia and Russia on a weekly basis.

Russia already has transit agreements to Afghanistan with Germany, France and the US, though the deal with Washington applies only to non-military cargo.

On Tuesday Spain became the third state to be granted permission for military cargo and personnel transit. Spain is allowed to use the rail route through Russian territory to Afghanistan. The corresponding agreement was signed on March 3 during President Medvedev’s state visit to Madrid.

Spain has more than 700 military personnel based in Afghanistan.

Germany will also be allowed to use the Russian rail route for military cargo transit, said Anatoly Serdukov, the Russian defence minister, after a meeting with his German colleague on Tuesday.

The agreement on military cargo transit through Russian air space was signed in 2004. Now another regarding railway transit is to be signed in the near future.

NATO searching for new supply routes

As the Taliban step up attacks on ground shipments travelling through Pakistan and with the US military airbase at Manas in Kyrgyzstan to be closed, NATO is looking for new supply routes to Afghanistan from north and central Asia.

The new route passes through the territories of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and

Uzbekistan, which have allowed the transit of non-military NATO cargo in the recent past.

Russia accepted to allow the transit of non-military American cargos through its territory to Afghanistan in February 2009.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in agreeing to provide support to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Moscow has indicated that it is willing to co-operate with the new American administration.

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