

Russia Mulls Sending Peacekeepers to Kyrgyzstan

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Russia may send peacekeepers to Kyrgyzstan but only if it is asked to, by either of the country's conflicting sides, the head of the Federation Council's defense and security committee said on Saturday.

Even though what is now going on in Kyrgyzstan is a strictly internal affair of this former Soviet Central Asian republic, Russia might send in peacekeepers as part of an OSCE or UN mission, Viktor Ozerov added.

The Federation Council upper house of the Russian parliament has the final say on issues related to deploying Russian peacekeepers abroad. Any such authorization, however, must be preceded by a top-level request from a country which needs peacekeepers to prevent further bloodshed or a humanitarian disaster. Because Kyrgyzstan is part of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, Russian peacekeepers can be dispatched there as part of a CSTO mission. Or as part of a UN mission if Kirgiz authorities make a formal request to the UN Security Council and the UN Secretary General gives a pertinent mandate to countries – members of the Security Council.

At present, there are neither legal nor political reasons for such deployments though now that life in Bishkek is gradually returning to normal and military checkpoints set up and Interior troops and volunteer units enforcing law and order in the capital.

Meanwhile, funeral processions are currently being held across the republic as part of a two-day period of national mourning declared by the interim government.

The number of deaths resulting from the unrest in Kyrgyzstan has reached 79, and more than 1,500 were injured in the protests that began in the northwestern town of Talas on Tuesday and quickly spread to other parts of the country.

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