

China to fund base in Afghanistan

China will fund the construction of an Afghan counterterrorism base in Badakhshan province to block cross-border infiltration of ethnic Uyghur militants.

Fergana News Agency (FNA) has quoted Gen. Dawlat Waziri of the Afghan Defence Ministry as saying that China will provide financial support to build the base, whose precise location inside Badakhshan, in northern Afghanistan, is yet to be determined.

Gen. Waziri said the Chinese side would cover all material and technical expenses for this base — weaponry, uniforms for soldiers, military equipment and everything else necessary for its functioning. The decision to build the facility was taken during last month's visit to China by Afghan Defence Minister Tariq Shah Bahrami.

Pragmatic cooperation

During his visit, Mr. Bahrami met his Chinese counterpart Chang Wanquan, and Xu Qiliang, Vice-Chairman of China's Central Military Commission.

According to China Military Online, a website affiliated with the People's Liberation Army, Gen. Xu said during his meeting with Mr. Bahrami that China was willing to "strengthen pragmatic cooperation in areas of military exchange and anti-terrorism, and safeguard the security of the two countries and the region, making contributions to the development of China-Afghanistan strategic partnership of cooperation".

FNA said Mr. Bahrami and his Chinese counterpart Gen. Chang Wanquan agreed that their counterterrorism focus should not only be confined to Badakhshan, but Afghanistan's entire northern region.

Afghan analysts said the largest group of Uyghur militants already resides in Badakhshan, from where they can rapidly shift to China. The Afghan Defence Minister's visit follows the first meeting of the foreign ministers of China, Pakistan and Afghanistan last month. "China has been able to establish itself as an honest broker in the eyes of the Afghans," a source said.

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