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Russia Reinforces Troops in Georgia, Continuing to Defy Ceasefire Agreement on Eve of Visit by EU Leaders to Moscow & Tbilisi

French foreign minister tells Russian president: "Let him respect his own signature"; EU diplomats refused access to conflict zone, fear further ethnic cleansing

As European Union leaders today begin a crucial round of shuttle diplomacy to Moscow and Tbilisi, Russian armed forces have reinforced their positions in Georgia. New tanks, armored personnel carriers, and ground troops were introduced over the weekend outside the conflict zones, including in the strategic port of Poti.

Russia's continued defiance of the 6-point ceasefire agreement negotiated by French President Nicolas Sarkozy drew a strong rebuke from France's Foreign Minister on Saturday, following an informal EU foreign ministers summit in Avignon. "Let him first respect his own signature," said Bernard Kouchner, referring to President Medvedev's signature on the ceasefire agreement. "Of the six points, only two or let's say two-and-a-half, perhaps three, have been implemented."

Russia's failure to withdraw its troops, and its refusal to allow diplomats and NGOs into the conflict zone, also drew the ire of European diplomats this weekend. The ambassadors of Sweden, Latvia, and Estonia sought to visit villages outside the South Ossetian conflict zone, but were twice refused entry by Russian forces.

"As we were not allowed to visit villages near the conflict zone, serious concerns about possible ethnic cleansing remain," said a statement released by the three ambassadors, who were joined by Lithuania's deputy foreign minister. "The restriction of free movement of ambassadors constitutes a gross violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic relations. Not granting free access for humanitarian aid is an unacceptable violation of President Sarkozy's ceasefire agreement."

This weekend, Russian occupation forces reinforced their checkpoints near the strategic commercial port of Poti, which was visited by the USS Mount Whitney, the command ship of the US Navy's 6th Fleet, on Saturday. Five armoured personnel carriers and about 50 troops were added to the Nabada checkpoint, while the Patara Poti checkpoint was reinforced by one APC, another vehicle, and about 10 troops. On Sunday, meanwhile two Russian air force jets illegally entered Georgian airspace from the Russian Federation and remained in Georgian airspace for about 45 minutes, presumably on a reconnaissance mission.

President Sarkozy visits Moscow today, together with European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and EU High Commissioner Javier Solana. Their goal will be to persuade Moscow to withdraw its troops to the positions they held on August 7, and to honor the other points in the ceasefire agreement. The EU leaders also will try to reach agreement with Russia on the mandate of a 200-strong EU monitoring mission expected soon in Georgia.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Statement of the Ambassadors of Sweden, Latvia & Estonia

http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7380&Itemid=65

Russian Invasion of Georgia

Breaches by Russia of the Ceasefire Agreement:

CHECKPOINTS

September 8, 2008¹

The Russian Army has illegally established 24 checkpoints deep within sovereign Georgian territory, contravening the six-point ceasefire agreement brokered by France.

Twelve of the checkpoints are located in central Georgia and eleven in western Georgia.

There are an estimated 1470 Russian soldiers and 236 heavily armored vehicles (including 6 Tanks) stationed at these checkpoints. The biggest number of armored vehicles is stationed between the villages of Megvrekisi and Brotsleti (about 150 units). Armored patrols are dispatched regularly from the checkpoints into surrounding towns and villages. Additionally there are an estimated 6 000 Russian soldiers in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region. Number of Russian troops in these regions reduced from an estimated 10 000 to an estimated 6 000 during last week.

Estimated number of Russian personnel & equipment at all 24 illegal Russian checkpoints:

- Russian servicemen: 1470²
- Tanks: 6
- Armored vehicles: 222
- Infantry combating vehicles: 8
- Ural-type vehicles: 23
- UAZ-type vehicle: 3

¹ All locations and numbers given in this document have been provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia. Conditions on the ground do not allow the MIA to verify all the information and the actual numbers of Russian military vehicles (and equipment) and personnel might be much higher.

² This number consists of the 1070 infantry personnel and about 400 crew members of armored vehicles.

- Gaz-66 vehicles: 2
- Vilis-type car: 1
- Military Army tent: 11
- Crane: 3
- Military power shovel: 2
- Vehicle with communication systems: 1
- Vehicle with electricity generator: 1

Central Georgia

As of 8th of September, the Ministry of Interior confirmed 13 checkpoints in central Georgia (Shida Kartli and other areas adjacent to South Ossetia, as well as in parts of South Ossetia that were never part of the conflict). Their location is given on the map number 2. The checkpoints are in the following locations:

LIST OF CHECKPOINTS IN CENTRAL GEORGIA

1. Perevi (Sachkhere district)
2. Ghodora (Sachkhere district)
3. Ali (Khashuri district)
4. Ptsa (Kareli district)
5. Variani (Gori district)
6. Karaleti (Gori district)
7. Shavshvebi (Gori district)
8. Ergneti (Gori district)

There are *approximately 60-65 Russian servicemen and 4 armored vehicles stationed in each of above listed checkpoints. The vehicles often move from one place to another "patrolling" the nearby territories and villages.*

9. Ikoti (Akhgori district) *2 infantry combat vehicles, 1 armored vehicle, trenches, and 50 soldiers*

10. 10Meghvrekisi and Brotsleti (Gori district) *Large concentrations of about 150 vehicles, most of them armored, are stationed between the villages.*

11. 1 km north of Odzisi in the Akhgori district *(2 Infantry combat vehicles, 1 armored vehicle, 15 Russian servicemen).*

12. 4 km north of Odzisi in the Akhgori district *(1 Infantry Combat Vehicle, 1 Ural, 20 Russian Service men)*

13. Village of Mosabruni in the Akhgori district *(1 armored vehicle, 15 Russian servicemen)*

Western Georgia

As of 8th of September the Ministry of Interior confirmed at least 11 checkpoints in western Georgia (in the regions of Samegrelo, Svaneti, Upper Kodori, Gali, and Ochamchire). Their locations, listed below, are indicated on map number 3.

LIST OF CHECKPOINTS IN WESTERN GEORGIA

Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti Region

1. Teklati (near Senaki)
5 armored vehicles, 1 crane, 2 Ural-type vehicles, 1 vehicle with communications systems, 1 UAZ-type vehicle, 1 GAZ-type car, 1 large army tent, trenches are dug, 40 Russian servicemen

2. Pirveli Maisi (Khobi district),
Near the former Georgian police checkpoint: 2 armored vehicles, 2 Ural-type vehicles, 1 UAZ-type vehicle, 1 large army tent, trenches are dug, 40 Russian servicemen

3. Nabada (a suburb of Poti)
8 armored vehicles, 3 Ural-type vehicle, 1 UAZ-type vehicle, 1 military power shovel, 1 large army tent, 70 Russian servicemen

4. Between Shua Khorga and Chaladidi (Patara Poti, Khobi district)³
Near the turnoff to the Kulevi oil terminal: 8 armored vehicles, 1 Ural-type vehicles, 3 large army tent, and 70 Russian servicemen

5. Menji (Senaki district)
In the Bakaraia neighborhood of the town, on the grounds of the Menji sanatorium, about 10 meters from the railroad: 2 Tanks, 5 armored vehicle, 4 Ural-type vehicle, 2 cranes, 1 military power shovel, 1 large army tent, 40 Russian servicemen

6. Kantisubani (Tsalenjikha district)
On the Tsalenjikha-Chkhorotsku road: 3 armored vehicles, 2 Ural-type vehicles, 1 large army tent, trenches are dug, 30 Russian servicemen

³ Nabada and Patara Poti checkpoints were reinforced with 6 armored vehicles and about 60 servicemen on the morning of 7th of September.

7. Chale and Muzhava (Tsalenjikha district)

At the entrances of the two villages: 3 armored vehicles, 1 Ural-type vehicle, 20 Russian servicemen

8. Chkhorotsku

On an old airfield, near the Senaki-Chkhorotsku highway: 6 armored vehicles, 2 Ural-type vehicles, 1 vehicle with electricity generator, 2 large and 1 small army tents, 40 Russian servicemen

Additional checkpoints

Colonel-General Anatoly Nogovitsin, deputy head of the Russian General Staff, listed the following additional checkpoints in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region during a press conference on 22 August:

9. Khudoni

10. Anaklia

11. Mount Kvira

In village Onaria (Zugdidi district) Russian military organized supply base for the units stationed on the above listed checkpoints in Western Georgia. There are 4 Tanks, 4 armored vehicles, 8 Ural type Vehicles, 150 Servicemen.

1: This map gives an overview of the current checkpoint situation:



Map No2: Location of checkpoints in Central Georgia



Map No3: Location of checkpoints in Western Georgia

