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United Nations Confirms Russian Fighter Jet Shot & Destroyed Georgian Unmanned Police Aircraft on April 20

**Attacking “aircraft belonged to the Russian air force,” report concludes based
on radar, other data; Russian fighter placed civilian aircraft in peril**

A report issued today by the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) confirmed that on April 20, 2008, a Russian fighter aircraft—either a MiG-29 or an Su-27—shot down and destroyed a Georgian unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) in Georgian airspace.

“The UN has released a report in which Russia is directly accused of aggression against Georgia,” said President Mikheil Saakashvili. “For the first time, the UN has directly, unequivocally pointed the finger at Russia.”

The unarmed Georgian UAV was conducting routine surveillance above the breakaway Georgian territory of Abkhazia. UNOMIG analyzed radar tracking data and video transmitted from the UAV in the moments before its destruction; the UN observers deemed the data to be authentic and impossible to simulate.

UNOMIG added that the data correlated with eyewitness reports from civilians and CIS peacekeeping forces that the mission interviewed. It said that the Russian interception mission was probably controlled by an operator using the Abkhaz 36D6 radar located at the airport of Babushara, south of Sukhumi.

Furthermore, the Russian fighter was found by UNOMIG to have fired a heat-seeking missile at the UAV, “very close to, or even inside, an international airway at a time where civilian aircraft were flying.”

The UAV belonged to, and was operated by, the Ministry of the Interior and not the Ministry of Defense. It was consequently not a military flight.

The UNOMIG report noted that it “considers that enforcement actions by third parties—in this case the Russian Federation—in the zone of conflict is fundamentally inconsistent with the Moscow Agreement and, aside from possible considerations under international law, undercuts the ceasefire and separation of forces regime.”

The Georgian Government welcomed the unequivocal confirmation by the international community that Georgia came under unprovoked attack on April 20 by the Russian Federation, which provides the bulk of the CIS forces under the 1994 Moscow Ceasefire Agreement. The Government said that this action puts a definitive end to the possibility of Russian neutrality in this conflict; it instead underscores that Russia is actively aiming to thwart Georgia’s peace initiative in Abkhazia.

In its statement following the UNOMIG report, the Government of Georgia added that it:

- regrets that this reckless act, which thankfully did not cause any deaths or injuries, placed commercial aircraft at risk in its own airspace and strongly condemns this irresponsible attack.
- calls on the Russian Federation to cease its unprovoked acts of aggression, which are counterproductive to the interests of all parties in this conflict, including the Russian Federation;

- reiterates its call to the international community for a change in the peacekeeping format in Abkhazia, Georgia;
- reiterates its commitment to seeking an exclusively peaceful solution to the conflict in Abkhazia that respects the rights and needs of all sides, including those of IDPs and of the current Abkhaz population of Abkhazia, Georgia;
- reminds that this commitment is expressed in the peace plan it proposed in March 2008 which foresees unlimited autonomy to Abkhazia within the Georgian Republic and, *inter alia*, gives Abkhazia a right of veto on any constitutional or legislative changes affecting its interests;
- calls on the Russian Federation to support a change in the negotiating format and to work with Georgia, the Friends of Georgia (including the EU and the USA), and the Abkhaz leadership to develop and implement a durable, peaceful solution that respects the rights and needs of all sides;
- notes and welcomes President Medvedev's statement today, Georgian Independence Day, that he seeks "constructive cooperation between our states for the sake of developing neighborly relations and strengthening stability and security in the Caucasus region";
- thanks UNOMIG for the difficult work of analyzing and interpreting the data about this incident.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. **United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG):**
<http://www.unomig.org>
2. **Agence France Presse, "UN Concludes Russia shot down Georgian spy plane":**
http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5jMXy0-Aj-K91ZUgT_ot6_pPnxZaw
3. **Reuters, "Russia Behind Downing of Georgia Spy Plane – UN":**
<http://www.reuters.com/article/europeCrisis/idUSL26412233>
4. **The New York Times, "U.N. Blames Russia for Downed Drone":**
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/27/world/europe/27georgia.html?ref=world>