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## **Disinformation Campaign: Russia & Separatist Rebels Falsely Allege Two Georgian Drones Shot Down on May 4**

Assertions aim to justify illegal buildup of troops & hardware in Abkhazia;  
Georgia asks UN to investigate “air defense systems” of separatist rebels

In an apparent effort to distract attention from the April 20 drone incident—when a Russian MiG-29 blasted a Georgian unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) out of Georgian airspace—as well as to justify its growing military presence in Georgia’s separatist regions, the Russian Ministry of Defense claimed yesterday that two additional Georgian UAVs had been shot down over Abkhazia by separatist “air defense systems.”

The claim was denied by the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs, which operates the drones, and the Ministry of Defense. Neither the Russian government nor the separatist rebels backed by Russia have provided any physical or other evidence of their assertions.

The Georgian Ministry of Defense said yesterday that the false claim seemed aimed at “diverting the international community’s attention from the incident of April 20.” One group of international experts already has conducted an independent investigation into the April 20 events, while a second group will begin work shortly.

Meanwhile, Georgia’s Foreign Ministry asked Mr. Jean Arnault, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative in Georgia, to launch an investigation into the separatists’ use of so-called “air defense systems” in the security zone and to report on his findings. The use of such systems would violate the 1994 Moscow Agreement (“On a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces”).

In its statement yesterday, the Russian Ministry of Defense characterized the separatists’ alleged use of air defense systems as “natural.” Given that Russia operates a large peacekeeping force in Abkhazia and acts as a self-appointed guarantor of security, the Government of Georgia has deemed Russia’s endorsement of illegal militarization in the conflict zone highly irresponsible. Furthermore, Russia’s statement casts additional doubt on its neutrality and fitness to act as the sole peacekeeping force in the region.

Video footage of the April 20 incident transmitted by the downed Georgian UAV showed a MiG-29 fighter jet approaching the drone and firing a guided missile at the aircraft. Radar records indicate the fighter jet took off from the Soviet-era airbase at Gudauta, in the Abkhazia region, and then fled into Russia after firing the missile.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

1. **Video footage of the April 20 incident:**  
<http://www.police.ge/en/curview.aspx?newsid=31127&categoryid=1>
2. **Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, May 4:**  
[http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=36&info\\_id=6560](http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=36&info_id=6560)
3. **Statement of the Ministry of Defense of Georgia, May 4:**  
<http://www.mod.gov.ge/?l=E&id=921>
4. **Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, May 5:**  
[http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=36&info\\_id=6563](http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=36&info_id=6563)