

GEORGIA UPDATE

WEEKLY EDITION • 23 October 2008

A Publication of the Government of Georgia

www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge

TOP STORIES:

- Former Putin Advisor Said Russia Left Georgia With No Choice on August 7
- World Bank Estimates €2.38 Billion Needed for Rebuilding as Donors Convened
- Spain Calls for Georgia to Join NATO, Build Closer Ties With European Union
- Citing Russia's Failure to Withdraw from Georgia, EU Delays Partnership Talks
- U.S. Commerce Deputy Secretary to Host the U.S.-Georgia Business Summit



When we traveled with Bernard Kouchner on the 12-th of August, to Moscow and Tbilisi, all media knew it already: Russians were 40 kilometers far from Tbilisi and their objective was to overthrow the regime of Mr. Saakashvili. This is the reality."

French President Nicolas Sarkozy, speaking in the European Parliament on October 21.

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

THE WASHINGTON POST: In Mostly Georgian Part of Abkhazia, Ethnic Lines Seem Indelible

LIBERATION: "The Russians Have Not Succeeded in Getting the Support of Their Allies"

ECONOMIST: Russia and Europe-Too soon to kiss and make up

WALL STREET JOURNAL: Georgian Leader Warns of Moscow's Aims

THE NEW YORK TIMES: Mikheil Saakashvili, An American Friend

WASHINGTON POST: Editorial-Where Georgia Stands

NEWSWEEK: The Realist Resurgence

TAGESSPIEGEL: Moscow to Appoint Russian National as Proxy PM in S. Ossetia

GUARDIAN: Unwelcome in the hillside

Reports from Think Tanks & NGOs

INSTITUTE FOR WAR & PEACE REPORTING: Georgians Far from Kodori Return

LAW LIBRARY OF THE US CONGRESS: Legal aspects of war in Georgia

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Contrary to how it is being portrayed, the conflict did not begin on 7 August 2008, but was carefully planned and built up since the spring of 2004, when the Russian authorities started supplying South Ossetia and Abkhazia with military equipment and training their military forces, building military bases and strategic highways and."

Andrei Ilarionov, Former Advisor to then-President Putin

UPCOMING MILESTONES

Oct. 23: William Hague, shadow foreign secretary of UK Conservative Party, and Lord Ashcroft, the party's deputy chairman, visit Tbilisi

Oct. 26-28: US Commerce Department's investor trip to Georgia

Nov 3: Elections of Supreme Council of Autonomous Republic of Adjara and By-Elections of Georgian Parliament

Nov. 10: EU foreign ministers meet to discuss resumption of partnership talks with Russia

Nov. 18: Provisional date for second round of Geneva peace talks

Nov. 23: 5th Anniversary of the Rose Revolution

TOP STORIES

Former Putin Advisor Said Russia Left Georgia With No Choice on August 7

Andrei Illarionov, a former top advisor to former Russian President Vladimir Putin, told the EU Observer that “contrary to how it is being portrayed, the conflict did not begin on 7 August 2008, but was carefully planned and built up since the spring of 2004, when the Russian authorities started supplying South Ossetia and Abkhazia with military equipment and training their military forces, building military bases and strategic highways and railroads.” He added: “The build-up culminated with the amassing of 80,000 regular troops and paramilitaries close to the Georgian border, at least 60,000 of which participated in the August war.”

EU OBSERVER (Oct. 14): Saakashvili saved Georgia from coup, former Putin aide says
<http://euobserver.com/9/26921>

World Bank Estimates €2.38 Billion Needed for Rebuilding as Donors Convene

The World Bank estimates that Georgia needs €2.38 billion in international aid to help revive its economy, social sectors and energy infrastructure—as well as to resettle around 65,000 people displaced by the Russian invasion. Yesterday, over 70 countries gathered in Brussels at a ministerial-level donors conference convened by the Bank and the EU; the EU has already pledged €500 million.

LES ECHOS (Oct. 21): Les Occidentaux prêts à aider la Georgie
<http://www.lesechos.fr/info/inter/4787450-les-occidentaux-prets-a-aider-la-georgie.htm>

AFP (Oct. 20): Western donors seek over two billion euros in aid for Georgia
<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/PANA-7KLGPC?OpenDocument>

Spain Calls for Georgia to Join NATO, Build Closer Ties With European Union

Spain will champion Georgia's bid to join NATO when Madrid takes the EU's rotating presidency in 2010, Spanish FM Moratinos said during a two-day visit to Georgia last week. He also spoke forcefully in defense of Georgia's territorial integrity: "Always, Spain has defended this principle, not like other countries that consider that this principle can be used in certain circumstances." Moratinos also stressed it was "time for the relationship between Georgia and the European Union to move forward."

AP (Oct. 18): Spain says Georgia should get NATO membership
<http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5h6iBFwUsnFnNQsKksK7divrFkd8wD93SUG900>

Citing Russia's Failure to Withdraw from Georgia, EU Delays Partnership Talks

The EU postponed the resumption of talks on a partnership and cooperation agreement with Russia, citing Moscow's failure to comply with the Sarkozy ceasefire agreement. Russia has not withdrawn from areas of Georgia that were never part of the conflict zones; Russia also is insisting on illegally keeping 7,600 troops in Georgian separatists' zones. The day prior to the EU decision, Russia has also scuttled the first attempt to launch peace talks in Geneva.

REUTERS (Oct. 16): EU delays decision on Russian partnership talks
<http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSTRE49F2IM20081016?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews>

THE TELEGRAPH (Oct. 16): Britain prevents EU from reopening trade talks with Russia
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/3210246/Britain-prevents-EU-from-reopening-trade-talks-with-Russia.html>

U.S. Commerce Deputy Secretary to Host the U.S.-Georgia Business Summit

U.S. Commerce Deputy Secretary John Sullivan will host the U.S.-Georgia Business Summit in Tbilisi, during a Commerce Department-led trade mission to Georgia, the week of October 26. The trade mission marks an important step for Georgia as it moves forward in repairing its economic and trade infrastructure. Summit participants will include Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, Overseas Private Investment Corporation President, Robert Mosbacher Jr. and U.S. Trade and Development Agency Director, Larry Walther.

CIVIL GEORGIA (Oct. 21): U.S. Commerce Secretary meets Georgian Economy Minister
<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=19563>



"The cease-fire accord that President Sarkozy negotiated requires that all the Russian armed forces withdraw to their positions before the outbreak of hostilities. "The Russians have not done so, and therefore they are not in compliance with the cease-fire."

U.S. Undersecretary of State Daniel Fried, speaking in Georgia on October 20, 2008

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

THE WASHINGTON POST: In Mostly Georgian Part of Abkhazia, Ethnic Lines Seem Indelible

For thousands of Georgians living in Gali district, Russia's invasion of Georgia has cast new uncertainty over an already shaky existence. Georgians continue to face harsh ethnic discrimination, extortion, and illegal property seizure by Abkhaz de facto authorities in the Russian-occupied separatist region. They also are pressured to relinquish their Georgian citizenship and accept Abkhaz passports.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/17/AR2008101702907.html?nav=rss_world/europe

LIBERATION: "The Russians Have Not Succeeded in Getting the Support of Their Allies"

Russia will cede Georgia's regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia only if Europe and the international community stand firm, argues Thornike Gordadze, director of the Caucasus Observatory. The West's will seriously damage its interests by allowing the borders of Council of Europe member to be changed by force. Gordadze also stresses that "the internationalization of the crisis represents progress," and notes that Russia's failure to generate support from its own allies belied a fundamental weakness in its position.

<http://www.liberation.fr/>

ECONOMIST: Russia and Europe-Too soon to kiss and make up

European nations have been too eager to return to "business as usual" after Russia only partially removed troops from security zones adjacent to rebel regions, the Economist argues in a leader. Russia must withdraw its forces from South Ossetia and Abkhazia and allow international observers access into conflict zones before partnership talks between Russia and Europe can resume. The EU also should reevaluate its neighborhood policy in the former Soviet Republics to inhibit Russia's use of energy as a political weapon.

http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story_id=12429514

WALL STREET JOURNAL: Georgian Leader Warns of Moscow's Aims

"If you accept what the Russians have done as *a fait accompli*, it's not the end of the trouble, it's the beginning, said President Saakashvili in an interview, urging Western governments to support Georgia's territorial integrity and compel Russia to withdraw fully from Georgia. Saakashvili underscored that rebuilding Georgia's economy and speeding integration with the EU are his top priorities. "If one year from now Georgia's economy is successful, the government is stable, the international community is firmly on our side, then I think the purposes of the aggressors have lost. And I think they understand this as well as we do."

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122408389570936585.html>

THE NEW YORK TIMES: Mikheil Saakashvili, An American Friend

In an interview, the Georgian President says Georgia's entry into NATO is the "\$100 million dollar question," and explains why supporting his country is critical for the West: "First of all, democracy is a strategic interest. And second, there are energy issues. If Russia shuts off central Asia and the Caspian Sea from Europe, the European allies of the United States will be totally dependent on Russian gas and energy."

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/19/magazine/19WWInq4t.html?_r=2&ref=word&oref=slogin&oref=slogin

WASHINGTON POST: Editorial-Where Georgia Stands

To prevent future Russian aggression, Russia's five-day war with Georgia must be a "net loss for Moscow," argues the Post in an editorial. Georgia's western partners must uphold support of Georgia's territorial integrity and demand that Russia observe its commitment to withdraw its forces from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Meanwhile, Georgia must continue on the path towards greater democratization and political liberalization.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/18/AR2008101801533.html>

NEWSWEEK: The Realist Resurgence

In the aftermath of Russia's invasion into Georgia, NATO's soft-power strategy might be the appropriate response to balance against an increasingly confident Russia. "Russia is not the threat that it wants to appear," say experts from the "realist" camp, who argue that NATO's policy of supporting democratic development in the former Soviet republics should continue.

<http://www.newsweek.com/id/163577/output/print>

TAGESSPIEGEL: Moscow to Appoint Russian National as Proxy PM in S. Ossetia

Russia is seeking to tighten its already firm grip over the occupying authorities of South Ossetia by planning to appoint a Russian national, Aslanbek Bulazev, as proxy prime minister.

<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/international/russland/SuedossetienRussland:art1186.2636510>

GUARDIAN: Unwelcome in the hillside:

Russia occupation of the Georgian ethnic-majority Akhlagori district is in direct violation of the cease-fire agreement. "The Kremlin is unilaterally redrawing Georgia's map. The international community appears not to notice." The EU should refrain from assuming business as usual with Russia and demand the repatriation of Georgians to their homes in Akhlagori.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/oct/15/russia-georgia>

REPORTS FROM THINK TANKS & NGOS

INSTITUTE FOR WAR & PEACE REPORTING: Georgians Far from Kodori Return

Over 2,500 Georgian refugees who fled the Kodori Gorge during Russia's invasion have been denied their right to return by Abkhaz authorities. After an extensive Russian bombing campaign, says an IWPR report, "the region is now almost totally depopulated of ethnic Georgians." With winter approaching and the absence of EU and UN observers, a swift return home for ethnic Georgians is unlikely.

http://www.iwpr.net/?p=crs&s=f&o=347184&apc_state=henh

LAW LIBRARY OF THE US CONGRESS: Legal aspects of war in Georgia

A Library of Congress study assesses the legal aspects of Russia's invasion of Georgia and offers comprehensive background on the conflict.

<http://www.loc.gov/law/help/russian-georgia-war.html>