

GEORGIA UPDATE

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TOP STORIES

- **Swiss Diplomat to Lead EU Investigation Into Russia's Invasion**
- **Residents Forced to Flee as Russian-Backed Militias Overrun Georgian Village**
- **EU Resumes Partnership Talks With Russia Despite Multiple Violations of Ceasefire**
- **As Demonstrations Mark Nov. 7 Anniversary, Georgia Accesses Democratic Progress**
- **Government to Change Electoral Code in Latest Democratic Reform; Cuts Taxes**



President to Testify Before War Commission

President Saakashvili said this week that he will testify before Parliament's war commission. In a meeting with the Anti-Crisis Council, he said he would "answer all questions" and that "not a single official is immune" from interrogation. Testifying on Monday, the State Minister for Regional Issues emphasized that Georgia did not have any plans to take military action in South Ossetia prior to Russia's August invasion. <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=19915>

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: Gates to show support for Baltics, bids by others to join NATO

FORBES: Georgia, Russia & the new administration

INSTITUTE FOR WAR & PEACE REPORTING: Gori gets back on its feet

WASHINGTON POST: Split over Russia grows in Europe

THE NEW REPUBLIC: Russian aggression and the genocide excuse

THE ECONOMIST: Europe quietly caves into new partnership talks with Russia

DIE WELT: Russia's missile threat augurs a return to Cold War tactics

Reports from Think Tanks & NGOs

CAUCASUS INSTITUTE FOR PEACE, DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT: Media freedom in Georgia

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"Norway wasn't surprised by Georgia. We predicted war would happen. The problem in NATO member states was that competence about Russia was shut down after the Cold War. They turned everyone into arabists or whatever."

—Norwegian Deputy Defense Minister Espen Barth Eide

"I cannot believe that he has claimed that Russian troops have been fully pulled out."

—Estonian PM Andrus Ansip on statements made by French President Sarkozy during a Nov. 7 EU summit

UPCOMING MILESTONES

Nov. 13: NATO-Georgia Commission meets in Brussels.

Nov. 13: Parliamentary assembly of Mediterranean states

Nov. 14: EU-Russia summit in Nice.

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

Nov. 19-20: South Caucasus Conference on enhancing the Independence and Efficiency of the Judiciary

Nov. 19-21: Parliament Speaker David Bakradze visits Latvia

Nov. 21: IOC meets in Istanbul; will review plans for Sochi Olympics

Nov. 23: Rose Revolution 5th Anniversary

TOP STORIES

Swiss Diplomat to Lead EU Investigation Into Russia's Invasion

Nearly three months after President Saakashvili called for an international investigation into the origins of Russia's invasion, the EU has decided to move ahead with an inquiry. Heidi Tagliavini, a Swiss diplomat with extensive experience in the Caucasus, will lead the effort. The mandate of investigators is still being negotiated, with efforts being made to ensure that it encompasses the years of Russian provocations leading up to the conflict. Meanwhile, German FM Steinmeier called on all parties to cooperate fully with the inquiry.

CIVIL GEORGIA (Nov. 11): **Ex-UN Envoy to Georgia to Chair International Probe into August War**

<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=19933>

<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,3780802,00.html>

Residents Forced to Flee as Russian-Backed Militias Overrun Georgian Village

South Ossetian militias took control of Perevi, a predominately Georgian populated village outside the conflict zone, provoking a mass exodus by the local civilian population. "The Georgian population is under threat," an interior ministry spokesman said. "There has to be a negotiated settlement to this, there cannot be a military settlement." Meanwhile, fatal explosions in the village of Dvani further highlighted Tbilisi's plea for a more robust EU observers mission.

IHT (Nov. 10) **Georgians fleeing border town**

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/11/10/europe/georgia.php>

AP (Nov. 10): **Explosion kills 2 Georgian police near S. Ossetia**

<http://washingtontimes.com/news/2008/nov/10/explosion-kills-2-georgian-police-near-s-ossetia/>

EU Resumes Partnership Talks With Russia Despite Multiple Violations of Ceasefire

The EU voted Monday to reopen partnership talks with Russia despite the country's failure to comply with the Sarkozy-brokered ceasefire agreement. Since the ceasefire was signed on August 12, Russia has occupied areas, such as Akhgori and Upper Abkhazia, outside the conflict zones; illegally recognized the "independence" of S. Ossetia and Abkhazia; and bulked up its force presence in the two regions beyond all agreed limits. Moscow also walked out of the Geneva peace talks. Georgian FM Grigol Mgaloblishvili cautioned: "To declare mission accomplished and return to business as usual with Russia could encourage the Russian Federation to continue aggressive action Europe's eastern neighborhood."

IHT (Nov. 11) **EU to Resume Talks With Russia Halted During Georgian War**

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/11/11/business/EU-EU-Russia.php>

As Demonstration Marks Nov. 7 Anniversary, Georgia Assesses Democratic Progress

Several thousand protestors gathered in Tbilisi on Nov. 7 to mark the one-year anniversary of demonstrations that turned violent and to voice their opposition to the Government. They laid out a series of demands, including a call for new elections, and promised a 5-month wave of protests. However, several significant opposition parties did not join the demonstration. Wrote one analyst: "A fractured opposition, fear of renewed hostilities with Russia and lingering support suggest the gathering political storm is unlikely to topple the pro-Western president soon." The Government has promised to continue a series of democratic reforms that have served to blunt some of the opposition criticism.

GEORGIA UPDATE (Nov. 7): **One Year After Anti-Government Demonstrations, Georgia Assesses Democratic Progress**

<http://georgiaupdate.gov.ge/doc/10006871/GEORGIA%20UPDATE%20One%20Year%20Later%20Nov%207%202008.pdf>

ASSOCIATED PRESS (Nov. 7): **Saakashvili's weathering storm**

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/11/08/europe/EU-Georgia-Stubborn-Saakashvili.php>

Government to change electoral code in latest democratic reform; cuts taxes

As part of its new wave of reforms, the Government is planning a series of changes to the electoral code—a key opposition demand. The revisions will draw on recommendations of the international observers who monitored presidential elections in January, the parliamentary vote in May, and last month's Adjara elections. "We have been planning the changes in the election code for months and it has nothing to do with early elections," said Parliament Speaker David Bakradze in reference to the opposition's demands for early elections. Meanwhile, President Saakashvili announced a sharp cut in tax rates to help revive the economy. "We will respond to the crisis with more liberalization and with more democracy and reforms," he said.

<http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=19914&search=anti-crisis%20group>

<http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=19937>

Council of Europe Assesses Cultural Damage of Russia's Invasion

A Council of Europe commission charged with assessing the damage to Georgia's cultural heritage sites during Russia's invasion has called for a feasibility study to determine how best to protect the country's cultural treasures. The commission also said "urgent action" is needed to repair Georgia's revered Nikozi monastery and the surrounding village, which endured extensive damage during the conflict



INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: Gates to show support for Baltics, bids by others to join NATO

US Defense Secretary Robert Gates—perhaps the only current cabinet member who might be retained by President-elect Obama—was in Estonia this week to underscore US support for NATO expansion. "I'm not so sure this is a meeting the secretary would have attended had the Russians chosen not to invade Georgia," said Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell. "But in the aftermath of that the secretary wanted to send a very strong signal of his support for the Ukraine and the Baltic states and other NATO allies from Eastern Europe that the United States stands behind them."

http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20081111/pl_afp/usnatoukrainebalticsrussia_08111221012

FORBES: Georgia, Russia & the new administration

Reports by the BBC and New York Times that blame Georgia for triggering Russia's invasion could lull the West into acquiescence, warns analyst Melik Kaylan. "Whatever the BBC is pretending to report there, their subtext sneaks through loud and clear—Georgia invaded first," Kaylan writes. "If Georgia invaded first, Russia was provoked, Russia could not but respond, President Saakashvili is a trigger-happy maniac, we should back off from confrontation with Moscow, this is no incipient or even full-fledged Cold War casus belli to test Obama, he can press the refresh button and the new world will pop up as a tabula rasa." Kaylan believes Obama will not succumb: "The New York Times and BBC can lay out their dream narrative all they want, but it's unlikely that Obama will buy into it. Biden certainly won't."

http://www.forbes.com/home_europe/2008/11/10/georgia-russia-obama-oped-cx_mk_1111kaylan.html

INSTITUTE FOR WAR & PEACE REPORTING: Gori gets back on its feet

The Georgian government has made great strides to rehabilitate the war-torn village of Gori after Russia's invasion. An estimated 228 civilians died in the conflict, with Gori bearing the brunt of Russian attacks. Bombings also left 12 blocks of flats needing a complete overhaul and 70 more requiring partial reconstruction. The Government plans to build 4,490 new homes for IDPs, and repair of 1,576 others. Says one Gori resident: "The town has become cleaner and more beautiful... they've been trying so hard to sweep away every trace of Russian aggression."

http://www.iwpr.net/?p=crs&s=f&o=347651&apc_state=henh

WASHINGTON POST: Split over Russia grows in Europe—Moscow alarms East more than West

Russia's aggressive expansion of its sphere of influence in former Soviet states has intensified an ideological divide between Western and Eastern Europe. While many countries in the east have become increasingly alarmed by Russian belligerence, "other countries in Western Europe play down any security risks posed by Moscow and instead see Russia, foremost, as a lucrative-if unpredictable trading partner." The EU's agreement to resume partnership talks with Russia despite the country's failure to comply with the Sarkozy ceasefire, coupled with President Medvedev's threat this week to deploy missiles near Poland, has further heightened tensions.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/07/AR2008110703296.html>

THE NEW REPUBLIC: Red Herring—Russian aggression and the genocide excuse

Russia's excuse for its invasion of Georgia—to prevent a brewing genocide comparable to the Kosovo crisis—is a faulty justification and an "extraordinarily misleading" analogy, writes former US deputy secretary of state James Rubin. "Russia is seeking to turn the tables—to exploit the human rights rhetoric of the West in order to establish international acceptance for a sphere of influence in Central Asia and other parts of the Soviet Union." Rubin says the West must not accept Moscow's illegitimate claims to establish any legal jurisdiction in Georgia's separatist regions.

<http://www.tnr.com/politics/story.html?id=abdb2404-4efb-4bd4-a615-a704b1a2a7c0>

THE ECONOMIST: Europe quietly caves into new partnership talks with Russia

By consenting to resume partnership talks with Europe's dominant energy supplier, the EU is quietly dismissing Russia's failure to comply with the Sarkozy ceasefire agreement. The EU's September decision to postpone cooperation talks was regrettably reversed in effort to maintain a collective and united European policy, the *Economist* argues. "The EU's strength is in its unity....In the interest of preserving long-term unity, the EU will now back down, in unison."

http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=12562305

DIE WELT: Russia's missile threat augurs a return to Cold War tactics

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's warning that Russia will deploy short-range missiles in Russia's western enclave of Kaliningrad is reminiscent of the Cold War arms race, reports German publication Die Welt. Moscow's perceived diminishing sphere of influence in former Soviet satellite states is the primary reason behind Medvedev's nuclear missile deployment threat.

http://www.welt.de/welt_print/article2682241/Medwedjews-Gruss.html

REPORTS FROM THINK TANKS & NGOS**Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development: Media freedom in Georgia**

A CIPPD study finds that the editorial and ownership independence of the media hinges on the development of Georgia's civil society. Says the report: "The establishment of the media as an institution is impossible when other civil institutions are underdeveloped." To achieve true media independence, encourage professionalism in journalism, and separate political interests from intervening in public broadcasts, institutional guarantees and greater transparency is needed.

WEBSITES @ GEORGIA

Civil Georgia: Leading independent English-language news website on Georgia: <http://www.civil.ge>

Georgia Update: Official government information service: <http://www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge>

Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies: Leading non-governmental organization that focuses on Georgian domestic and foreign policy: <http://www.gfsis.org>

Georgian Parliament: <http://www.parliament.ge/>

Government of Georgia: <http://www.government.gov.ge/eng/>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.ge>

National Investment Agency: <http://www.investgeorgia.org>

Georgian Mission to NATO:

http://embassy.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=135