

GEORGIA UPDATE

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TOP STORIES

- EU Observers Ask to Stay in Georgia as Russia Digs In
- NATO Reaffirms Support for Georgia's Military Integration, Eventual Membership
- National Security Advisor Builds Ties in Washington With Obama Administration
- President Saakashvili Says Economic Diversification Protects Georgia from Deeper Crisis
- Russian Helicopters Violate Georgian Airspace in Latest Transgression



Foreign Minister Vashadze met with US Secretary of State Clinton in Brussels last Thursday, when an extraordinary session of the NATO-Georgia Commission was convened. Clinton and other NATO allies voiced their unwavering support for Georgia's eventual membership in the Alliance, while underscoring concerns about Russia's militarization of Georgia's occupied territories

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

REUTERS: Georgia appeals to West over Russian bases

EURASIANET: Tbilisi tries to get a feel for the Obama administration

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE: Disrepair in S. Ossetia dims hopes

NEWSWEEK: Pulled from all sides

RFE/RL: Abkhaz incident opens up new vista in Georgia conflict

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: Clinton says US still supports Georgia despite russia talks

DAILY TELEGRAPH: A beautiful start to Lent in Tbilisi

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR: Editorial-Thawing out "Cold War II"

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I reiterated again today—in our meetings with Ukraine and Georgia—the United States' firm commitment to each of those nations moving toward NATO membership, and our equally strong commitment to work with them, along with NATO, to make clear that they should not be the subject of Russian intimidation or aggression."

—US Secretary of State Clinton in Brussels, March 5

UPCOMING MILESTONES

Mar. 15: New Group of Friends (NGF) meeting in Brussels

Mar. 16: FM Vashadze visits Belgium

Mar. 23. Greek FM and OSCE Chair Dora Bakoyanni visits Georgia

Mar. 23-27: Parliament Speaker Bakradze visits Washington, D.C.

Mar. 30 – Apr. 1: Speaker Bakradze visits Denmark & Norway

Mar. 31: EU monitoring mandate expires

Apr. 2-4: Speaker Bakradze visits Finland

Apr. 27: 10th anniversary of Georgia's CoE membership

TOP STORIES

EU Observers Ask to Stay in Georgia as Russia Digs In

The EU should keep some 250 observers in Georgia's war-torn areas far beyond the autumn as Russia is blocking other international missions, the head of the EU observation team warned today. He said Russia's decision to recognize the occupied territories, and its refusal to extend the mandate of either the OSCE or the UN mission, means the EU mission must stay longer. He also said Russia had repeatedly accused Georgia of breaching the ceasefire and abusing ethnic minorities—accusations for which the observation mission found no evidence.

[DEUTSCHE PRESSE AGENTUR: EU Observers Ask to Stay in Georgia](#)

NATO Reaffirms Support for Georgia's Military Integration, Eventual Membership

NATO reaffirmed its "strong support" for Georgia's military integration and future accession into the Alliance at last week's foreign ministerial summit. "We look forward to a discussion regarding the development of Georgia's Annual National Program (ANP), the ongoing process of reforms in Georgia, a continuation of our dialogue on the regional security situation, and ways to further enhance the NATO-Georgian relationship," said NATO chief Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. A visit this week to Tbilisi by General Mattis—NATO's Supreme Allied Transformation Command and commander of the US Joint Forces Command—focused on developing Georgia's ANP, which details cooperation with the Alliance.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Clinton: NATO should continue to open door to Georgia, Ukraine](#)

[CIVIL GEORGIA: NATO/Georgian Commission held in Brussels](#)

National Security Advisor Builds Ties in Washington With the Obama Administration

President Saakashvili's national security advisor, Eka Tkeshelashvili, is on a 10-day visit to Washington and New York City to meet with senior Obama administration officials, as well as with US media and think tanks. The new administration appears to recognize that a strong, independent, and democratic Georgia is vital to US strategic interests, since it creates security, energy, and political options in a crucial region. Tkeshelashvili also has been underscoring Georgia's intense focus on strengthening the country's democratic institutions as the best means of defense against future Russia aggression.

[AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: Georgia urges US warning to Russia](#)

President Says Economic Diversification Protects Georgia from Deeper Crisis

President Saakashvili said that Georgia's intensive efforts in recent years to diversify its economy and to create new export markets had helped soften the blow of the global economic crisis. Where once Russia was responsible for the majority of Georgian trade, it now accounts for just 2 percent of exports. By contrast, countries that relied too heavily on the Russian market are now on the verge of economic collapse. "We are in a region where economies are experiencing difficulties; but Georgia will sustain, Georgia will survive even in light of these difficulties," he said.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Saakashvili says economy only priority now](#)

Russian Helicopters Violate Georgian Airspace in Latest Transgression

Russian helicopters violated Georgian airspace last week in late-night reconnaissance flights over police posts. "Russia's Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters flew from Russian-occupied Georgian territory, in particular from the Gali district's village of Pichori," the interior ministry said. "The helicopters flew over and photographed the Georgian interior ministry posts in the villages of Ganmukhuri and Khurcha." Russian authorities denied any involvement in reconnaissance flights.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: MIA reports of Russian overflights on Georgian police post](#)



The State Ballet of Georgia, under the direction of Artistic Director Nina Ananiashvili, toured Erevan last week within the framework of "Georgian Season" in Armenia. They performed George Balanchine's "Serenade," two modern ballets (Tray McIntyre's "Second Before Ground" and Alexei Ratmansky's "Dreams about Japan"), as well as dances set to Georgian folk music.

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

REUTERS: Georgia Appeals to West over Russian Bases

Georgia's defense minister appealed to the West to halt a continuing Russian military buildup in two breakaway Georgian regions. "The security environment is a concern. This represents a danger not only for Georgia but for the entire region," said Defense Minister Sikharulidze. Both the EU and the US have said any new Russian bases in the breakaway regions would violate the Sarkozy ceasefire accord.

uk.reuters.com

EURASIANET: Tbilisi Tries to Get a Feel for the Obama Administration

Georgia's National Security Advisor, Eka Tkeshelashvili, embarked on a 10-day trip to the US to bolster ties with the new administration. "The US and Georgia are strategic partners and that's a relationship that stands for a long time, and it doesn't depend on personal preferences or choices of administrations, but on the vital interest of both states," she said.

www.eurasianet.org

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE: Disrepair in South Ossetia dims hopes after war

Six months after Russia invaded Georgia and occupied South Ossetia, its main city is still a mass of fresh scars. Reconstruction is moving slowly and has been delayed by price gouging, shoddy workmanship by unscrupulous contractors, and corrupt Russian-backed local leadership. With little aid and accountability, South Ossetians ask their Russian-back supporters, "What has actually changed as a result of our independence?"

www.iht.com

RFE/RL: Abkhaz Incident Opens Up New Vista in Conflict

Irakli Bigvava, a young Georgian forced to flee his village in Abkhazia, is at the center of a new dimension of conflict simmering between Georgia and its occupied territories. Abkhazia's Russian-backed authorities are making military service in the region mandatory—regardless of whether a conscript like Bigvava has Georgian ethnicity. Western officials say attempts to forcibly conscript Georgians in S. Ossetia and Abkhazia could constitute an "intolerable provocation" for the Georgian government and create an explosive situation.

www.rferl.org

NEWSWEEK: Pulled From All Sides

Russia is crumbling amid the economic crisis, but, given that others in E. Europe are worse off, Moscow sees a geopolitical upside. The Kremlin is pushing to create "a new European architecture," in which Moscow would maintain hegemony over its near abroad. The EU is pushing back. After Russia invaded Georgia in August, Brussels created the Eastern Partnership Program, designed to counter Russian expansionism.

www.newsweek.com

DAILY TELEGRAPH: A Beautiful Start to Lent in Tbilisi

Georgians convened in Tbilisi's old town to sing, praise, and pay homage to revered Patriarch Ilia II, marking a beautiful start to Orthodox Lent. Writes Sarah Marcus: "Whilst I am wary of the immense power and influence the Orthodox church has here, I also think that for many if not most Georgians, the church and the Patriarch himself have provided spiritual and emotional sustenance and constancy during a long period of tremendous upheaval."

telegraph.co.uk

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR: Thawing out 'Cold War II'

Is it possible to be partners when one side conducts internal and foreign policy through diktat and arm twisting, while the other values democratic persuasion? The Obama team rightly says that issues such as sovereignty and freedom to choose alliances (read: Georgia and Ukraine) are not up for debate. The US must be realistic in its diplomatic endeavors with the "managed democracy."

www.csmonitor.com

THINK TANKS & NGOS

JAMESTOWN FOUNDATION: The Impact of the Russia-Georgia War on the South Caucasus Transportation Corridor

Russia's invasion of Georgia revealed new strategic realities in the Black Sea region that have a tremendous impact on regional energy security. New opportunities to secure Caspian energy through the South Caucasus Transportation Corridor are emerging. The US, Europe, NATO and Turkey must implement broader security guarantees for the region.

www.jamestown.org

CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS INSTITUTE: The Prospects for the US-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership

Russia's invasion of Georgia was an attack on the East-West corridor, a region of vital US interest in connecting Caspian energy to the Black Sea. The US-Georgia Strategic Charter provides the diplomatic foundation to regain energy security in the region. The challenge for the Obama administration will be to make the Charter more than just diplomatic banter.

www.cacianalyst.org

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 Mission to NATO: <http://embassy.mfa.gov.ge>

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

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

Local Government: Official website of Georgia's capital, Tbilisi: http://www.tbilisi.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=1

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

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

President Saakashvili's official website:

<http://www.president.gov.ge/?l=E&m=0&sm=0>