

# GEORGIA UPDATE

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[www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge](http://www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge)

## TOP STORIES

- **Government Offers New Dialogue to Opposition on Democracy, Economy, National Security**
- **President, International Community Urge Calm Ahead of April 9 Demonstrations**
- **EU, OSCE Condemn Explosions Near S. Ossetia That Kill One Policeman, Injure Six Others**
- **As NATO Summit Begins, President Obama Signals Support for Expansion of Alliance**
- **Georgia FDI Reaches \$1.3 billion in 2008, Remaining Strong Despite War, Global Crisis**



Gen. James Cartwright, the second-highest ranking US military officer, met with President Saakashvili and Defense Minister Sikharulidze on Monday. He also traveled to Gori to visit Georgia's first infantry brigade and the first artillery brigade. The two countries hailed their deeper military and political cooperation in the context of the recently signed US Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership. On Tuesday, the US naval frigate "[Klaking](#)" docked in Batumi for a three-day port call and joint training with the Georgian coast guard.

## INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

**AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE:** US to help Georgia rebuild military

**THE NEW YORK TIMES:** In Georgia, new video discrediting opposition

**MOSCOW TIMES:** A global game of "broken telephone"

**INSTITUTE FOR WAR & PEACE REPORTING:** Georgia prepares CIS exit

**EURASIANET:** Russia offers Belarus \$500 million for Abkhazia recognition

**RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY:** Russian language "pressed" on Georgian teachers in Abkhazia

**EU OBSERVER:** South Ossetia—fragile frontline

## QUOTES OF THE WEEK

**"The United States will not recognize a Russian sphere of influence in Europe, and it will remain our view that sovereign states have the right to make their own decisions and choose their own alliances."**

—Philip H. Gordon, U.S. assistant secretary of state-designate for European and Eurasian affairs (March 26)

**"We are ready to cooperate and talk with the opposition on constitutional reform, election code reform, judicial reform, and the creation of more democratic media,"**

—Statement by the ruling National Movement Party as it offered a new dialogue with the opposition (March 31)

## UPCOMING MILESTONES

**Apr. 1-5:** Estonian business delegation visits Georgia

**Apr. 2-4:** Parliament Speaker Bakradze visits Finland

**Apr. 6-8:** FM Vashadze Visits Egypt

**Apr. 9:** 20th anniversary of Soviet crackdown on Georgians seeking independence

**Apr. 27:** 10th anniversary of Georgia's Council of Europe membership

**May 4:** Parliament Speaker Bakradze visits Sweden

**TOP STORIES****Government Offers New Dialogue to Opposition on Democracy, Economy, National Security**

Building on a series of ambitious efforts to expand the opposition's say in Georgia's governance, the ruling National Movement party on Tuesday extended an invitation to all political parties to join a new dialogue on democracy, the economy, and national security. "We are ready to cooperate and talk with the opposition on constitutional reform, election code reform, judicial reform, and the creation of more democratic media," the UNM said in a statement. "Of course, we have no illusion that we will manage to agree on all the issues; but we are sure that through cooperation instead of confrontation, through dialogue instead of division, through joint construction instead of destruction, we will be able to properly meet our responsibilities to the Georgian people."

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Ruling Party Offers Opposition Talks on Three Issues](#)

**President, International Community Urge Calm Ahead of April 9 Demonstrations**

President Saakashvili and Western diplomats pressed for peace a week ahead of planned opposition demonstrations on April 9. "This is no time for radicalism; this is a time for dialogue and unity," Saakashvili said. Meanwhile the international community echoed his call against political and civil violence. "The right to protest peacefully must be respected; however, violence is the enemy of democracy," said US assistant secretary of state Matthew Bryza. Last week, 10 individuals were arrested for seeking to purchase illegal arms, after being caught on videotape planning for provocations during the April 9 demonstrations.

[REUTERS: Georgia's Saakashvili warns rivals against unrest](#)  
[AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: US envoy urges calm as Georgia tension rises](#)

**EU, OSCE Condemn Explosions Near S. Ossetia That Kill One Policeman, Injure Six Others**

The EU and the OSCE have condemned two attacks Sunday near the administrative border with S. Ossetia that left one Georgian policeman dead and six others injured. The EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) confirmed the interior ministry's account of the episode, in which trip wires led to serial explosions. Said EUMM chief Haber: "The attackers did not discriminate between potential victims, but any car could have been hit. It is an abominable act that the second explosion obviously targeted the people coming to help the victims of the first one."

[CIVIL GEORGIA: EU Monitors Condemn Attack](#)

**As NATO Summit Begins President Obama Signals Support for Expansion**

US President Obama said he supports NATO enlargement for aspiring new members ahead of this week's Alliance summit. "My administration is seeking a reset of the relationship with

Russia, but in a way that's consistent with NATO membership and consistent with the need to send a clear signal throughout Europe that we are going to continue to abide by the central belief that countries who seek and aspire to join NATO are able to join NATO," President Obama said. Georgia has been diligently pursuing military reform to prepare for future NATO accession, to which the Alliance committed last April.

[DEUTSCHE PRESSE AGENTUR: Obama backs NATO expansion, wants to improve US-Russia ties](#)

**Georgia FDI Reaches \$1.3 Billion in 2008, Remaining Strong Despite War, Global Crisis**

Georgia's FDI reached \$1.3 billion last year, helping the economy to grow by 2.1 percent—evidence of the country's economic resilience in the aftermath of war and amidst a global crisis. "If we consider the global financial and economic crisis, as well as the problems in the region, the 2.1 percent growth becomes a positive index," PM Gilauri said.

[REUTERS: Georgia FDI down 36 pct in 2008 to \\$1.3 bln](#)



A rare and stunning exhibition of 40 Picasso masterpieces will come to Georgia from May 30 to September 6, and be shown in three cities—Tbilisi, Batumi, and Signaghi. The collection comes from the Zervos museum in France. The exhibition is expected to generate tremendous interest both in Georgia and internationally. Picasso's works will be exhibited first at the Signaghi Museum from May 30 to June 23, followed by the Tbilisi Arts Museum from June 28 till August 2, and at the Batumi Arts Museum from August 8 to September 6.

[www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge](http://www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge)

## INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

### AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: US to help Georgia rebuild military-top general

The US will “work hard” to help Georgia retrain its armed forces and obtain new military hardware after the ex-Soviet republic’s war with Russia last year, a top US general said Monday.

“The US remains committed ... to providing training and other assistance to the Georgian military in support of their reform efforts,” the vice chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff, General James Cartwright, said at a press conference in Tbilisi with President Saakashvili. US military planners are working with Georgia to revamp its military and redesign its military strategy following its defeat during last year’s brief war with Russia over S. Ossetia.

[www.afp.fr](http://www.afp.fr)

### THE NEW YORK TIMES: In Georgia, new video discrediting the opposition

Georgian authorities on Wednesday released surveillance video in which a political activist associated with a prominent opposition leader, Nino Burjanadze, says Ms. Burjanadze is prepared to use violence to force President Saakashvili from office. Ms. Burjanadze denied knowing the man and said the government was trying to discredit her ahead of anti-government protests on April 9. But the film, the third such exposé to be released in three days, hit the Georgian airwaves immediately, casting a shadow over the opposition in some quarters.

[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

### MOSCOW TIMES: A global game of “broken telephone”

In a case of brash Russian propaganda, Moscow tried to mislead the international community on who started the August war by “leaking” a demonstrably forged document. The fake was purportedly an order from President Saakashvili on August 7 to the Georgian military to “restore constitutional order” in S. Ossetia. Even more distressingly the leak was picked up and “legitimized” by Germany’s *Der Spiegel*. Writes Yulia Latynina: “This is a classic example Russia’s secret service at its best. First, it tosses out a canard, then the foreign media picks it up, quotes its loose translation, and distorts the message.”

[www.themoscowtimes.com](http://www.themoscowtimes.com)

### INSTITUTE FOR WAR & PEACE REPORTING: Georgia prepares for CIS exit

Georgia is preparing to withdraw from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), an outdated ex-Soviet club.

“Currently, all agreements Georgia signed within the CIS framework are being inventoried,” MP Shota Malashkhia says. The Georgian government voted unanimously to withdrawal from the CIS last August after Russia invaded Georgia and recognized the “independence” of the occupied territories of Abkhazia and S. Ossetia.

[www.iwpr.net](http://www.iwpr.net)

### EURASIANET: Russia offers Belarus \$500 million for Abkhazia recognition

The Kremlin has offered Minsk \$500 million on the condition that it recognizes the independence of Georgia’s occupied territories of Abkhazia and S. Ossetia. Belarus President Lukashenko recently expressed support for the de facto Abkhaz authorities. “After gaining independence, there is more work to do,” he said. “Belarus would be glad to help solve more problems that exist in the region.” The EU has warned Minsk against recognition amid acute Kremlin pressure.

[www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org)

### RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY: Russian language “pressed” on Georgian teachers in Abkhazia

The Russian-backed de facto authorities in Abkhazia have mandated the use of Russian-language books for students throughout the occupied territory. “Teachers are indeed being put under pressure,” confirmed a teacher in Georgia’s Gali district, home to over 40,000 ethnic Georgians. Parents have protested the ban on Georgian-language instruction, arguing that it is discriminatory (meanwhile, 40-plus Armenian schools are allowed to operate).

[www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org)

### EU OBSERVER: South Ossetia—fragile frontline

Peace is incredibly fragile on the administrative borders between Georgia and the Russian-occupied territory of S. Ossetia, says Nicu Popescu of the European Council on Foreign Relations. The relative calm rests almost exclusively on the lack of any (current) interest for renewed hostilities from either Russia or Georgia. Withdrawing the EU monitoring mission from Georgia would be folly, as a resurgent Russian invasion is not improbable.

<http://blogs.euobserver.com>

### THINK TANKS & NGOS

#### ICRC: Western/Central Georgia & S. Ossetia-helping the most vulnerable

In the aftermath of Russia’s invasion of Georgia, the International Committee of the Red Cross says the humanitarian situation for the majority of the affected populations has improved, though chronic problems remain. “The overall humanitarian situation in the region has stabilized. We are now able to focus on the longer-term needs of the most vulnerable” the ICRC regional chief says.

[www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)

### 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 NGO focusing on domestic, 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./](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](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>