

GEORGIA UPDATE

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TOP STORIES

- **Government Calls for Dialogue on Eve of April 9 Demonstration, Underscores Opposition Right to Protest**
- **NATO Renews Support for Georgia's Membership, as President Obama's Criticizes Russia's Invasion**
- **President Rules Out Russia's "Military Adventure" after Obama-Medvedev Meeting**
- **Russian-backed Forces Oust Orthodox Christian Monks from Kodori Gorge**
- **Egyptian Electronics Firm to Invest \$1.2 Billion in Georgia, Employ 15,000 Georgians**



The 28 members of the NATO alliance last week reaffirmed their intention to admit Georgia as a member. "At Bucharest we agreed that Ukraine and Georgia will become members of NATO and we reaffirm all elements of that decision," NATO said in its declaration after its 60th anniversary summit in Strasbourg and Kiehl. "We are maximising our advice, assistance and support for their reform efforts in the framework of the NATO-Ukraine Commission and NATO-Georgia Commission, which play a central role in supervising the process set in hand at the Bucharest Summit." NATO also urged Russia to pull its troops out of the occupied Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and fulfill pledges it made in an EU-brokered truce last year. Meanwhile, US President Obama (above, with NATO chief Jaap de Hoop Scheffer) criticized Russia for its invasion and failure to abide by the Sarkozy ceasefire agreement.

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

NEW YORK TIMES: Russia keeps some troops in Georgia, defying deal

WALL STREET JOURNAL: The only way to prevent genocide

DAILY TELEGRAPH: Georgia v. Russia on the cultural front

INTERFAX: Georgia joins White Stream gas pipeline project

BLOOMBERG: Georgia won't float lari, 28-year-old central bank chief says

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QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"I was a critic of the Russian invasion of Georgia. I continue to believe that despite extraordinary efforts of President Sarkozy to broker ceasefire, we have not seen a stabilization of that situation."

—US President Barack Obama

"Membership in NATO is dependent on meeting a set of standards, and we have teed up the process for both [Georgia and Ukraine]. They are very interested in continuing to pursue membership, and the NATO process is moving on."

—US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

UPCOMING MILESTONES

Apr. 7: NATO PA Delegation meets with Backradze

Apr. 6-8: FM Vashadze visits Egypt

Apr. 8-10: EU Special Representative Peter Semneby visits Georgia

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

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

May 11-13: Parliament Speaker Bakradze visits Sweden

May 15: UN Secretary General to submit report on UN mission in Georgia

TOP STORIES

Government Calls for Dialogue on Eve of April 9 Demonstration, Underscores Opposition Right to Protest

On the eve of an opposition demonstration planned for April 9, the governing party renewed its call for dialogue with the opposition. "There is no alternative to listening to each other, searching for compromises and saying no to this old practice that 'we do not care about your opinion'," the President said Tuesday. "Dialogue is necessary even with the smallest and the most radical group, no matter how radical and often unacceptable their demands might be. Georgia and its multi-ethnic population have no other alternative." He said the protests were a natural part of the democratic process and that he had instructed the police to exercise the greatest possible restraint in protecting civil liberties and public order. The opposition has said its aim is to force the President's resignation. However, recent polls show this position is at odds with the Georgian public; an IRI survey released last month found that only 28 percent of Georgians agreed with opposition leaders that Saakashvili should resign. Analysts said the opposition appeared to be divided on what strategy it should follow during the demonstrations.

[EURASIANET: Georgia-Opposition Struggles to Settle on Single Protest Strategy](#)

[REUTERS: Stakes High in Georgia](#)

NATO Restates Support for Georgia's Territorial Integrity, as President Obama's Criticizes Russia's Invasion

NATO leaders pledged to "maximize advice, assistance, and support" for Georgia, helping the country to advance military reform and Euro-Atlantic integration aspirations. "We remain committed to fostering political dialogue with, as well as providing assistance to, Georgia," read a joint statement at last week's Strasburg/Kehl summit. Meanwhile, US President Obama denounced Russia's invasion: "I was a critic of the Russian invasion of Georgia. I continue to believe that despite extraordinary efforts of President Sarkozy to broker ceasefire, we have not seen a stabilization of that situation."

[CIVIL GEORGIA: NATO 'maximizing advice, support' for Georgia's reforms](#)

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Obama on Disagreement with Moscow over Georgia](#)

President Rules Out Russia's "Military Adventure" after Obama-Medvedev Meeting

President Saakashvili said that he was "very pleased" that US and Russian Presidents "disagreed" over Georgia's occupation during last week's meeting. "After the London meeting between the US and Russian Presidents, I practically rule out any further Russian military adventures against Georgia," he said. Saakashvili reaffirmed Georgia's need for strong allies and his commitment to democratic development and military reform.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Saakashvili rules out Russia's 'military adventure' after Obama-Medvedev meeting](#)

Russian-backed Forces Oust Orthodox Christian Monks from Kodori Gorge

Russian-backed Abkhaz separatists expelled ethnic-Georgian monks and nuns residing in the country's breakaway region. After refusing Abkhaz citizenship, the Orthodox Christian religious leaders were ousted from the Saint Giorgi church in the Kodori Gorge and interrogated by separatist forces. "The Abkhaz Church as such does not exist, it has no legitimacy," said Father Michael Botkoveli, of the Georgian Orthodox Patriarchate after hearing of the ethnically motivated oppression.

[RUSTAVI: Separatists oust monks from Kodori Gorge](#)

Egyptian Electronics Firm to Invest \$1.2 Billion in Georgia, Employ 15,000 Georgians

Egyptian electronic firm Fresh Start will invest an "unprecedented" \$1.28 billion in Georgia, said Economy Minister Zhvania. The Egyptian home appliance manufacturer plans to establish a free industrial zone in Kutaisi and to build several textile, ceramics, and home appliances factories. The investment project will create nearly 15,000 new jobs in Georgia, helping to boost the country's economic growth amidst a global financial crisis.

[RUSTAVI: Egyptian company to make unprecedented investments in Georgia](#)

[AFP: Egyptian firm's investment 'unprecedented' in Georgia](#)



For Christians, Easter is the holiest of days. Christians believe according to Scripture, that Jesus came back to life, or was raised from the dead, three days after his death on the cross. As part of the Easter season, the death of Jesus Christ by crucifixion, is commemorated on Good Friday, always the Friday just before Easter. Through his death, burial and resurrection, Jesus paid the penalty for sin, thus purchasing for all who believe in him, eternal life in Christ Jesus. In 325 by the decision of Nicea, at the first world meeting of the clergy, the date of Easter Sunday happens according to the Spring equinox. Easter is celebrated in the following equinox week. Catholicos Patriarch of all Georgia, Ilia II, will give Easter Mass, late night at St. Trinity church.

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

NEW YORK TIMES: Russia keeps some troops in Georgia, defying deal

Nearly eight months after invading Georgia, Russian troops continue to hold Georgian territory that the Kremlin agreed to vacate as part of a formal ceasefire, leaving a basic condition of that agreement unfulfilled. The Russian military, working with militias in S. Ossetia and Abkhazia, has stationed forces in two large swaths of territory that were under Georgian control before the war, including 51 villages. Observers and diplomats say Russia has also used attack helicopters and stationed tanks in areas where none existed before the war.

www.nytimes.com

WALL STREET JOURNAL: The only way to prevent genocide

Diplomatic rhetoric such as “the responsibility to protect” (R2P) is important, but insufficient to prevent genocide. Vladimir Putin’s Russia cleverly cited the R2P as a reason for its invasion of Georgia in 2008. It fell to the Swedish foreign ministry to inform the Russians that the “R2P” here was Georgia’s, since it was on Georgian territory that the supposed offense against Russian ethnics was taking place—and that in case Georgia failed, the responsibility would fall to the international community. If we are serious, we must have the political will and military backing to effectively prevent genocide and mass atrocities.

<http://online.wsj.com>

DAILY TELEGRAPH Georgia v. Russia on the cultural front

A Russian state-controlled TV station, Channel One, broadcast a biased, racy film to Russians on last summer’s invasion of Georgia, waging a new cultural war with the former Soviet state. It is depressing to see such a pro-Russian, anti-Georgian account being fed to a Russian audience. There is enough mutual mistrust already between the two countries; this is only going to make those feelings more entrenched.

<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk>

BLOOMBERG: Georgia Won’t Float Lari, 28-Year-Old Central Bank Chief Says

The new 28-year-old chief of the Georgian central bank said the global financial crisis won’t have a “destructive” impact on Georgia’s banking system, in part because the financial sector accounts for about 40 percent of GDP. “This is low even by eastern European standards,” Giorgi Kadagidze said. The IMF last month approved the second \$187 million installment of a loan aimed at helping the Georgian economy during the global financial crisis and bolstering the country’s stability after last year’s invasion by Russia.

www.bloomberg.com

INTERFAX: Georgia joins White Stream pipeline project

Georgian Energy Minister Khetaguri signed a memorandum of cooperation in implementing the White Stream gas pipeline project on Friday. Construction of the pipeline—linking Georgia, Ukraine, and the EU—will start in 2012, and its first phase should be completed in 2015. The project is aimed at ensuring Europe’s energy security through the diversification of routes and sources of energy, Khetaguri said. The EU will finance the preparatory work.

www.kyivpost.com

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE: The disorder of conferring with Russia

The big problems (and great contradictions) in a vast attempt to engage with Russia were encapsulated in congressional testimony given in Washington last week. American generals basically said Russia’s post-Cold War innocuousness was over and that its potential threat to NATO and its friends in Europe and Eurasia was now such that America should abandon its plans to draw down its forces in Europe. General John Craddock, NATO’s top commander and chief of U.S. forces in Europe, said the West’s basic post-Cold War notion about Russia had been “turned upside down” by its invasion of Georgia last August.

www.nytimes.com

THINK TANKS & NGOS

HERITAGE FOUNDATION: Svante E. Cornell on "The Caucasus and the Obama Administration's Foreign Policy"

Russia’s invasion of Georgia fulfilled a broader purpose: to ensure the restoration of an exclusive Russian sphere of influence, specifically in the South Caucasus. To address the resulting serious consequences for U.S. interests, the Obama Administration should continue to support Georgia’s economic recovery, military reform, territorial integrity, and NATO aspirations. This is no longer only about Georgia or the South Caucasus, but about American credibility and the limits to Russian aggressive foreign policies. The essay appears in a Heritage Foundation Special Report: "Russia and Eurasia-A Realistic Policy Agenda for the Obama Administration"

<http://www.silkroadstudies.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 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/>

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>