

# GEORGIA UPDATE

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

## TOP STORIES

- **US Underscores Support for Georgia's Territorial Integrity, Praises Government for Handling of Demonstrations**
- **Defense Minister Builds Ties With Obama Administration, Warns of Russian Buildup**
- **Series of Attacks on Georgian Rail Lines Raise Fresh Concerns**
- **Mock "cells" removed from Rustaveli Avenue, as Tbilisi Returns to Normal**
- **Economic Stimulus Plan to Emphasize Infrastructure; IMF Approves New Funds**



Visiting US Assistant Secretary of State Philip Gordon, reiterated that Washington "stands by Georgia, we stand by its territorial integrity and we stand by its democracy." In meeting with President Saakashvili and National Security Advisor Tkeshelashvili, he said President Obama would raise Georgia during his meetings in Moscow on July 6-8. "I think that the President will bring up Georgia in his discussions with Russia," Gordon said. "Georgia is an important issue for the US, so I think the President will raise it and we will make clear that we do stand by Georgia's territorial integrity and expect that Russia to implement all of its agreements on Georgia."

## INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

**WASHINGTON POST:** Editorial-Another Summer in Georgia

**TRANSITIONS ONLINE:** Georgia—Neither White Knight nor Blackguard

**RFE/RL:** Georgia's Alasania Seeks A Middle Ground for Opposition

**THE MOSCOW TIMES:** St. Pete Banker Linked to Georgian Mutiny

**IWPR:** Georgian Opposition Protest Masks Inherent Weakness

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**TIME:** South Ossetia's No-Hope Elections

## QUOTES OF THE WEEK

**"Georgia is an important issue for the US.... We will make clear that we do stand by Georgia's territorial integrity and expect that Russia to implement all of its agreements on Georgia."**

— US Assistant Secretary of State Philip Gordon (June 10, 2009)

## UPCOMING MILESTONES

**Jun. 11- 12:** FM Vashadze visits Romania

**Jun. 15:** UN Security Council Resolution due on UNOMIG

**Jun.17-18:** FM Vashadze visits Latvia

**Jun. 22:** FM Vashadze visits Portugal

**Jun.23-25:** FM Vashadze visits Washington

**Jun. 24-25:** President Saakashvili visits Armenia

**Jun. 24-27:** Interior Minister Merabashvili visits Washington

**Jun. 30:** OSCE's monitoring mandate in Georgia expires

**Jul. 1:** Sweden takes over EU Presidency

**Jul. 1:** Next round of Geneva peace talks

**Jul.6-8:** President Obama visits Russia

## TOP STORIES

**US Underscores Support for Georgia's Territorial Integrity, Praises Handling of Demonstrations**

Philip Gordon, the newly confirmed US assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, spent two days in Georgia this week to confer with the Government, opposition leaders, and civil society. He made clear that the Obama administration is unwavering in its support of the country. "We are here to emphasize our interest and our support to Georgia," he said. "We stand by Georgia, we stand by its territorial integrity, democracy, relations with the United States." Gordon also highlighted the Government's peaceful, professional handling of the recent opposition demonstrations, saying: "We appreciated the way the government is dealing with the protests." Gordon's visit comes shortly after his confirmation by the US Senate, and less than a month before President's Obama's crucial visit to Moscow from July 6-8. He also is visiting Armenia and Azerbaijan this week.

[AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: US envoy praises Georgia's handling of opposition protests](#)

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Senior U.S. Diplomat Reaffirms Georgia Support](#)

**Defense Minister Builds Ties With Obama Administration, Warns of Russian Buildup**

Defense Minister Sikharulidze last week met his counterpart in the Obama Administration to focus on advancing the US-Georgia Strategic Partnership Charter and deepening bilateral cooperation in the area of defense. He also asked Secretary Gates and other leaders in Washington to pay heed to Russia's alarming military buildup in the occupied territories, the North Caucasus, and the Black Sea. Sikharulidze said Russia has vastly improved communication and supply lines on occupied Georgian territory since Moscow invaded last August. Added Georgia's ambassador to the US, Batu Kutelia: "If they made the decision, it might require five hours for them to reach the capital."

[ASSOCIATED PRESS: Georgian officials in US warn of Russian buildup](#)

**"Terrorists" blow up Georgia rail line, official says**

Three bombs exploded this week western Georgia, injuring a train engineer at a train station—the latest in a series of blasts to hit the district that neighbors the Russian-occupied Georgian territory of Abkhazia. The engineer was slightly injured in the first explosion, which hit a train car just before midnight Tuesday at the station in Zugdidi, said Interior Ministry spokesman Shota Utiashvili. It was followed 30 minutes later by another that slightly damaged tracks nearby. A third bomb minutes later damaged a truck outside of Zugdidi, Utiashvili said. He added investigators believe all three explosions were connected and were designed to increase tensions in Zugdidi, which is close to the administrative border with separatist-held Abkhazia.

[ASSOCIATED PRESS: 3 bombs explode in Georgia](#)

**Mock "cells" removed from Rustaveli Avenue, as Tbilisi Returns to Normal**

Georgia's opposition removed more improvised cells from Tbilisi's Rustaveli Avenue, allowing Tbilisi to return mostly to normal. The mock polythene-covered "cells" obstructed traffic in the capital's main transit corridor since the opposition launched large-scale rallies in April. Additional cells were removed last week from Freedom Square and from the perimeter of Georgia's public TV station.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: 'Cells' removed from part of Rustaveli Ave.](#)  
[RUSTAVI: Opposition frees central avenue of cells](#)

**Economic Stimulus Plan to Emphasize Infrastructure; IMF Approves New Funds**

PM Gilauri is preparing a new economic stimulus plan, focusing heavily on new infrastructure projects including road construction in Tbilisi. Heeding the recommendations of the Georgian National Bank, the government is working out details of the plan's budgetary obligations. Meanwhile, the IMF forecast Georgian economic growth of as much as 1 percent this year and agreed to lend the country \$750 million in September.

[RUSTAVI: Government prepares new economic stimulus plan](#)

[BLOOMBERG: Georgia's 2009 economy growth depends on donated cash, IMF says](#)



Georgian ballerina's Nina Ananiashvili performances in "Gisele" this week in New York City elicited gasps and raves. Writes the New York Times reviewer: "Looking just about the same as when I first saw her dance the ballet with the Bolshoi in 1986 but now halfway through her farewell season with Ballet Theater, Ms. Ananiashvili showed both the best virtues and the qualities that have made her singularly beloved worldwide. How easily she takes to the air; how beautifully energy flows down the ravishingly long limbs of her physique (and, apparently, beyond)... Ballet textbooks say that arabesque penchée—in which the dancer leans forward and downward while extending one leg up and behind—is the ultimate test of line. Ms. Ananiashvili took one of these on Friday and made it slowly stretch (I heard someone in the audience gasp) so that you thought about this standard position as if for the first time."

[NEW YORK TIMES: Dance Review-Gisele](#)

**INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA****WASHINGTON POST: Editorial-Another Summer in Georgia**

Russia is once again mounting provocations on the ground and in diplomatic forums; once again it has scheduled a large military training exercise for July in the region bordering Georgia. Could Vladimir Putin be contemplating another military operation to finish off the Georgian government. A peaceful summer in Georgia will also require firmness from Mr. Obama: He must leave no doubt that another Russian advance in Georgia would be devastating for U.S.-Russian relations.

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

**TRANSITIONS ONLINE: Neither White Knight nor****Blackguard**

Throughout Georgia's protests, opposition leaders have made countless accusations against President Saakashvili, referring to him as a tyrant. The reality, however, is very different. Amidst a cadre of constant crises, the Georgian government was able to implement fundamental reforms vital for the development of true and sustainable democracy in Georgia.

[www.tol.cz](http://www.tol.cz)

**RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY: Georgia's Alasania Seeks A Middle Ground for Opposition**

Opposition leader Alasania has distanced himself from the coalition of radical opposition parties, seeking middle ground with the government. Alasania, who has objected to roadblocks and other radical protest tactics by the opposition, is forming his own political party and calling for immediate dialogue with the government. "It was our belief that, in parallel to the protest rallies, it was necessary to launch talks with the government, so that we could learn what it was that the government could agree to or concede at this stage," he told RFE/RL.

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

**WEEKLY STANDARD: The Russian Sphere of Coercion**

The Economic Forum offered a fascinating glimpse into Russia's continuing struggle to define its post-Communist identity and its prickly relationship with its former satellites. The Russia-Georgia conflict was frequently and defensively brought up. Romanian President Basescu complained about Russia's assertion of a "sphere of influence"; what was needed instead, he said, was to build "spheres of trust"—a phrase mistakenly repeated by the Russian camp as a "sphere of coercion."

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

**INSTITUTE FOR WAR & PEACE REPORTING: Georgian Opposition Protest Masks Inherent Weakness**

Although the May 26 demonstration looked like a show of strength for Georgia's opposition, it masked major differences over strategy that may destroy the opposition's challenge to Saakashvili's rule. A clear division has arisen between Alasania and Burjanadze, the more radical ex-speaker of parliament. Protesters are already frustrated with the strategy discussions.

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

**THE MOSCOW TIMES: St. Petersburg Banker Linked to Georgian Mutiny**

Last month's failed mutiny at a tank base near Tbilisi was financed by Alexander Ebralidze, a wealthy St. Petersburg banker with ties to Russian PM Putin. Says senior Georgian lawmaker Targamadze: "If anyone thinks that in today's Russia it is possible to be an oligarch from St. Petersburg and not be controlled by the most famous St. Petersburg native of all, Putin, he is wrong." Targamadze accused Ebralidz—who has publicly announced ambitions to run for Georgia's presidency—of financing the mutiny to "at minimum cause riots and at maximum to prepare the base for the entry of Russian occupation forces into Tbilisi."

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

**TIME: South Ossetia's No-Hope Elections**

The recently re-elected Eduard Kokoity presides over the stability of squalor in Georgia's Russian-occupied territory of S. Ossetia. Kokoity's government received \$324 million from Moscow to reverse the damage wrought by the five-day war. But residents have seen little evidence of any such spending. There are hints that Moscow's support for Kokoity is running out too.

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

**THINK TANKS/NGOS****CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS ANALYST: Russian Pressure Affects UN Stance on Georgian Conflicts**

The renewed failure of the West to take a determined stance against Russia with regard to Georgia's occupied territories does little to improve the already fragile security situation in Georgia's conflict zones. Moscow has already largely escaped international accountability for its full-blown invasion of Georgia last summer; effectively limited international EU observers from monitoring the conflict territory; and expelled OSCE's observers from the region. Now, it is pressuring the UN Secretary General to weaken Georgia's legal hold on its occupied territories, despite their being nearly universally acknowledged as part of Georgia.

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

**WEBSITES @ GEORGIA**

**Civil Georgia:** Independent English-language news site: [www.civil.ge](http://www.civil.ge)

**Georgia Update:** Official government information service: [www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge](http://www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge)

**Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies:** Leading NGO focusing on domestic, foreign policy: [www.gfsis.org](http://www.gfsis.org)

**Georgian Mission to NATO:** [embassy.mfa.gov.ge](http://embassy.mfa.gov.ge)

**Georgian Parliament:** [www.parliament.ge](http://www.parliament.ge)

**Government of Georgia:** [www.government.gov.ge/eng](http://www.government.gov.ge/eng)

**Tbilisi:** Official website of Georgia's capital: [www.tbilisi.gov.ge](http://www.tbilisi.gov.ge)

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs:** [www.mfa.gov.ge](http://www.mfa.gov.ge)

**National Investment Agency:** [www.investgeorgia.org](http://www.investgeorgia.org)

**President Saakashvili's official website:** [www.president.gov.ge](http://www.president.gov.ge)