

GEORGIA UPDATE

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TOP STORIES

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- OSCE Makes Last Georgia Patrol, Issues Warning
- President Says Georgia Stands Ready to Reopen Border Crossing with Russia
- Legendary Ballerina Nina Ananiashvili Bids Farewell to American Ballet Theater



Large-scale Russian military exercises started this week along Georgia's northern borders, intensifying tensions in the region. Dubbed, "Caucasus 2009," the war games also include soldiers from Georgia's Russian-occupied territories of S. Ossetia and Abkhazia. The games are an ominous echo of last summer, when Russia undertook similar exercises shortly before invading Georgia.

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

FINANCIAL TIMES: Zbigniew Brzezinski on "Russia must re-focus with post-imperial eyes"

TIMES OF LONDON: Mikheil Saakashvili says Russia started war to gain energy supplies

WASHINGTON POST: Russia's Maneuvers in Caucasus Highlight Volatility of Region

MOSCOW TIMES: Troublesome Signs of Pre-August War Events

BLOOMBERG: Russia Faces Western Criticism on Georgia

PRA: Armenia, Georgia tied by centuries-old friendship

RFE/RL: U.S., Georgia Report Progress in Strategic Partnership

AFP: Despite risks, Arab investors flocking to Georgia

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"We are not, in any way in the name of the 'reset' abandoning our very close relationships with these two democracies, Ukraine and Georgia."

—Michael McFaul, US National Security Council

"Russia must understand that the use of force or promotion of ethnic conflicts to destabilise Ukraine or Georgia would poison American-Russian relations."

—Zbigniew Brzezinski, former US National Security Advisor

"Russia's actions have created a hugely hazardous atmosphere. Moscow needs to review its policy and work for a reasonable compromise allowing the UN and OSCE monitors to continue their important work."

—Lawrence Sheets, International Crisis Group

UPCOMING MILESTONES

Jul 2-3: FM Vashadze visits Latvia

Jul 6: FM Vashadze visits Lithuania

Jul.6-8: President Obama visits Russia

July 20-24: US Vice President Biden visits Georgia, Ukraine

Aug. 12: 1st Anniversary of Sarkozy Ceasefire Agreement

Sep. 17: Next round of Geneva talks

TOP STORIES

US Vice President Biden to Visit Georgia Later This Month

US VP Biden will visit Tbilisi July 22-24, in a move that will reaffirm American political and economic support for Georgia. Coming shortly after President Obama's visit to Moscow, the visit is expected to underscore that America's "reset" policy with Russia will not detract from its backing of Europe's new democracies. "We are not, in any way in the name of the 'reset' abandoning our very close relationships with these two democracies, Ukraine and Georgia," said Michael McFaul of the US National Security Council said in a briefing that touched on VP Biden's trip. Added a statement from the VP's office: "The vice president will demonstrate US support for continued democratic and economic reforms and discuss issues of mutual interest in both countries." Biden also will travel to Ukraine.

[AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: US VP Biden to visit Georgia, Ukraine in July](#)

[DEUTSCHE PRESSE AGENTUR: US VP Biden heads to Ukraine, Georgia](#)

Interior Minister, in Washington, Puts Spotlight on Georgia's Democratic Progress

Interior Minister Merabishvili completed a four-day trip to Washington last week, where he placed the spotlight on Georgia's democratic progress. In meetings with senior US officials and members of Congress, Merabishvili elaborated on Georgia's latest wave of democratic reforms, including the work being done on the constitution, the electoral code, and the judiciary. He also discussed the operational aspects of the US-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Interior Minister visits US](#)

International Crisis Group, Citing Russian Failure to Abide by Ceasefire, Warns of Possible "Full-Blown Hostilities"

The International Crisis Group warned this week of the risk of new "full-blown hostilities" in the absence of an "effective security regime in and around the conflict zones." According to a new ICG report: "The security situation on the ground remains tense. Russia has not complied with the main points of the truce, and the sides have not engaged in meaningful negotiations to stabilize the situation. These factors create a potentially explosive situation in which even small incidents could spark a new conflict."

[CIVIL GEORGIA: ICG report says situation 'still insecure and dangerous'](#)

[INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP REPORT](#)

OSCE Makes Last Georgia Patrol, Issues Warning

The OSCE's now-expired mission in Georgia has warned of a new conflict over the breakaway region of S. Ossetia, after its monitors were forced to leave the country earlier this week. "The situation is unstable. The security for people in these villages is very vital now, and there the EU Monitoring Mission is now in a crucial role," said OSCE Ambassador and mission head Hakala. The international security organization was forced to end its presence in Georgia in June, as a result of Russia's veto of a mandate extension.

[REUTERS: OSCE makes last Georgia patrol, issues warning](#)

President Says Georgia Stands Ready to Reopen Border Crossing with Russia

President Saakashvili, during a visit to Yerevan, said Tbilisi is prepared to reopen a Russian border crossing that is important to Armenia's economy. Saakashvili said that Georgia was willing "to immediately reopen" the Zemo Larsi border crossing point, as soon as Russia reopened it as well. Meanwhile, Armenian President Sargsyan lauded relations between the two countries: "Few peoples in the world can take pride in deep, lasting, and friendly relations such as those between the Armenian and Georgian people. It would be redundant to speak about the importance of our countries for each other for security, policy, economy, culture or any other matter."

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Saakashvili: Tbilisi ready for reopening border crossing with Russia](#)

Legendary Ballerina Nina Ananiashvili Bids Farewell to American Ballet Theater

Legendary Georgian prima ballerina Nina Ananiashvili bid farewell to the American Ballet Theater, after 16 years with the company, performing in front of a sold-out crowd in New York. Her Odette, the mournful White Swan, was lyrical and vulnerable, with those famously fluttering arms at their full power. The audience ate it up, bringing Ananiashvili out for repeated bows, and giving her a rare mid-performance standing ovation. Wrote one critic: "Ballet fans tend to choose favorites among dancers, debating their attributes ad nauseam. But during Nina Ananiashvili's 16 years with American Ballet Theatre, there was little debate. She was at the top of nearly everyone's list."

[AP: Exit of a swan-Ballerina bids adieu to New York](#)



Bringing the bible to the iPod generation in Georgia took one big step forward in Georgia last week. Under the patronage of Patriarch Georgia Ilia II, an audio version of the bible, narrated by the famous Georgian actor Gogi Kharabadze, was released. Sano Studio and the actor worked on the project for three years to produce an epic collection of 51 CDs. The music was written by Nodar Mamisashvili. The Patriarch said the project had been the dream of many Georgians for many years, and that this dream had now come true.

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

FINANCIAL TIMES: Zbigniew Brzezinski on “Russia must re-focus with post-imperial eyes”

In the summit meetings, Mr Putin and Mr Medvedev will be looking for signs that the new US administration disowns the charters on partnership with Ukraine and Georgia signed by President Bush. Even an unintentional signal to that effect would be seen as a green light for more muscular Russian actions against these two countries. Russia must understand that the use of force or promotion of ethnic conflicts to destabilise Ukraine or Georgia would poison American-Russian relations.

www.ft.com

TIMES OF LONDON: Mikheil Saakashvili says Russia started war to gain energy supplies

Russia's invasion of Georgia was a brazen grab for control of the pipelines running through the country. Taking over the whole of Georgia was vital to Mr Putin's plan. Says Saakashvili: “He saw it in terms of geopolitical competition with the West.” Mr Saakashvili dismissed critics who accuse him of starting the war with Russia. “We didn't attack Russia. We didn't go there and bomb Moscow,” Mr Saakashvili told The Times.

www.timesonline.co.uk

WASHINGTON POST: Russia's maneuvers in Caucasus highlight volatility of region

The Kremlin's military training campaign in the North Caucasus, Kavkaz-2009, highlights the region's extreme volatility. Pavel Felgengauer, a Moscow-based military analyst, warned that Russia may be preparing for another war, “Such exercises are traditionally used as a cover under which to prepare troops for war.”

www.washingtonpost.com

MOSCOW TIMES: Troublesome signs of pre-August war events

Just over a year ago, there were disturbing predictions of impending war in Georgia. Now we are witnessing some of the same fearful murmurs and unsettling premonitions. Signs include: a series of bomb blasts near Abkhazia; large-scale Russian military exercises not far from the Georgian border; allegations of Moscow-funded political machinations intended to destabilize its wounded neighbor; and the Kremlin dispatching border guards to police the disputed perimeters of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

www.themoscowtimes.com

BLOOMBERG: Russia faces Western criticism on Georgia

Russia kicked international observers out of two Russian-occupied territories in Georgia and today refused to let EU monitors in. “I just asked for one millimeter of progress in Georgia in giving EU observers access to the other side of the line,” said French FM Kouchner. “It has not been accepted.”

www.bloomberg.com

PUBLIC RADIO OF ARMENIA: Armenia, Georgia tied by centuries-old friendship

Georgian President Saakashvili and Armenian President Sargsyan met in Yerevan last week, reaffirming long-standing bilateral ties and discussing future relations. “We exchanged views on pressing regional and international issues and paid special attention to the deepening of economic cooperation,” said President Sargsyan.

www.armradio.am

RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY: U.S., Georgia report progress in first talks of strategic partnership

US and Georgian delegates reported progress during their first strategic partnership talks. “We reaffirmed our strong support for Georgia's independence and territorial integrity,” said US Deputy Secretary of State Steinberg. “We will continue to support Georgia's military professionalization, and to help Georgia as it contributes to coalition operations and undertakes the reforms required to achieve NATO membership.”

www.rferl.org

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: Despite risks, Arab investors flocking to Georgia

Despite risks, Arab investors are flocking to Georgia for its profitable business climate in transparent political system. “Georgia's location is very important. . .we found a lot of advantages,” said Mohammad Refat, VP of Arab textile company Fresh. Fresh's multi-billion dollar project in Georgia's Kutaisi industrial zone follows on a series of enormous investments by companies from the UAE and the greater Middle East.

news.yahoo.com

THINK TANKS/NGOs**CSIS: Georgia—Why we should be watching**

The West should watch what happens in Georgia this summer, as the country is of key geopolitical importance. Russia's veto of UNOMIG's presence in Georgia must be seen for what it is: an attempt to legitimize its recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but more ominously, an attempt to eject all foreign presence—and therefore foreign eyes—from Georgia's conflict regions. A resumption of Russia's war in Georgia, which would be a disaster for the United States and Europe, is not out of the question.

www.csis.org

INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP: Georgia/Russia—Still insecure and dangerous

Russian diplomatic pressure is dismantling the critical international conflict resolution machinery in Georgia, leaving the region facing a potentially explosive situation. A new report by the International Crisis Group (ICG) says Moscow's veto on extending both the OSCE's and the UN's monitoring missions in the region, while massively remilitarizing the conflict zones, has intensified regional instability. “Russia's actions have created a hugely hazardous atmosphere. Moscow needs to review its policy and work for a reasonable compromise allowing the UN and OSCE monitors to continue their important work,” says one ICG regional director.

www.crisisgroup.org