

GEORGIA UPDATE

WEEKLY EDITION • 9 July 2009

A Publication of the Government of Georgia

www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge

TOP STORIES

- U.S. President Obama, in Moscow, Reaffirms Unwavering American Support for Georgia
- European Court of Human Rights to Hear Georgian Case Against Russia
- EU Inquiry Into Russian Invasion of Georgia to Release Report in September
- Constitutional Commission Holds First Session; Venice Commission Visits Georgia to Advance Electoral Law
- Georgia Unveils Economic Stimulus Package
- 6th Round of Geneva Peace Talks: "Difficult but Constructive"
- Italian Chocolate-Maker Ferrero Invests in Georgian Hazelnut Plantations



President Barack made Georgia a headline issue during his two-day visit to Moscow earlier this week. He underscored American support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and for its right to join NATO. "State sovereignty must be a cornerstone of international order," he said. "Any system that cedes those rights will lead to anarchy. That is why this principle must apply to all nations—including Georgia and Ukraine."

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

LE FIGARO: Is Europe in for a hot summer?

THE TELEGRAPH: Another summer war in Georgia?

FOREIGN POLICY: Russia tightens its grip on Georgia's breakaway regions

WALL STREET JOURNAL: Is Russia determined to repeat its history?

THE INDEPENDENT: Mikheil Saakashvili Interview—Georgia on his mind, Moscow on his back

NYT: Russia's neighbors resist wooing and bullying

AFP: Russia begins war games near Georgia

THE ECONOMIST: Welcome to Moscow

AP: Russian soldier defects to Georgia, 2nd this year

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"I reiterated my firm belief that Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected. If even as we work through our disagreements on Georgia's course, we do agree that no one has interest in renewed military conflict."

"In 2009, a great power does not show strength by dominating or demonizing other countries. The days when empires could treat sovereign states as pieces on a chessboard are over."

"There is a 19th century view that we are destined to vie for spheres of influence, and that great powers must forge competing blocs to balance one another. These assumptions are wrong."

— US President Barack Obama in Moscow

UPCOMING MILESTONES

July 13: PM Gilauri visits Turkmenistan

July 14: PM Gilauri visits Israel

July 20-24: US VP Biden visits Georgia, Ukraine

Aug. 12: 1st Anniversary of Sarkozy Ceasefire Agreement

TOP STORIES

U.S. President Obama, in Moscow, Reaffirms Unwavering American Support for Georgia

US President Barack Obama unequivocally confirmed American support for Georgia's independence and territorial integrity during his first presidential visit to Moscow as. "I reiterated my firm belief that Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected," Obama said during a press conference with his Russian counterpart. "If even as we work through our disagreements on Georgia's course, we do agree that no one has interest in renewed military conflict." President Obama also asserted American backing for the right of Georgia and Ukraine to join NATO. Meanwhile, US Vice President Biden will underscore the Obama administration's strong ties with Tbilisi by visiting Georgia later this month.

THE TELEGRAPH: Obama tells Russia to respect borders of Georgia and Ukraine

THE GUARDIAN: Obama urges Russia not to interfere in neighbouring states

European Court of Human Rights to Hear Georgian Case Against Russia

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) agreed to hear Georgia's case against Russia over Moscow's mass deportation of ethnic Georgians in Russia. An official statement by the Strasbourg-based court reads that it "has declared admissible the application lodged in the case of Georgia v. Russia." According to Georgia's 70-page lawsuit, over 2,000 ethnic Georgians have been deported from Russia since late 2006 amid tense Russo-Georgian relations.

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: European Rights Court Allows Georgian Complaint Vs Russia

CIVIL GEORGIA: ECHR to hear Georgia vs. Russia case

EU Inquiry Into Russian Invasion of Georgia to Release Report in September

EU diplomats in Brussels agreed to postpone the official release of the EU's inquiry into Russia's invasion following a request from the inquiry's head. Originally scheduled for release in late July, the report will be issued in September. Swiss diplomat Heidi Tagliavini, in charge of the probe, said she needs more time due to fresh material coming to light at a late stage, EU sources explained.

EU OBSERVER: EU to delay Georgia war report

Constitutional Commission Holds First Session; Venice Commission Visits Georgia to Advance Electoral Law

Georgia's Constitutional Commission held its first session this week, discussing constitutional and electoral reform with opposition representatives. Meanwhile, members of the Venice Commission visited Georgia to help amend the country's electoral code. "This is a very important meeting. We gave our recommendations and discussed an example of more balanced composition of the election commission based on political consent," said a Venice Commission representative.

RUSTAVI: Representatives of Venice Commission visit Tbilisi

RUSTAVI: Alliance for Georgia cooperates with constitutional commission

Georgia Unveils Economic Stimulus Package

Georgia unveiled a stimulus package to boost the economy, hoping to include an additional \$200 million dollars in loans from international financial institutions. The five-point plan is aimed at "kick-starting the economy, fostering banking sector activity and supporting the construction sector," the government said. The stimulus package will also "allow the government to invest more money in infrastructure projects and create new jobs."

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: Georgia Unveils Economic Stimulus Package

CIVIL GEORGIA: Government offers new plan to boost economy

6th Round of Geneva Talks: "Difficult but Constructive"

Georgian and Abkhaz representatives will meet next week to discuss incident prevention mechanisms, a diplomatic advance made last week at the sixth round of peace talks in Geneva. Georgian representatives called the discussions "difficult, but constructive" in aiming to reduce tension in the volatile region. The UN/EU/OSCE-mediated talks will reconvene for a seventh round in September.

CIVIL GEORGIA: Sixth round of talks 'difficult' but 'constructive'

Italian Chocolate-Maker Ferrero Invests in Georgian Hazelnut Plantations

World renowned Italian chocolate-maker Ferrero Trading Lux invested €6.5 million in Georgia last week, purchasing 3,000-hectares of hazelnut plantations. "Nut trees have been planted across 1,200 hectares and they will cover the total area within the next year," said the director of Georgian nut producer Agro Georgia. The Italian firm is expected to invest an additional €8 million next year in the venture.

GBW: Ferrero increases investments in Georgia nut business



Renowned Georgian-British songstress Katie Melua — raised between Tbilisi, Batumi, and Belfast — performs next week in Georgia. Europe's biggest selling female solo artist — her two albums, (the second of which contained the hit "Nine Million Bicycles") have sold nearly 9 million copies to date — will appear at the Tbilisi Opera on July 14 and in Batumi on the following day. Proceeds from the performances will help buy houses for homeless Georgians.

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

LE FIGARO: Is Europe in for a hot summer?

Will the EU and Obama succeed in containing Moscow's atavistic ambitions or will they purchase a fallacious and precarious tranquility by sacrificing the independence of Georgia? The clouds are gathering: big military maneuvers, media crusades, a Russian veto in the Security Council in order to interrupt the missions of neutral observers. The prize at stake is not human rights and freedom, it is the independence of Europe which is at stake, its energy independence.

www.lefigaro.fr

THE TELEGRAPH: Another summer war in Georgia?

At the moment many Georgians seem to fear the worst—the prospect of a summer war—while hoping for the best. The young and the educated have the perspective and the knowledge to see that talk of a new war is at present speculative, but many others, especially older people, are all but convinced that Russia will attack. It was reported that Russia will invade Georgia again and intends to divide its southern neighbor into seven or nine warring regions, split along ethnic lines.

blogs.telegraph.co.uk

FOREIGN POLICY: Finishing the job—Russia tightens its grip on Georgia's breakaway regions.

As the summer heat spreads through the Caucasus, it is once again accompanied by fears of war. The main question today is whether Russia's leaders think they finished the job during the 2008 amputation, or whether they still hope to force out President Saakashvili's democratically elected government. The bottom line: Moscow, by expanding its military presence in the two occupied territories and hindering international observation, has made the annexation of the territories a fait accompli that Georgia and its Western powers are now essentially powerless to reverse.

www.foreignpolicy.com

WALL STREET JOURNAL: Is Russia determined to repeat its history?

As European democracies celebrate the 20th anniversary of their liberation from communism and the Soviets, Moscow seeks to restore its dominance over former satellites. Russian legislators proposed a bill to allow the criminal prosecution of individuals who question whether the Soviets really "liberated" Eastern Europe toward the end of the war or whether countries such as Georgia welcomed their annexation by the Czarist Empire. As Russia glosses over its dark past and flexes its muscles, the fear is that those who rewrite history may also be determined to repeat it.

online.wsj.com

THE INDEPENDENT: Mikheil Saakashvili Interview—Georgia on his mind, Moscow on his back

As President Obama travels to Moscow, the worry in Tbilisi will be that Georgia will be sold out to the Russians for bigger geopolitical issues. "If Obama says something that looks like some kind of permission, then they will go for it. That's why every word counts," President Saakashvili says. Still, Saakashvili confirms that his government has received positive signals from the new administration. "I've spoken to Obama several times, and we have a very good working relationship with this administration at every level. They are fresh and focused."

www.independent.co.uk

NEW YORK TIMES: Russia's neighbors resist wooing & bullying

Russia's ability to attract its neighbors to its side and keep them there is unimpressive. The Kremlin's bullying methods, as seen in the war in Georgia, seems to have hurt Moscow in that regard. Rather than being cowed into obedience, as most Western observers feared, the former republics seem to have grown even more protective of their sovereignty.

www.nytimes.com

AFP: Russia begins war games near Georgia

Last week, Russia started its biggest military exercises in the Caucasus since its war with neighboring Georgia last year, mobilizing thousands of troops in a clear warning to its foes. Russian troops now based in the Georgian occupied territories of Abkhazia and S. Ossetia will also participate in the exercises. "The fact that we carried out these military exercises last year turned out to be absolutely right," says Russia's ambassador to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin. "If we had not...Russia's reaction would have been much slower."

www.nasdaq.com

THE ECONOMIST: Welcome to Moscow

Medvedev is promoting a European security structure that would in effect give Russia a veto over any expansion of NATO, enhancing Moscow's sphere of influence in Georgia and Ukraine. The US needs to be firm over Russia's ambitions to dominate the countries along its western and southern borders. During his inaugural presidential visit to the Kremlin, Obama must make clear that he will not cut them adrift and will not tolerate attempts to destabilize their governments.

www.economist.com

AP: Russian soldier defects to Georgia, 2nd this year

A Russian soldier has deserted his unit and is seeking political asylum in Georgia, the second such incident this year. Georgia's refugee ministry says the soldier, Dmitry Artemyev, crossed from Russian-occupied S. Ossetia into Georgia proper last week. Said President Saakashvili: "Georgia is located on the border of freedom and totalitarianism. People in search of freedom are tearing through to us."

www.newser.com

THINK TANKS/NGOS

EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS: The limits of enlargement-lite—European and Russian power in the troubled neighborhood

The EU's eastern neighbors are in the middle of the worst economic and political disarray, having a large impact on both European and Russian influence in the region. There is an emerging contest between the EU and Russia over the political rules that are to govern the neighborhood. The EU's "enlargement-lite" strategy offers six Eastern Partnership states the prospect of eventual political and economic alignment; however, internal divisions have limited the potential effectiveness of a secure neighborhood policy.

www.reliefweb.int

INSTITUTE FOR WAR & PEACE REPORTING: UN withdrawal leaves border Georgians fearful

UN observers are pulling out of Georgia, leaving many residents afraid for their security and prompting predictions of an escalation of tension. "With the observers withdrawing, provocations in the region should not be ruled out," said Georgia's refugee commissioner Malashkhia. The only way to prevent this tension in the conflict zone from continuing to grow is to deploy new international observers, a measure Russia has vetoed.

www.reliefweb.int