

GEORGIA UPDATE

WEEKLY EDITION • 30 July 2009

A Publication of the Government of Georgia

www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge

TOP STORIES

- European Union Extends Monitoring Mission in Georgia, Considers Broadening Participation to US, Other Countries
- VP Biden Tells IDP Children: "You should understand, America cares about you, cares about you personally"
- Opposition Parties Formally End Protests; Traffic Resumes on Rustaveli
- Parliament Proposes Moving Legislative Body to Kutaisi, Reinstating Mandates for Opposition MPs
- Belarus Urges Citizens to Follow Georgian Rules in Traveling to Occupied Territories
- IMF Increases Support for Georgia to Help Rebuilding Effort



In unscripted remarks during a visit with children forced from their homes by last summer's invasion of Georgia by Russia, Vice President Biden made clear where he felt responsibility for the war rests. Russia "used a pretext to invade your country" in the hope of wrecking its economy and persuading its people that "democracy doesn't work," he said.

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

- WASHINGTON POST:** Biden offers Georgia solidarity
- WASHINGTON POST:** The VP pays important visits to Ukraine & Georgia
- WALL STREET JOURNAL:** Rifts stymie Saakashvili opponents
- AP:** Medvedev says US need not abandon Ukraine or Georgia
- THE GUARDIAN:** Georgia is ready for dialogue
- WALL STREET JOURNAL:** Biden says weakened Russia will bend to US
- NEW YORK TIMES:** Biden Pledges Support for Georgia
- AFP:** US may rearm Georgia, despite Moscow's opposition
- NEW YORK TIMES:** Central & Eastern European countries issue rare warning for U.S. on Russian policy

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"What we can do is make clear to the world, and to the Russians particularly, that we stand with you, and that if they fail to meet their commitments, that it is a problem for them."

—VP Biden, referring to the ceasefire agreement that Russia is violating

"You should understand, America cares about you, cares about you personally. We care about all of you, and we're not going to leave you. It's a hard journey, but we're not going away."

—VP Biden speaking to IDP children

"A lot of you think maybe Russia did what they did, and they paid no price. They paid a pretty big price already diplomatically. The countries that surround Russia, even those that have been very, very loyal to Russia, are now saying very harsh things."

—VP Biden

"It would be impossible in other countries to have such a critical ombudsman toward the government. But, in Georgia, it's possible."

—Ombudsman Subari in the Washington Post

UPCOMING MILESTONES

- Aug. 12:** 1st Anniversary of Sarkozy-Medvedev ceasefire agreement
- Aug. 25:** FM Vashadze visits Estonia
- Sep. 8-9:** Caucasus Environmental Infrastructure, Green Energy Investment Summit in Tbilisi
- Sep. 10-11:** Latvian FM Riekstins visits Georgia
- Sep. 9 -11:** Vice Premier Baramidze visits Poland
- Sep. 17:** 7th round of Geneva talks
- Sep.** Vice Premier Baramidze visits US
- Oct. 27:** FM Vashadze visits Brussels
- Oct.** Danish FM Møller visits Georgia
- Oct.** Vice Premier Baramidze visits UK
- Oct.:** Next meeting of US-Georgia Commission

TOP STORIES

EU Extends Monitoring Mission in Georgia, Considers Broadening Participation to US, Other Countries

The EU extended its ceasefire monitoring mission in Georgia for another year on Monday. The Union called for the withdrawal of all Russian military forces to their pre-war positions and demanded that EU observers have “unhindered access” to Georgia’s Russian-occupied territories. The EU is considering inviting non-members, including the US, to join the mission. “After the summer there are other issues, including the issue of third country participating, that will be on the table,” said Swedish FM Bildt, whose country holds the EU Presidency this semester.

[AFP: EU extends Georgia ceasefire monitor mission](#)

[CIVIL GEORGIA: EU to discuss third country involvement in Georgia monitoring in Autumn](#)

VP Biden Tells IDP Children: "You should understand, America cares about you, cares about you personally"

In unscripted remarks shortly before he left Georgia last Thursday, VP Biden reassured Georgia’s internally displaced youth of American concern for their well-being and future. “You should understand, America cares about you, cares about you personally,” he said, following a historic speech to the Georgian Parliament. “What we can do is make clear to the world, and to the Russians particularly, that we stand with you, and that if they fail to meet their commitments, that it is a problem for them.”

[THE WHITE HOUSE: Remarks by the Vice President Joseph Biden to the Georgian Parliament](#)

Opposition Parties Formally End Protests; Traffic Resumes on Rustaveli

Georgia’s opposition, struggling to muster support for a campaign to oust President Saakashvili, has formally ended over three months of political protests. Police opened up Tbilisi’s central avenue, Rustaveli, to traffic last week with no resistance from protesters. Analysts had doubted whether the disparate opposition alliance had the strength to oust the President. The opposition called off the rallies because they had nothing new to say said Lawrence Sheets, senior analyst and Caucasus director with International Crisis Group. “There isn’t the level of raw anger among the political neutral or passive sectors of the population that there was when Shevardnadze was ousted.”

[REUTERS: No Opposition as Police Remove Roadblock](#)

[REUTERS: Georgian Protests End for Summer](#)

Parliament Proposes Moving Legislative Body to Kutaisi, Renewing Mandates for Opposition MPs

The Georgian Parliament has drafted two new constitutional amendments, proposing the partial relocation of the Parliament and offering to renew mandates for opposition MPs. The proposed legislation would enable parliamentary working groups to be held in Georgia’s second largest city, Kutaisi, starting in 2012, while also allowing 10 opposition politicians to reclaim parliamentary seats they renounced last June.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Two constitutional amendments offered](#)

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Bill to allow 10 politicians to regain MP seats](#)

Belarus Urges Citizens to Follow Georgian Rules in Traveling to Occupied Territories

Belarus warned its citizens last week to enter Abkhazia and S. Ossetia only via Georgia. Defying pressure from Russia, Minsk has indicated it will not recognize the independence of the two occupied territories. President Saakashvili praised the decision. “The situation has completely changed in the post-Soviet space,” he said. “I want to welcome a very brave decision of Belarus about prohibiting its citizens to violate Georgian laws.”

[EURASIANET: Belarus Says Only Travel Via Georgia to Abkhazia, S. Ossetia](#)

IMF Increases Support for Georgia to Help Rebuilding Effort

The International Monetary Fund on Monday announced it has boosted the value of a loan to Georgia by \$420 million, bringing the total aid pledged to the country to nearly \$1.17 billion. The IMF approved its original \$750 million loan for Georgia in September after Russia’s invasion. The increase aims to “support the economic policies put in place by the Georgian authorities to overcome the pressures created by the international financial and economic crisis, which came on top of the economic and financial disruption caused by the conflict with Russia,” said an IMF official.

[DOW JONES: IMF Boosts Georgia Loan \\$420M To Approximately \\$1.17B](#)



“Open Iron Curtain,” a photo exhibition inspired by the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, debuted in Tbilisi’s Hippodrome last week and will run until August 8—the first anniversary of Russia’s invasion of Georgia. The exhibit, organized by Open Up Georgia together with the German Embassy and the Berlin Wall Museum, features the work of Georgian and foreign photographers active in Georgia. Their images illuminate the visible and invisible aspects of the iron curtain that alienates and segregates people from one another, preventing Georgian society from becoming a part of a larger, more free world. Berlin Wall prints (courtesy of The Berlin Wall Museum) also are on show. Open Up is a charitable alliance of volunteers who promote free expression and propagate the ideas of an open society in Georgia.

www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

WASHINGTON POST: Biden offers Georgia solidarity

VP Biden sharply criticized Russia's invasion, pledging US support for Georgia's. Russia "used a pretext to invade your country" in the hope of wrecking its economy and persuading its people that "democracy doesn't work," said VP Biden during last week's visit to Georgia. "What we can do is make clear to the world, and to the Russians particularly, that we stand with you and that if they fail to meet their commitments, that it is a problem for them," Biden said, referring to the ceasefire agreement that Russia is violating.

www.washingtonpost.com

WASHINGTON POST: Editorial—The vice president pays important visits to Ukraine & Georgia

VP Biden performed a valuable service this week by traveling to the capitals of Ukraine and Georgia. The administration must now determine how best to follow Mr. Biden's words with actions. Placing US personnel on the ground in Georgia as part of the EU's monitoring mission would eliminate any doubt about America's stance against Russian neo-imperialism—and make it less likely that Putin would again attempt to subdue a neighbor by force.

www.washingtonpost.com

WALL STREET JOURNAL: Rifts stymie Saakashvili opponents

Renewed protests by Georgia's opposition during Biden's visit to Tbilisi last week were stymied by internal squabbling and strategy differences. Three months of opposition protests have fizzled, and lobbying of Western governments has yielded little support. The opposition "thought that the government would start to collapse," observed President Saakashvili. "They were wrong."

online.wsj.com

ASSOCIATED PRESS: Medvedev says US need not abandon Ukraine or Georgia

"I don't think it is right for the relations with Russia to be reset—to use the American terminology—at the expense of some other countries," Medvedev said last week, referring to US ties to Ukraine and Georgia. "We need normal, working, friendly relations with the US," he added. "But this does not mean our relations must lead to the deterioration of our ties with others or of U.S. relations with Ukraine or Georgia."

www.google.com

THE GUARDIAN: Georgia is ready for dialogue

It is depressing but unsurprising that opposition leader Nino Burjanadze should use VP Biden's visit to Georgia to try to breathe life back into her own personal political ambitions. Her article is the usual mishmash of unfounded allegation and inaccuracy. She avoids any discussion about the concrete measures the Georgian government is taking to reform the country's political, judicial, and electoral systems and improve the life of its citizens.

www.guardian.co.uk

NEW YORK TIMES: Biden Pledges Support for Georgia, but Warns Against Militarism

VP Biden gave a rousing speech at Georgia's Parliament building last week, denouncing Russia's "19th-century notion of spheres of influence," and urging the world not to recognize the separatist territories of S. Ossetia and Abkhazia. He promised that the US would press Russia to comply with the French-brokered ceasefire agreement.

www.nytimes.com

WALL STREET JOURNAL: Biden says weakened Russia will bend to United States

VP Biden said domestic troubles are the most important factor driving Russia's new global outlook and renewed cooperation with the US. "I think we vastly underestimate the hand that we hold," he said after last week's visit to Ukraine and Georgia. Russia's economy is "withering," suggesting the trend will force the country to make accommodations to the West on a wide range of national-security issues.

online.wsj.com

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: US may rearm Georgia, despite Moscow's opposition

The US could rearm Georgia, even at the cost of angering Moscow, according to the US State Department. "Georgia is on a path that the US supports toward NATO membership," said a State Department spokesman when asked about possible military aid for Georgia. "A fundamental tenet of NATO membership is to have a military that meets NATO standards and would add to the capability of the alliance."

www.google.com

NEW YORK TIMES: Central & Eastern European countries issue rare warning for U.S. on Russian policy

In an open letter, 22 intellectuals and former leaders from the Central and Eastern Europe issued a rare warning for the US on Russian foreign policy. The letter is emblematic of a widening gap: On one side is a US government whose friends fear could trade off their East European interests as a hinge for deals on Iran and nuclear disarmament. And on the other, people from the old Soviet bloc who take as an ominous matter Russia's attempts to re-establish a zone of influence along its borders. The letter's frankness is twice rare: It comes from a region absolutely without objective interest or amusement in needling the US.

www.nytimes.com

THINK TANKS/NGOs

USAID: Vouchers Help Georgian Farmers Recover from Conflict

USAID's Georgia Agricultural Risk Reduction Program began as a three-month emergency plan to help farmers plant wheat in Shida Kartli, which borders territory now occupied by Russia. The US-funded effort has grown to a 15-month, \$19.5 million program reaching farmers in over 100 communities and helping displaced people in 18 settlements nationwide. "In many communities the signs of war are still visible," says a USAID staffer. "Returning these fields to their intended purpose—producing food and income for the Georgian people—gives us all a great deal of pride."

www.usaid.gov

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 non-governmental organization that focuses on Georgian domestic and foreign policy: <http://www.gfsis.org>

Georgian Mission to NATO: <http://nato.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>

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>