

GEORGIA UPDATE

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TOP STORIES

- Georgia Marks Anniversary of Russian Invasion With Moment of Silence, Human Chain, Memories of Lives Lost
- President Saakashvili's Anniversary Address: "We Want to Win the Peace"
- Russia Escalates Provocations in Occupied Territories, in Menacing Echo of 2008 Invasion; EU, US Condemn Actions
- New Report on War Illuminates Planning & Buildup to Russian Invasion
- Georgians Who Fled Russian Invasion: 28,000 New IDPs, With Roofs Over Their Heads, Yearn for Home
- New Ombudsman Nominated, As Governing Party Also Agrees to Opposition Demands for By-elections

!!! Our Summer Publication Schedule: Georgia Update Will Be on Holiday for the Issues of August 13 & 20 !!!



Bonfires blazed across Georgia, flags were lowered, and people stood in silence to mark the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Georgia and to remember the war dead: 412 Georgian citizens were killed, including 228 civilians, 170 military, and 14 policemen; 10 military servicemen and 14 policemen remain missing. On Rustaveli Avenue (above), a tank in front of Parliament was a stark reminder of the occupation, and a photographic exhibition recalled the fallen.

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

WASHINGTON POST & LE MONDE: Saakashvili on "Georgia on the Rebound"

FINANCIAL TIMES: Tbilisi looks like winning the peace

THE TELEGRAPH: Georgians wait in fear for Russians to return

REUTERS: New NATO chief says Russia must respect neighbors' sovereignty

ASSOCIATED PRESS: US says weapons for Georgia not ruled out

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: Fear lingers in Georgian city a year after war

CITY JOURNAL: André Glucksmann on "A Hot Summer in Europe"

RFE/RL: Russian troops try to shift South Ossetia border markers

CSM: Editorial-Georgia's best defense against Russia is democracy

REUTERS: IMF increases Georgia loan to over \$1.1 billion

AFP: Renny Harlin to direct film on Russia-Georgia conflict

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"Our present might still be difficult, but we are free to write our future, we are able to decide our destiny. Our future will not be written in a hostile, far away, frigid capital. Our future will be written by us in Tbilisi, in Kutaisi, in Batumi, in Rustavi, in Poti, in Aklakalaki, in Zugdidi, in Mestia and in Telavi. And most importantly it will be written here in this hero town of Gori. My fellow citizens, I call on you again tonight: let's write our future together, let's continue to build our country together."

"Twenty years ago, the attraction of a free and prosperous West brought down the Berlin Wall. We believe the example of a free and prosperous Georgia ultimately will restore our sovereignty and reverse the wrongs caused by Russia's invasion. With the support of our friends in the United States and Europe—support for which we are deeply grateful—Georgia will continue to rebound and set an example for the region."

—President Saakashvili

UPCOMING MILESTONES

Aug. 12: 1st Anniversary of Sarkozy-Medvedev ceasefire agreement

Aug. 25: FM Vashadze visits Estonia

Sep. 9 -11: Vice Premier Baramidze in 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

Georgia Marks Anniversary of Russian Invasion With Moment of Silence, Human Chain, Memories of Lives Lost

One year after Russia invaded Georgia, occupying over 20 percent of the country, Georgians marked the anniversary by remembering those killed and reaffirming the country's determination to remain independent and free. The commemorations began in Gori with a "bonfire of unity" at midnight, and continued today with ceremonies throughout the country—including human chains near the occupied territories. At three in the afternoon, all Georgians stood still for a nationwide moment of silence.

[AP: Georgia marks anniversary of war with Russia](#)

President Saakashvili's Anniversary Address: "We want to win the peace"

On the anniversary of the Russian invasion, President Saakashvili underscored Georgia's resilience and the country's determination to stay on a democratic path of integration with the West. "Our democratic institutions are growing. Foreign investors are returning. And the world recognizes that the kind of behavior Russia exhibited last August threatens not only Georgia but our entire region." In a speech tonight in Gori, he said: "We want to win the peace. We want to defeat the invaders, not by another war. Obviously not. We want to defeat them by peacefully strengthening our democratic institutions, by constantly developing our economy, by getting closer and closer to the European Union, by offering a perspective to every Georgian child. We want peace. Because we are winning the peace. Because only peace can allow us to reach our objectives."

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Georgia Marks August War Anniversary](#)

[THE GUARDIAN: Georgia is rebounding—and resolute](#)

Russia Escalates Provocations in Occupied Territories, in Menacing Echo of 2008 Invasion; EU, US Condemn Actions

A series of Russian provocations one year after its invasion of Georgia prompted preventative diplomacy by Washington. In a phone call to his Russian counterpart, according to the White House, "President Obama reiterated the importance of working through established crisis management mechanisms such as the Joint Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism and underscored the need for international monitors." In the past week, Russian forces tried to shift the administrative boundary with S. Ossetia and were rebuffed by EU monitors; Moscow also placed its troops on high alert, after making menacing statements about the prospect of invading Georgia again. US Vice President Biden, meanwhile, called President Saakashvili to reassure Georgia of Washington's attention to the situation in the region.

[AP: Georgia says Russia is trying to seize more land](#)

[AFP: Biden calls Georgian President over Russia tensions](#)

New Report on War Illuminates Russian Invasion

Georgia released an authoritative new report on last year's war Thursday which offers detailed evidence of a premeditated and "large-scale Russian invasion." The report underscores that Georgia acted in self-defense to protect civilians in its province of South Ossetia. "On August 7, 2008, Russian armed forces launched a massive, coordinated, and—given the scale of the enterprise—premeditated assault on Georgia," the report said. "The Georgian government concluded that it had been left with no choice but to order military action to counter what was rapidly becoming an invasion—with aims that went far beyond a dispute over two Georgian territories." The report said that according to intelligence gathered by Georgia, about 150 tanks and armored vehicles entered the Roki Tunnel leading to South Ossetia in the early hours of August 7.

[AFP: Large-scale Russian Invasion Started War](#)



Just after midnight this morning, a boy in Gori watches a memorial bonfire at the medieval citadel in the Georgian city that is near the administrative border with the Russian-occupied territory of South Ossetia. This evening, President Saakashvili addressed the nation from Gori. "My fellow citizens, we survived a full scale invasion, we survived as a free and proud nation," he said in a speech dedicated mostly to remembering fallen heroes of the invasion. "Our present might still be difficult, but we are free to write our future, we are able to decide our destiny."

Georgians Who Fled Russian Invasion: 28,000 New IDPs, With Roofs Over Their Heads, Yearn for Home

Although the Georgian government quickly provided shelter for nearly 28,000 Georgians who were ethnically cleansed by Russian-led forces during and after last August's invasion, Georgia's internally displaced persons (IDP) yearn for permanent homes. "They robbed and then burned every single house in our region," said a Georgian IDP of the S. Ossetian militia. One year later, the International Committee for the Red Cross said most Georgians are still too scared to return to their villages, fearing for their security. Says the IRC: "There is a question of security, a question of whether their houses still exist even."

[REUTERS: Displaced Georgians pine for homes](#)

New Ombudsman Nominated, As Governing Party Also Agrees to Opposition Demands for By-elections

Georgia's Parliament approved Giorgi Tugushi as the country's new ombudsman, while also agreeing to opposition demands to delay by-elections until a new electoral code is in place. Tugushi said he would focus on protection of human rights in detention centers; rights of internally displaced persons; minority rights; rights of children; rights of disabled; property rights. Tugushi, who previously worked on an EU-funded project aimed at strengthening the institutional capacity of the Public Defenders office, will serve a five-year term.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Incoming public defender speaks of priorities](#)

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Ruling Party Agrees to Reschedule MP By-Elections](#)



INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

WASHINGTON POST & LE MONDE: Mikheil Saakashvili on "Georgia on the Rebound"

A year after Russia's invasion of Georgia, the results are not what the Kremlin expected. Contrary to some expectations, Georgia has rebounded. Our democratic institutions are growing. Foreign investors are returning. And the world recognizes that the kind of behavior Russia exhibited last August threatens not only Georgia but our entire region. Twenty years ago, the attraction of a free and prosperous West brought down the Berlin Wall. We believe the example of a free and prosperous Georgia ultimately will restore our sovereignty and reverse the wrongs caused by Russia's invasion. With the support of our friends in the United States and Europe—support for which we are deeply grateful—Georgia will continue to rebound and set an example for the region.

www.washingtonpost.com

www.lemonde.fr

FINANCIAL TIMES: Tbilisi looks like winning the peace

Georgia may have seen its pride sorely dented, but the economy has held up much better. American and European aid has flooded in. Tbilisi appears to have lost the war, but it is winning the peace. The West must also draw lessons from Russia's invasion. What appeared to come as a surprise to Georgia's friends in the US and in the EU should have been glaringly obvious. Russia had been building up its military forces inside Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and over the border in the north Caucasus, for months. According to Andrei Illarionov, chief economic adviser to Mr Putin when he was president, the decisions that made war inevitable between Russia and Georgia were taken much earlier—between September 1999 and June 2003.

www.ft.com

THE TELEGRAPH: South Ossetia one year on—Georgians wait in fear for Russians to return

Some analysts in Moscow say Russia is now contemplating a new war to oust Saakashvili, whose determination to seek NATO membership has consistently infuriated the Kremlin. Remarkably, the Georgian leader has defied widespread predictions that failure in the war would cost him his job—despite four months of protests called by Georgia's fragmented opposition. Yet tensions remain high: The Kremlin has forced the withdrawal of two international observer missions and, in breach of its ceasefire commitments, has prevented the EU Monitoring Mission from operating in the occupied territories. Even more worryingly, the EUMM came under attack for the first time when an ambulance driver was killed in an assault in June.

www.telegraph.co.uk

REUTERS: Interview-New NATO chief says Russia must respect neighbors' sovereignty

New NATO Chief Rasmussen demanded that Russia respect the national sovereignty of former satellite states. NATO will pursue its drive for a strategic partnership with Russia, but Moscow must respect the sovereignty and integrity of its neighbors, Rasmussen said Monday. Amid Russian resistance to Georgia and Ukraine's bid for NATO membership, Rasmussen insisted that membership remains open to countries that meet NATO standards.

in.reuters.com

ASSOCIATED PRESS: US says weapons for Georgia not ruled out

Assistant Secretary of Defense Alexander Vershbow told lawmakers at a Senate hearing this week that US military aid to Georgia was focused on training and modernization of Georgia's military. But he added that "other forms of assistance can take place. Nothing is off the table." Assistant Secretary of State Philip Gordon said at the same hearing that there "is no arms embargo on Georgia."

www.ap.org

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: Fear lingers in Georgian city a year after war

A year after taking centre stage during Russia's five-day war in Georgia, the Georgian city of Gori is physically healing from the war, yet fear of conflict lingers. "Life in Gori is getting better, but we are filled with fear that Russia may attack us again," said one Gori resident. Memories of last year's bombing and occupation remain fresh with Russian troops stationed only a few km away in the Russian-occupied S. Ossetia region, many live in fear of renewed fighting.

www.afp.com

CITY JOURNAL: André Glucksmann on "A Hot Summer in Europe"

Can President Obama and the EU contain Moscow's ambitions or will they purchase a fallacious and precarious tranquility by sacrificing Georgia's independence? At stake is the very sovereignty of Europe: its energy independence. If Tbilisi falls, not only will Western diplomatic credibility be significantly hit, but there will be no way to reduce Europe's energy dependence on Gazprom and guarantee autonomous access to the gas and petroleum in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

www.city-journal.org

RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY: Russian troops try to shift South Ossetia border markers

Residents of the village of Kveshi, on the Georgian side of the border, told RFE/RL that Russian soldiers entered the area on August 2 and moved the markers delimiting the border some 500 meters further into Georgian territory. Taniel Elizbarashvili, a Kveshi resident from a mixed Georgian-Ossetian family, said the Russian soldiers were using Soviet-era maps. He said he contacted a representative of the EU's monitoring mission. "The Russian soldiers said, 'According to our maps, the posts should be here.' Then the EU mission people came and they had computer maps. And they said the Russians shouldn't be on this side of that ditch."

www.rferl.org

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR: Editorial-Georgia's best defense against Russia is democracy

On July 20, Saakashvili announced reforms of the media, elections, and the judiciary – just before a visit by US Vice President Joseph Biden. The Georgian leader pledged a more effective system of checks and balances between the executive branch and the legislature – constitutional changes that will have to be worked out with the opposition. Indeed, the Georgian president must now follow through.... As tough as the last year has been for Saakashvili, the work of democracy-building will be tougher. Pruning, weeding, fertilizing, and watering of democratic reform is patient work that must be done if Georgia's "Rose Revolution" is to blossom.

www.csmonitor.com

REUTERS: IMF increases Georgia loan to over \$1.1 billion

The International Monetary Fund on Thursday increased Georgia's loan program by \$423.5 million to over \$1.1 billion, saying the impact from the global financial crisis will likely last into 2010 despite signs the economy may have reached its trough. The loan program had been at \$748.3 million, which was approved in September 2008 to rebuild reserves and bolster investor confidence following Russia's invasion last August.

www.reuters.com

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: Renny Harlin to direct film on Russia-Georgia conflict

Last year's five-day war between Russia and Georgia is to be the subject of a new drama by Finnish-American action movie director Renny Harlin, it was reported Tuesday. Entertainment industry Daily Variety reported that Harlin, best known for action movies such as "Die Hard 2" and "Cliffhanger," was keen to make a serious movie based around the conflict. "I've waited a long time to find something with substance and reality," Harlin, 50, was quoted as saying by Variety. "When I got this script two weeks ago, it was exactly what I had been looking for, a great human story, with tragic, serious overtones."

www.afp.com