

# GEORGIA UPDATE

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

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To mark the first anniversary of Russia's invasion, Georgians gathered on the evening of August 8 in Gori (above) to listen to President Saakashvili. His speech focused on the many heroes of the war and on those who have helped rebuild the country—including Georgia's international friends. "We are not alone and we are right. Our cause is right. The principles we defend are right," he said, and added: "My fellow citizens, we survived a full scale invasion. We survived as a free and proud nation. Our present might be difficult, but we are free to write our future, we are able to decide our destiny."

## INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

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## QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"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 EU, 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."

"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. My fellow citizens: let's write our future together, let's continue to build our country together."

—President Saakashvili speaking in Gori on the first anniversary of Russia's invasion

## UPCOMING MILESTONES

- Aug. 25:** FM Vashadze visits Estonia
- Sep. 1:** US training starts for Afghanistan-bound Georgian forces
- Sep. 3:** Next meeting of the incident prevention and response mechanism
- Sep. 9 -11:** Vice Premier Baramidze visits Poland
- Sep. 12-17:** Vice Premier Baramidze visits US
- Sep. 17:** 7th round of Geneva talks
- Sep. 24:** President Saakashvili addresses UN General Assembly
- 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

**Cross-party Cooperation Grows as Opposition Meets With Interior, Foreign Ministers, Attends National Security Council**  
 Irakli Alasania, leader of Our Georgia-Free Democrats, and other opposition leaders met last week with the foreign and interior ministers, in a fresh sign of cross-party dialogue cooperation. The encounters followed the participation on August 6 of opposition leaders earlier in the month in a meeting of the National Security Council—an initiative President Saakashvili had promised in his landmark address on democratic reforms on July 20. “I think it was very fruitful meeting and we have all seen that it is more productive when we speak with each other without loudspeakers [a reference to protest rallies],” said President Saakashvili. Regular meetings of the National Security Council will be open to opposition parties, allowing for constant dialogue and political debate. Of the meeting with the interior ministry, MP Levan Vepkhvadze, vice-speaker of the Parliament from the Christian-Democratic Movement, said: “We have agreed that there will be a round-the-clock possibility of getting in touch with the Interior Ministry’s leadership... I think these steps are a positive development and an expression of a good will.” The interior ministry will create a forum where opposition members can address grievances.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Alasania meets FM Vashadze](#)

[JAMESTOWN FOUNDATION: Reforming the National Security Council of Georgia](#)

### US Troops Arrive to Train Georgian Battalion for Combat in Afghanistan

With Georgia contributing a 750-strong combat battalion to NATO’s mission in Afghanistan, the Pentagon announced that the US military will prepare the battalion to fight to NATO standards alongside American and allied forces. American troops began arriving in Georgia on Saturday, and training will begin Sep. 1. “This training mission is not about internal defenses or any capabilities that the Georgians would use at home,” said Geoff Morrell, the Pentagon press secretary. “This is about the United States supporting Georgia’s contribution to the war in Afghanistan, which everybody can recognize is needed and valued and appreciated.”

[NEW YORK TIMES: U.S. to resume training Georgian troops](#)

### EU, US Condemn Putin Visit to Abkhazia, Aggressive Militarization of Occupied

EU and US officials condemned Russian PM Putin’s visit last week to Abkhazia, criticizing the Kremlin for contributing to instability in the South Caucasus. “The EU does not consider this visit compatible with the principle of territorial integrity nor helpful for international efforts to stabilize the region,” said the Swedish EU presidency, in a statement echoed by the US State Department. Putin promised to allocate nearly half a billion dollars next year to drastically expand Russia’s naval and air bases in Abkhazia—bases located within striking distance of Georgia’s Poti and Batumi ports.

[EU OBSERVER: EU chides Russia for Abkhazia trip](#)

[ASSOCIATED PRESS: US critical of Putin visit to Georgian region](#)

[THE GUARDIAN: US-Russia stand-off looms as Moscow announces expansion of military bases](#)

### 1st Anniversary of Sarkozy-Medvedev Ceasefire Agreement Marked by Complete Russian Non-compliance

On August 12, 2008, French President Sarkozy negotiated a 6-point ceasefire agreement that was signed by the presidents of Russia and Georgia. Yet while Georgia is in full compliance with the accord, Russia effectively continues to violate all six points of the agreement. Instead, Russia has bolstered its military presence, prohibited international monitors access into occupied-territories, and has unilaterally recognized the independence of Georgia’s territories despite global solidarity for Georgia’s territorial integrity.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Georgia marks August war anniversary](#)

### New Details Emerge of 2008 Cyberwar by Moscow, As Georgian Blogger Is Targeted in Latest Russian Attack

Russian hackers hijacked American identities and US software tools and used them in an attack on Georgian government Web sites during the war between Russia and Georgia last year, according to new research to be released Monday by a nonprofit U.S. group. “Many of the cyber attacks were so close in time to the corresponding military operations that there had to be close co-operation between people in the Russian military and the civilian cyber attackers,” the report said. “Many of the actions the attackers carried out, such as registering new domain names and putting up new websites, were accomplished so quickly that all of the steps had to have been prepared earlier.” The report added: “Given the speed of action, the signal to go ahead also had to have been sent before the news media and general public were aware of what was happening militarily.” Meanwhile, in an attack that brought down Twitter for several hours last week, a Georgian blogger writing about IDPs from Abkhazia was attacked by Russian hackers.

[WALL STREET JOURNAL: Hackers stole IDs for attacks](#)

[REUTERS: Georgian blogger says he will not be silenced](#)

### Administrative Border Quiets as Opposing Sides Meet to Prevent Further Incidents

Officials from Georgia and Russian-occupied S. Ossetia met last week to discuss the border shootings that have taken place since last year’s war. “This meeting was urgently needed as Georgian police have observed a lot of shooting incidents recently and we need to cooperate to avoid further flare-ups in the region,” said a Georgian interior ministry spokesman. The meeting, also attended by Russian, EU, and OSCE representatives, was the first time the sides had sat down to discuss efforts to prevent further incidents.

[BLOOMBERG: Georgia, separatist S. Ossetia discuss shootings](#)

### Investors Sense Fresh Chances in Georgia

A quick end to last year’s fighting, tight macro-economic policies, and a \$4.5 billion injection of foreign aid has given foreign companies enough of an incentive to invest in Georgia. The attractions of Georgia’s cheap labor, low taxes, and plentiful development opportunities have been boosted by the prospects of aid-financed projects, particularly in transport and energy. International financial institutions, such as the World Bank’s International Finance Corporation, have stepped in to boost investor confidence, agreeing to help fund the development of Tbilisi’s first shopping and office center.

[FINANCIAL TIMES: Investors Sense Fresh Chances in Georgia](#)



The village of Akhalkalaki has been inspiring painters and filmmakers with its colorful, captivating landscapes and its extraordinary light for the past century. Today, it aims to become a self-sustaining art village, gathering artists from all over Georgia and from around the world. The village’s “International Festival of Contemporary Art Garikula ‘09” runs until Oct. 25 and features artists from Austria, Georgia, France, Netherlands and the United States of America. More at: [www.garikula.org](http://www.garikula.org).

## INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

### FINANCIAL TIMES: Georgia recovers as rebel regions suffer

One year on, the bonfires and memorials in Georgia were held in a country faring markedly better than the South Ossetian and Abkhazian regions that Russia chose to recognise as independent states. Said President Saakashvili: "We survived a full-scale invasion as a free and proud nation." Georgia has received \$4.5bn of international assistance; civilian infrastructure has been repaired and the economy has stabilised. But the Russian-occupied territories are in ruins. Lawrence Sheets, Caucasus director at the ICG, said the lack of rebuilding pointed to a "policy paralysis" in Moscow. "Russia could have paved Tskhinvali's roads with gold by now, turning it into a showcase for the South Caucasus."

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

### EURASIANET: Saakashvili Shows Staying Power on Anniversary of War

Despite war, political instability, and economic crisis, President Saakashvili has endured in office. Alexander Rondeli, the head of the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, says that Saakashvili's ability to negotiate all these political landmines is a testament to his skill as a politician. "There is a fundamental mistake in the assessment of Saakashvili," Rondeli said, referring to the widely held opinion that the 41-year-old leader is "unstable and very impulsive." Says Shalva Pichkhadze, an analyst and outspoken Saakashvili critic: "I don't think anything will hinder him [from remaining in power until 2013]."

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

### THE GUARDIAN: Georgia is rebounding—and resolute

A year after Russia's long-planned invasion aimed at toppling my government and increasing Moscow's control over our region, Georgia remains resolute in our democratic pursuits, writes President Saakashvili. We chose to reinforce our commitment to values we share with the west, such as personal and economic freedom. With the support of our friends in Britain and elsewhere, We believe the example of a free and prosperous Georgia ultimately will restore our sovereignty and reverse the wrongs caused by Russia's invasion.

[www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)

### NEW YORK TIMES: How Russia defines genocide down

Moscow accused Tbilisi of genocide after last summer's war, without recognizing that their credibility would quickly suffer if the facts proved otherwise. "Eyewitnesses say Georgian army units ran over women and children with their tanks drove people into houses and burned them alive," declared Russian PM Putin. Yet when reporters entered S. Ossetia after the five-day war, Russian officials could not explain where all the bodies were. It later became clear that the death toll was far lower.

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

### THE ECONOMIST: The fog of war

Georgia is weakened, but not destroyed. Its economy has not collapsed. Political pluralism survives. War-weariness has not brought a pro-Moscow regime to power. Georgian politics is still commendably open and contestable. One reason for that is that the West has not abandoned Georgia. Despite all the pressing priorities elsewhere, the core commitment to Georgia is intact. America's "reset" of relations with Russia did not uninstall the program "Georgia 1.0". Partly because of the principle of are defending sovereignty, partly out of enthusiasm for Georgia's political and economic achievements, and partly because of energy politics (remember the pipelines), America and Europe staying engaged.

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

### L.A. TIMES: Cyber attack makes anti-Russia blogger a star

Last week's master cyber attack allegedly aimed at silencing an anti-Russian blogger instead made him a global celebrity. A hacker-controlled "botnet," or network of virus-infected computers, attacked Georgian blogger "Cyxymu," taking down social-networking site, Twitter. One Open Society Institute fellow says the cyber attack was an intentional demonstration, revealing the kind of leverage that Cyxymu's detractors have on the Internet's most popular sites.

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

### FINANCIAL TIMES: Editorial—Putin has misread his Georgian lesson

Putin has misread his Georgian lesson as Moscow has not gained any credit nor benefit from last summer's invasion of Georgia. True to his KGB training, Putin is an excellent short-term tactician, but a rotten strategist with no clear vision for the longer-term future of the Caucasus. While Obama wants to "press the reset button" on Russia relations through mutual respect, Putin shows very little sign of learning this lesson.

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

### EURASIANET: South Ossetia, one year later—Running on empty

There is little doubt that S. Ossetia now functions essentially as a part of the Russian Federation. Almost all of the region's budget comes from Moscow, and Russia's "security guarantees" essentially involve turning the region into a Russian garrison. Meanwhile, in the formerly Georgian village of Eredvi, all the houses are looted and torched as all ethnic Georgians have fled. "South Ossetia will simply become a service point for a big Russian army base," said one local official.

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

### CONSERVATIVE HOME: Liam Fox on "Why Conservatives must offer support to the people of Georgia"

The UK's Conservative Party members must offer support to Georgia. One year after Russia invaded Georgia, 10,000 Russian troops are still occupying Georgia's territories of S. Ossetia and Abkhazia. Georgia is located in a vital geostrategic area, has contributed to NATO operations in the Balkans and Iraq, and will be sending substantial forces to Afghanistan next year.

[Conservativehome.blogs.com](http://Conservativehome.blogs.com)

### REUTERS: 30,000 Georgians still displaced from war

About 30,000 Georgians are still displaced from the five-day war following Russia's invasion of Georgia a year ago. Amnesty said 192,000 people were displaced in the war. Many displaced ethnic Georgians "no longer have access to their fields or orchards" due to the new borders or "because the area has not been cleared of explosives," Amnesty said. Many had become dependent on humanitarian aid. The closure of the monitoring mission by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the exclusion of EU monitors from South Ossetia deprives people of "international scrutiny", leading to insecurity, writes Amnesty.

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

## THINK TANKS/NGOS

### AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL: EU mission in Georgia—Address gaps in monitoring of human rights

One year on, civilians continue to endure human rights violations and remain directly affected by the aftermath of the Russian-Georgian conflict. The closure of the UN and OSCE missions, due to Russia's veto, has meant a reduced capacity for international scrutiny on the protection of human rights. "It is now time for the EUMM to re-examine its current mandate and working practices with a view to closing the gaps that now exist in international monitoring and public reporting," said Amnesty director, Nicolas Beger.

[www.amnesty-eu.org](http://www.amnesty-eu.org)