

GEORGIA UPDATE

WEEKLY EDITION • 1 October 2009

A Publication of the Government of Georgia

www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge

TOP STORIES

EU War Investigation Concludes: Russia Illegally Entered Georgia, Followed Premeditated Plan, Committed Ethnic Cleansing

Government Response: Report Exonerates Georgia, All Facts Point to Russian Invasion, Ethnic Cleansing

Opposition Leader Alasania to Run for Tbilisi Mayor, as Government Announces All Mayors to Be Elected Directly

More Opposition Members Join Electoral Code Reform Group as Process Advances

State Minister Says Georgia Wants to Avoid Isolation of Abkhazia



President Saakashvili, speaking at the UN last Thursday, said Georgia is focused on the future: “We are winning the peace because every day, nations from our region become more and more independent from our common imperial legacy.” He also drew parallels between Russia’s illegal occupation of S. Ossetia and Abkhazia and the Berlin Wall. But Saakashvili said Georgia’s approach to tearing down the new wall that divides Europe would be through peace and democracy. “We understand the need for patience. But the history of the Berlin Wall teaches us that patients must not be passive. The Berlin Wall only fell because passionate, disciplined, energetic partisans of freedom worked with focus, discipline, and courage, to remind the world continually of its illegitimacy and illegality.”

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

REUTERS: Abkhazia will one day return to Georgia-Saakashvili

AGENCE FRANCE PRESS: Clinton advises "strategic patience" to Saakashvili

BLOOMBERG: Yushchenko Warns of Russia’s Post-Georgia Security Threat

NEW YORK TIMES: Russia Tries to Control the Reset Button

ASSOCIATED PRESS: Bomb hits Georgian police truck near South Ossetia

FOX NEWS: Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili on "Your World"

UN NEWS CENTRE: Georgia speaks out against “new dividing line”

FOREIGN POLICY: Is the missile shield moving to Georgia?

REUTERS: Interview-Georgia economy seen growing in H2-PM

LA STAMPA: A Russian pipedream for Europe

DPA: Writers and intellectuals urge Europe to stand up for Georgia

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

“There seems to have been an influx of volunteers or mercenaries from the territory of the Russian Federation to South Ossetia through the Roki tunnel and over the Caucasus range in early August, as well as the presence of some Russian forces in South Ossetia, other than the Russian JPKF [Peacekeeping] battalion, prior to 14.30 hours on 8 August 2008.”

—Excerpt from the EU-commissioned report on the war, confirming that regular Russian forces invaded Georgia before Georgia took military action.

“The mass conferral of Russian citizenship to Georgian nationals and the provision of passports on a massive scale on Georgian territory, including its breakaway provinces, without the consent of the Georgian Government...constitutes an open challenge to Georgian sovereignty.”

—Excerpt from the EU-commissioned report

“Extended Russian military action reaching out into Georgia was conducted in violation of international law. Much of the Russian action went beyond the reasonable limits of self-defence.”

—Excerpt from the EU-commissioned report

UPCOMING MILESTONES

Oct 1-3: FM Ušackas of Lithuania visits Georgia

Oct. 5-7: Danish FM Møller visits Georgia

Oct. 12- 14: Georgian FM Vashadze visits the UK

Oct. 16-18: State Minister Yakobashvili visits Sweden

Oct. 27: FM Vashadze visits Brussels

Oct. 27: CoE Georgia cooperation Council meeting in France

Oct.: Vice Premier Baramidze visits France.

Nov. 11: Eighth-round of Geneva peace-talks

TOP STORIES

EU Inquire Concludes: Russia Illegally Entered Georgia, Followed Premeditated Plan, Committed Ethnic Cleansing

The EU-funded war inquiry mission released its highly anticipated report Wednesday on the origins of war in Georgia after Russia's August 2008 invasion, concluding that Russian troops entered Georgia before Georgia took military action. The report also confirmed that Russia followed a long-premeditated plan and committed ethnic cleansing. The inquiry debunked Russia's pretexts for the invasion, saying it could find no evidence that Georgia committed genocide or even attacked civilians or Russian peacekeepers.

[REUTERS: Georgia says war report pins blame on Russia](#)

[CIVIL GEORGIA: EU-Funded Report on August War](#)

Government Response: Report Exonerates Georgia, All Facts Point to Russian Invasion, Ethnic Cleansing

In a statement following the release of the EU report, the Government said the facts uncovered by the investigation had confirmed Georgia's interpretation of the events.

"The Commission confirms that Russia invaded Georgia before Georgia took military action. It also confirms that Georgian civilians and peacekeepers were under attack, on Georgian soil, before August 7. The report also gives ample evidence of Russia's military buildup in the months before August 2008, and of Russia's political provocations that violated Georgian sovereignty and international law. In addition, the Commission confirms that Russian-backed forces undertook the ethnic cleansing of Georgian citizens.

"The report also confirms that Russian military operations in 2008 appear to most analysts to have been well planned and well executed. Russia tested its operational planning the month before the invasion during its "Kavkaz 2008" military exercises (and in previous exercises from 2005 onwards).

"The most important fact documented by the Commission is that regular armed Russian forces and mercenaries illegally crossed into Georgia before August 8, 2009. The Commission writes: "There seems to have been an influx of volunteers or mercenaries from the territory of the Russian Federation to South Ossetia through the Roki tunnel and over the Caucasus range in early August, as well as the presence of some Russian forces in South Ossetia, other than the Russian JPKF battalion, prior to 14.30 hours on 8 August 2008."

"The Government regrets that while the Commission has proven that Russian troops were illegally in Georgia, it fails to call this an invasion. Yet it was this invasion that triggered the conflict. The verified illegal presence in Georgia's sovereign territory of non-peacekeeping Russian troops, in violation of all international agreements, can only be called an invasion.

"The report, meanwhile, refutes the reasons Russia gave for invading Georgia. In particular Russia claimed that over 2,000 people had been killed in South Ossetia and that it invaded to prevent genocide—this was the pretext for their actions. This report confirms that these Russians claims were an outright lie.

"Nor could the Commission verify another Russian pretext: that its peacekeepers were attacked. By contrast, Georgian peacekeepers were targeted and killed early on August 7. The invasion began before Russian peacekeepers were engaged in armed hostilities.

"The report documents in detail the Russian military buildup in the months before the invasion, as well as Russia's provision of military and security assistance to South Ossetian and Abkhazian irregular proxy forces prior to August 7 2008. It also documents a series of intensifying political, economic, legal, and other provocations."

"No democratic government can survive if, when foreign forces enter its territory, it fails to defend its citizens. Georgia acted as any democratic nation would have done - a fact that is impossible for any reasonable observer to deny."

[FULL STATEMENT: Government Response to the EU Report](#)

Opposition Leader Alasania to Run for Tbilisi Mayor, as Government Announces All Mayors to Be Elected Directly

Opposition leader and former UN envoy Alasania announced that he will run for mayor of Tbilisi, as Georgia's government announced the direct election of all mayors. Georgian authorities have "committed to the direct election of all mayors in few months time," said President Saakashvili in his speech to the UN General Assembly. Saakashvili expressed the government's readiness to develop new electoral rules based on the consensus of different political parties in order to ensure legitimacy for future local, parliamentary and presidential elections. Local elections are expected to be held next May, ahead of schedule.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Saakashvili says 'all Mayors' to be elected directly](#)

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Alasania to Run for Tbilisi Mayoral Office](#)

More Opposition Members Join Electoral Code Reform Group as Process Advances

The Alliance for Georgia, Georgia's main opposition party, joined the inter-party working group on electoral reform last week, submitting a proposal to reshape the current election system. The newly enlarged working group agreed to submit an electoral reform draft by late October. Legal experts from the Venice Commission, a European advisory body, will then review the draft before the final proposal is passed.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Opposition lays out proposals on electoral reform](#)

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Opposition Politician Speaks on Election Reform Group](#)

State Minister Says Georgia Wants to Avoid Isolation of Abkhazia

Underlining the country's commitment to preserving its territorial integrity, Georgian State Minister for Reintegration Yakobashvili emphasized that Georgia wants to keep bridges open to the occupied territories. "We are not going to push the occupied territories in isolation and to push them further towards Russia and further into Russia's slavery," he said. "We cannot turn Abkhazia into a black hole for the Russia's Federal Security Service or its military intelligence." Yakobashvili is developing a plan to engage the occupied territories, focusing on people-to-people contacts.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: "We do not want to push Abkhazia in isolation"](#)



President Saakashvili re-opened a century-old synagogue in the Old Tbilisi district last week, celebrating the completion of a year-long renovation project. Mayor Ugulava and representatives of Georgian-Jewish Diaspora also attended the ceremony.

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

REUTERS: Abkhazia will one day return to Georgia-Saakashvili

Russian-occupied will once again be part of Georgia, President Saakashvili said in his address to the UN General Assembly last week. "It will take time, but Abkhazia will once again be what it was—the most wonderful part of Georgia," Saakashvili said. He cited former Czech President Vaclav Havel in his speech, comparing the presence of Russian troops in his region to Germany in the Cold War, when the Berlin Wall ran through a democratic West Berlin and Communist East that was allied to the Soviet Union. "As Vaclav Havel and other leading voices of Europe's conscience declared earlier this week, Europe is today divided by a new wall, built by an outside force—a wall that runs through the middle of Georgia," he said.

www.reuters.com

AFP: Clinton advises "strategic patience" to Saakashvili

Secretary of State Clinton urged Georgia to exhibit strategic patience in resolving issues over Russian-occupied S. Ossetia and Abkhazia. Clinton, meeting with President Saakashvili in New York, added: "We are working to try to ensure that Russia abides by the 2008 cease-fire, and hopefully to eventually reintegrate your country as it should be." She added that the US has repeatedly called on Russia to withdraw the majority of its forces from Abkhazia and S. Ossetia and permit "unhindered humanitarian access." Clinton also underscored American support for Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

www.lemonde.fr

BLOOMBERG: Yushchenko Warns Obama of Russia's Post-Georgia Security Threat

Ukrainian President Yushchenko warned President Obama this week that Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 poses a threat that European leaders still haven't addressed. "What happened in Georgia is not a problem of Georgia, it is a problem of the EU," he said in a Sept. 17 interview. "Georgia's loss of border integrity means the same may happen in Europe. We all became more vulnerable."

www.bloomberg.com

NEW YORK TIMES: Russia Tries to Control the Reset Button

When Russia issues a reminder that it wants to buy an advanced, helicopter-carrying warship from France that's built for amphibious assaults—hello all you folks along the Black, Baltic, and Caspian Seas—then it's pressing deeper its own reset button on altered relations with the US and NATO. The Kremlin is talking up a plan that Russia sees as containing an alliance-splitting downside for the US whichever way it turns. In relation to the ship purchase talks, the Russian Navy's commander in chief, Adm. Vysotsky, rhapsodized over how he could have done the Georgia job in 40 minutes instead of 26 hours if he had had the French warship.

www.nytimes.com

AP: Bomb hits Georgian police truck near South Ossetia

A police truck was hit by a bomb blast while on patrol in the tense region near the Russian-occupied S. Ossetia last week. The Interior Ministry said the blast was caused by a mine with a timer attached. EU monitors have recently intensified patrols along the breakaway republics' borders with the rest of Georgia as tensions have escalated in anticipation of the EU's released war report.

www.etaiwannews.com

FOX NEWS: President Mikheil Saakashvili on "Your World"

President Saakashvili, in an interview with Fox News, highlighted the parallels between last year's invasion of Georgia by Russia and the run-up to World War II: "Last year, Putin invaded Georgia, occupied two of our regions, wanted to take the whole of the country, couldn't make it, and took the regions. We have a half-a-million refugees, that is one-tenth of our population. It's exactly the same thing as what Nazi Germany did with Czechoslovakia and Sudetenland."

www.foxnews.com

UN NEWS CENTRE: Georgia, addressing UN debate, speaks out against "new dividing line" In his speech to the UN General Assembly, President Saakashvili vowed that he and the Georgian people will never accept a new dividing line in our country. "The new wall that cuts across our territory has transformed Georgia to an idea and a test; an idea of freedom and independence, and a test for the world. A test the world must not fail," he said. "If the test is successful, then you will be amazed how quickly this region will develop its tremendous potential. An active, patient victory over this new wall is a crucial step in the effort to build energy security for free nations, and to build a united front against lawlessness and terrorism."

www.un.org

FOREIGN POLICY: Is the missile shield moving to Georgia?

It appears that the Obama administration's revised plans for a missile shield will heavily focus on the Caucasus. US defense officials have not specified the radar's new proposed location, but some Georgian and Russian officials and commentators have been quick to suggest that the Pentagon has Georgia in mind. If the US is thinking about the South Caucasus, Georgia would be the best place for the radar deployment because of its close proximity to Iran, say analysts.

blog.foreignpolicy.com

REUTERS: Interview-Georgia economy seen growing in H2-PM

The Georgian economy is expected to grow in the second half of this year, compensating for the fall of the first two quarters, PM Gilauri said last week. "The second quarter could be worse than the first quarter. We will compensate for it by the results of the third and fourth quarters, when we expect positive growth, or at least close to zero," he said.

www.forexyard.com

LA STAMPA: A Russian pipedream for Europe

While America is engrossed in Afghanistan, a new bigger strategic risk looms in a much more sensitive area—Europe and Russia. The challenge is about the global issue of energy and about influence in the old continent. With the North and South stream pipeline projects, Russia could have three channels to bring its energy to European countries, including the present pipeline running through Ukraine. With three pipelines, Russia could be able to divide and rule at will Europe.

www.lastampa.it

DPA: Writers and intellectuals urge Europe to stand up for Georgia

A group of European intellectuals and former politicians, including former Czech president Vaclav Havel, urged Europe last week to back Georgia in its territorial conflict with Russia. "We urge the EU's 27 democratic leaders to define a proactive strategy to help Georgia peacefully regain its territorial integrity and obtain the withdrawal of Russian forces illegally stationed on Georgian soil," they said in a letter published by several European newspapers.

www.earthtimes.org

WEBSITES @ GEORGIA

Civil Georgia: Leading independent English-language news website on Georgia.

Georgia Update: Official government information service.

Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies: Leading NGO focuses on Georgian domestic and foreign policy.

Georgian Mission to NATO

Georgian Parliament

Government of Georgia

Local Ministry of Foreign Affairs

National Investment Agency

City of Tbilisi: Official website of Georgia's capital, Tbilisi

Office of the President of Georgia