

GEORGIA UPDATE

WEEKLY EDITION • 7 October 2010

A Publication of the Government of Georgia

www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge

TOP STORIES

- Secretary of State Clinton Affirms Georgia's Path to NATO, Praises "Great Strides" in Democracy
- NATO Secretary-General, in Visit to Tbilisi, Underscores Alliance's Commitment to Georgia
- Four Georgian Soldiers Killed in Afghanistan
- Jury Trials Begin in Tbilisi, Marking New Era in Reform of Georgia's Justice System
- Parliament Approves Draft Constitutional Amendments in Second Reading



US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Prime Minister Gilauri on Wednesday opened the first omnibus meeting of the US-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership, as senior officials from both countries came together to advance relations and cooperation on issues ranging from security and the economy, to culture and education. "The relationship between Georgia and the United States stands on a foundation of shared values and common interests," Clinton said in opening the proceedings. "The Charter that our countries signed in January 2009 has given us a framework for further developing our cooperation. And today, I want to reiterate our commitment to working together to advance Georgia's security and democracy."

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

FOREIGN POLICY: The Georgia syndrome

NEW YORK TIMES: Our lesser-known allies in Afghanistan

EU OBSERVER: Beware "neo-imperial" Russia, Kaczynski says

JAMESTOWN: Georgia's focus on regional cooperation—modernization by example and engagement

EURASIANET: The glass age comes to Georgia

RADIO FREE EUROPE: Kremlin's ruling party boosts ties across the former Soviet Union

REUTERS: Georgia not only block on Russia WTO entry—Saakashvili

THE GUARDIAN: Do we look like refugees?!

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"The United States remains committed to Georgia's aspirations for membership in NATO, as reflected in the Alliance's decisions in Bucharest and Strasbourg-Kehl. ... And we continue to support Georgia's efforts on defense reform and improving defense capabilities, including NATO interoperability and Georgia's contributions to ISAF operations in Afghanistan."

"We continue to call on Russia to end its occupation of Georgian territory, withdraw its forces, and abide by its other commitments under the 2008 ceasefire agreements. Georgia has taken a constructive approach in our common efforts to address this challenge through the talks in Geneva. We support the objectives of Georgia's State Strategy on Occupied Territories, and we are prepared to undertake activities that reinforce these important objectives."

—Secretary of State Hillary Clinton speaking yesterday after meeting PM Gilauri

"I would like to affirm recent statements by the White House and Secretary of State Clinton calling on Russia to abide by its August 2008 cease-fire commitments, to withdraw Russian troops to their pre-conflict positions, and to allow for the full return of internally-displaced persons to the occupied territories."

—United States Senator Jeanne Shaheen

UPCOMING MILESTONES

Oct. 8: Swiss FM visits Georgia

Oct. 11-12: Turkish FM visits Georgia

Oct. 14: Next round of Geneva talks

Nov. 3-4: Iranian FM visits Georgia

Nov. 8-13: UN permanent representatives from South/Central America visit Georgia

Nov. 19-20: NATO summit in Lisbon

Dec. 1-2: OSCE summit in Astana

TOP STORIES



NATO Secretary-General, in Visit to Tbilisi, Underscores Alliance’s Commitment to Georgia

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen (above), visiting Tbilisi last Friday, underscored that Georgia remains firmly on the path to membership in the Alliance. “I would expect the NATO summit in Lisbon to reaffirm our position, which we took already in Bucharest in 2008, that Georgia will become a member of NATO once Georgia fulfills the necessary criteria,” Rasmussen said, referring to the Alliance’s upcoming summit on Portugal next month. He also expressed gratitude for Georgia’s steadfast commitment to NATO’s Afghanistan mission. “Georgian soldiers are serving in Helmand province—one of the most difficult areas in our mission in Afghanistan,” he said. “I highly appreciate your dedication to our common security, which is a testimony of strong partnership between Georgia and NATO.” President Saakashvili said NATO membership remained a top priority. “It’s not just about NATO, it’s about Georgia being free, whole and independent,” he said. “There is one thing Georgia can never compromise on—that’s the issue of freedom and for us and right now NATO stands for the idea of freedom and that’s why it has strong support of the Georgian nation.”

[WALL STREET JOURNAL: NATO Committed to Georgia Inclusion](#)
[REUTERS: Door to NATO Still Open for Georgia—Rasmussen](#)

Four Georgian Soldiers Killed in Afghanistan

Four Georgian soldiers serving alongside NATO troops in Afghanistan were killed last week by a mine explosion in notoriously dangerous Helmand Province. The dead were Col. Ramaz Gogiasvili, Sgt. Davit Tssetskhadze, Cpl. Giorgi Kolkhitashvili, and Cpl. Nigzar Kalandadze. NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who was in Georgia when news of the deaths came, offered his condolences. “It was with great sadness that I received the message that Georgian soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan,” he said. “Let me convey my deepest condolences to the families, who have lost their loved ones. These brave Georgian soldiers have paid the biggest price for liberty and in the fight against terrorism. You can be proud of those people.” Rasmussen added: “I highly appreciate your dedication to our common security, which is a testimony of strong partnership between Georgia and NATO. For this, I am grateful.” President Saakashvili also conveyed his condolences, while also praising Georgia’s troops for their contributions to global security. “We should understand that in Afghanistan our guys are also sacrificing for the global interests our small country is bearing. A big international fight is being conducted against us, but our allies are those people who are doing their best to help Georgia survive, develop, and strengthen. Their sacrifice will not be in vain.”

[AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: NATO reassures Georgia after deaths](#)

US Secretary of State Clinton Affirms Georgia’s Path to NATO, Praises “Great Strides” in Democracy, as She Meets PM in DC
 Meeting Wednesday in Washington with Prime Minister Gilauri, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton underscored America’s unequivocal support for Georgia’s NATO membership, while again calling on Russia to withdraw from the occupied territories. “The United States remains committed to Georgia’s aspirations for membership in NATO, as reflected in the Alliance’s decisions in Bucharest and Strasbourg-Kehl,” Clinton said. “We continue to call on Russia to end its occupation of Georgian territory, withdraw its forces, and abide by its other commitments under the 2008 ceasefire agreements. Georgia has taken a constructive approach in our common efforts to address this challenge through the talks in Geneva. We support the objectives of Georgia’s State Strategy on Occupied Territories, and we are prepared to undertake activities that reinforce these important objectives.” She also said the US was working with Georgia on promoting “defense reform and improving defense capabilities.” Gilauri and numerous ministers were in Washington to meet with counterparts in the context of the US-Georgia Charter for Strategic Partnership, with the goal of strengthening cooperation between the two countries on numerous fronts. Clinton also remarked on Georgia’s reform progress. “Democracy in Georgia has made great strides over the last seven years,” she said.

[YOU TUBE: Secretary Clinton and Georgian Prime Minister Gilauri Deliver Remarks](#)

Jury Trials Begin in Tbilisi, Marking a New Era in Reform of Georgia’s Justice System

Georgia last week introduced jury trials in Tbilisi as part of a newly established criminal code, the latest in a series of reforms to the country’s justice system. Konstantine Kublashvili, Chairman of Georgia’s Supreme Court, said people’s direct participation in the justice system through jury duty will build trust in the rule of law. “It will positively change people’s attitudes and confidence to the court,” he said. Under the revised criminal code, cases of aggravated homicide heard in Tbilisi are eligible to be decided by juries. Other criminal offenses and civil law cases would also become eligible for jury trials if the jury process proves successful over the next four years. The establishment of jury trials would also spread beyond the capital to other regions. According to Gregory Mize, a retired Washington judge who has worked with Georgian judges to prepare them for the change, nearly a dozen jury trials are expected in the coming year. Georgia’s jury system largely borrows from the American model, but also contains some major differences: psychologists, psychiatrists, lawyers, and priests cannot serve on a jury, an exclusion based on concern that they could influence fellow jury members. As in the US, police officers, government officials, and armed forces members are also exempt from jury duty. In advance of the change, former director of the National Democratic Institute in Georgia, Mark Mullen, expressed optimism on the city’s transition to trial by jury: “If you wait for people to be ready for new responsibility, they are never ready, but once you give them the responsibility, they will rise up to it,” he said .

[EURASIANET: Jury Trials Aim to Bolster Public Confidence](#)

Parliament Approves Constitutional Amendments in 2nd Reading

Georgia’s Parliament approved proposed constitutional amendments in a second reading. After substantial debate in public forums and preliminary hearings over nearly 18 months, the amendments cleared the second reading by a 125-4 vote. Although the draft requires another reading before it comes law, the most difficult legislative obstacles have been passed. According to Justice Minister Zurab Adeishvili, the updated draft incorporates the revisions that were approved during the previous reading. The proposed draft includes changes that aim to reduce the powers of the president, redistributing executive authority to the prime minister. Other changes also limit the president’s role in conducting foreign policy, appointing military officials, initiating law, and holding official posts in a political party—an issue brought forward by opposition party members.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Constitutional Amendments Passed with 2nd Reading](#)

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

FOREIGN POLICY: The Georgia syndrome

Grossly inferior to Russia in all matters of hard power, Georgia enjoys a crushing soft-power advantage that the Russians must find both bewildering and infuriating. Visitors to Tbilisi, the country's charming and ancient capital, quickly succumb to Georgia Syndrome, a blissful capitulation to hand-on-heart sentimentality, sodden feasts, Mitteleuropean boulevards, and passionate devotion to Western values in the face of threats both real and imagined. Meanwhile, Georgia really does pose a problem for its friends. Most of its neighbors in the post-Soviet space have knuckled under to Russia's demand for regional hegemony. Georgia, defiantly, has not. Russia's occupation of Georgian territory is one of those abuses that one must keep insisting is unacceptable—even as, in practice, one accepts it, and waits for the moment when compromise solutions become possible. When I asked Irakli Porchkhidze, deputy secretary of Georgia's National Security Council, why the West should pressure Russia to withdraw from Abkhazia and S. Ossetia, he said, "Russia has violated the principle of the inviolability of borders; Russia has engaged in ethnic cleansing. Are these not human rights issues?"

www.foreignpolicy.com

NEW YORK TIMES: Our lesser-known allies in Afghanistan

What do the Greek, Mongolian, Latvian, and British Armies have in common? They've all been in Afghanistan before; they are also current members of the International Security Assistance Force, and contribute troops to the coalition mission in Afghanistan. Most forces are assigned to training, mentoring or other critical support operations. The Georgian troops have been used to protect entry points into forward operating bases around Kabul. Their country's dedication is such that they were kept here even after Georgia's conflict with Russia back in 2008.

atwar.blogs.nytimes.com

EU OBSERVER: Beware "neo-imperial" Russia, Kaczynski says

Former Polish PM and leader of Poland's main opposition party, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, has warned of Russia's "neo-imperial" foreign policy to all 738 MEPs in Brussels and to dozens of ambassadors. "There are more signs that there is increasingly less America in Europe. This is bad for both sides. Unfortunately, this is taking place at a time when Moscow's neo-imperial foreign policy causes no objections from the major playmakers in Europe and the US." In an opinion piece due to appear in the *Wall Street Journal*, Kaczynski also criticizes EU states for allegedly putting bilateral business interests with Russia ahead of EU values and strategic considerations.

euobserver.com

JAMESTOWN: Georgia's focus on regional cooperation—modernization by example and engagement

With Russian occupying forces stationed some 20 miles from the Georgian capital, concentrating on reform and development is not an easy task. But President Saakashvili's pro-Western liberal government thinks that modernization is the only way to counter its present challenges and walk the safest road into the future without sacrificing Georgia's sovereignty and freedom of choice. "Peace is not only the goal; it is also the means to any goal," Saakashvil told world leaders at the UN in September. To the surprise of many analysts in Tbilisi, he put unusually strong emphasis on the need for cooperation in the Caucasus region. Unlike most of his previous speeches, Saakashvili has now increased the scope of his discussion from talking about modernizing Georgia to transforming the entire Caucasus region.

jamestownfoundation.blogspot.com

**EURASIANET: The glass age comes to Georgia**

Flamboyant glass-and-steel structures, the brainchildren of Italian and Spanish architects, are causing both shock and awe as they advance on Georgia under President Saakashvili's Grands Travaux campaign. Meant to symbolize a new, transparent Georgia, a wavy, see-through Interior Ministry (above), a domed presidential palace, a fishnet pedestrian bridge, and a cone-shaped "Torch of Freedom" air traffic tower all share the same glass-centric, post-modern look. Tbilisi's famed "Bridge of Peace" is the most recent architectural accomplishment to shape the city's skyline.

www.eurasianet.org

RADIO FREE EUROPE: Kremlin's ruling party boosts ties across the former Soviet Union

In Georgia, Russia's ruling United Russia party works with the opposition For A Just Georgia movement of former PM Zurab Noghaidei, which describes itself as "having a classic right opposition orientation." Sergei Markov, a Russian Duma deputy and United Russia official, told RFE: "United Russia's main goal is to support those political forces that are in favor of better relations between Georgia and Russia. Noghaidei is among them." Said Alexander Rondeli of the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International: "If you take this as an attempt to influence the political situation inside Georgia and set up some sort of pro-Russian opposition against the current authorities, you can also assume that definitely without financial contributions this won't work."

www.rferl.org

REUTERS: Georgia not only block on Russia WTO entry-Saakashvili

Georgian President Saakashvili said his Caucasus nation, a member of the World Trade Organization, is not the only impediment to its larger rival Russia joining the world body. "We were not the last ones left. Right now there is a long line of countries," Saakashvili said of opposition to Russia's entry. Meanwhile, the Georgian president sarcastically applauded Putin for helping create Georgia's economic success: "I told him, Vladimir Vladimirovich, we will put a statue to you, erect a statue as to the creator of the modern Georgian economy. He of course thought it was a very bad joke. But actually I meant it. Thanks to that embargo we are much less vulnerable," Saakashvili said.

www.reuters.com

THE GUARDIAN: Do we look like refugees?!

"We hoped Europe would help, but they abandoned us," says one of the displaced Georgians in this verbatim show, created by Alecky Blythe with actors from Tbilisi's Rustaveli theatre. The situation for those displaced from Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia is not life-threatening or desperate but, as this quietly dignified, award-winning show proves, their loss is still raw as they try to pick up the pieces in the camps established miles south of their mountainous homelands. The people here speak for themselves, simply and directly—and they sing too, beautiful wistful songs of loss and hope.

www.guardian.co.uk