

GEORGIA UPDATE

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TOP STORIES

- EU Monitoring Mission Chief: “Georgia Is Still the Big Prize for Russia”
- Georgia Says Russian Officers Ordered Murder of MIA Official
- “Georgia Is Making Outstanding Contributions to NATO Security,” NATO Assembly Hears
- International Court of Justice to Issue Jurisdiction Ruling on Russian Ethnic Cleansing Cases
- Georgia Goes Green as Electric Cars Come to Tbilisi
- Georgia Delivers Aid to Japan Earthquake, Tsunami Survivors
- Border Talks Between Sokhumi & Moscow Draw Tbilisi's Condemnation



General David Petraeus (above), commander of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan, said yesterday that Georgian troops there “have been integral to the growing success of our efforts to improve security and stability” in Helmand and Nimruz provinces. In a letter to Georgian Minister of Defense Akhalaia, Petraeus praised Georgian troops for their “effective interactions with the Afghan people,” which, he said, had led to increased confidence in both NATO-led forces and the Afghan government. “Your troopers are truly courageous in conducting these foot patrols, which place them at greater risk of insurgent attacks,” he wrote. “Much of the credit for improved security in southern Musa Qal’eh is attributable to the outstanding leadership of your battalion commanders,” he said, adding that Georgian commanders were planning “sound operations to reduce the insurgents’ influence on the people.”

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

LE MONDE DIPLOMATIQUE: Georgians who can’t go home

THE ECONOMIST: Revolutions compared—rose-tinted lessons

REUTERS: Georgian economy returns to growth in 2010

EURASIANET: Bishkek looks to Georgia as role model for reform

RFE: Georgia’s ruling party, opposition seek consensus on electoral reform

EURASIA DAILY MONITOR: Russian hard bargaining delays French warships

DEUTSCHLAND RADIO: Pink wave hunter

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: Donald Trump to the rescue in Georgia?

BLOOMBERG: Georgia seeking foreign investors for 50 MW wind-energy project

EURASIANET: Svaneti gold prospectors seek the monster nugget

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

“Clearly for historical, political, economic and not least sentimental and touristic reasons, Georgia is still the big prize for Russia in the Transcaucasus.”

◆ Hansjörg Haber, head of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia

“Your troopers’ effective interactions with the Afghan people have led to increased confidence in both ISAF and GIRoA security forces. As an example, the area where they operate is southern Musa Qaleh is now patrolled on foot, resulting in better relationships with the Afghan people. Your troopers are truly courageous in conducting these foot patrols, which place them at greater risk of insurgent attacks.”

◆ General David Petraeus, Commander of NATO and US forces in Afghanistan, commenting on the performance their of Georgian troops

“And I think the best way that Georgia can demonstrate its readiness, its suitability to be a full member of the alliance... is by continuing to aggressively pursue the democratic reform agenda that it has undertaken and to continue to pursue free market reforms and economic development... that will further cement Georgia as a model for the countries in this region.”

◆ John Bass, US Ambassador to Georgia

UPCOMING MILESTONES

Mar. 31: Swedish FM Carl Bildt visits Georgia

Apr. 1: ICJ to issue initial ruling on ethnic cleansing cases against Russia

Apr. 15-20: Parliament Speaker Bakradze attends IPU meeting in Panama

May 15: President Saakashvili delivers commencement address at Ohio Northern University

Jun. 7: Next round of Geneva peace talks

TOP STORIES

EUMM Chief: “Georgia Is Still the Big Prize for Russia”

The chief of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia, Hansjörg Haber, gave a blunt account last week of Russia’s illegal occupation of Georgia and struggle to regain influence in its former satellite. “Clearly for historical, political, economic, and not least sentimental and touristic reason, Georgia is still the big prize for Russia in the Transcaucasus,” Haber said in a speech at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly’s 76th Rose-Roth Seminar in Tbilisi last week. Russia’s occupation and recognition of the Georgian territories of S. Ossetia and Abkhazia was a means to gain leverage in the prized country, a policy that has largely failed, according to the German diplomat. “Russia has lost a great part of its influence over Georgia,” Haber said, adding that Moscow is no longer able to use the threat of recognition to “blackmail” Tbilisi to return into the fold of Russia’s “near abroad.” Haber also criticized Russia’s demand to assume a mediator role at the Geneva peace talks, rather than participating as a party to the conflict, as “clearly absurd.”

[CIVIL GEORGIA: European Diplomat on Russia-Georgia Conflict](#)

Georgia Says Russian Officers Ordered Murder of MIA Official

The death last May of Dimitri Kordzadze was the result of a contract killing, according to the findings of a 10-month-long investigation by Georgia’s Ministry of Internal Affairs. Two Russian intelligence officers are suspected of being behind the attack. Georgian authorities have sought the cooperation of Russian authorities in the investigation, but have not received a response. Kordzadze—who at the time of his death led the Adjara Division of the MIA’s Emergency Situations Management Department—was killed by a powerful bomb that exploded as he drove his Toyota Hilux in Batumi. Evidence revealed that two officers from Russia’s intelligence bureau (GRU) were behind the murder plot, paying two Abkhaz criminals, Otar Rogava and Temur Butbaia, over \$50,000 to assassinate Kordzadze. Georgian officials have arrested Butbaia and Rogava, along with other suspected accomplices.

[GOVERNMENT OF GEORGIA: Investigation Reveals Contract Killing Behind 2010 Death of its Employee; Russia Links Under Investigation](#)

“Georgia Is Making Outstanding Contributions to NATO Security,” NATO Parliamentary Assembly Hears

A host of senior-level officials convened in Tbilisi last week for NATO’s Parliamentary Assembly (PA). “I came here to once again express our support for democratic processes in Georgia, and to say that we support the process of Georgia’s integration into the Alliance,” PA President Karl Lamers said at the Rose-Roth seminar of the Assembly, adding that the Alliance appreciated the “important work” that Georgia is doing to enhance global security. Meanwhile US Ambassador to Georgia John Bass expressed confidence in Georgia’s future NATO membership, saying Tbilisi’s accession is not a matter of when, but how: “How will Georgia become a NATO member?” Bass asked rhetorically. “It will become a member by convincing all of our respective governments of NATO member states that it is a net contributor to our respective national interests and our security in the Euro-Atlantic region,” adding: “There is no question Georgia is making outstanding contributions,” he said, calling Georgia’s 1,000-strong troop commitment to NATO’s Afghanistan mission “remarkable.”

[CIVIL GEORGIA: U.S. Ambassador on Georgia’s NATO Path](#)

International Court of Justice to Issue Jurisdiction Ruling on Russian Ethnic Cleansing Cases

The ICJ tomorrow will deliver its judgment on Russia’s preliminary objections to a two-year-old human rights case against Moscow. Georgia filed the case just days after Russia’s 2008 invasion, asserting that Russian forces and proxies committed large-scale ethnic cleansing campaigns against Georgians. Russia violated the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination during three distinct interventions conducted between 1990 and 2008. If the court decides in favor of Georgia and rules that it has jurisdiction, the ICJ will hold separate hearings later on the merits of the complaint.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: ICJ to Rule on Russia’s Objections](#)



A last-gasp goal by Levan Kobiashvili earned Georgia a stunning 1-0 win over Group F leader Croatia in the 2012 Euro Championship qualifier. Goalkeeper Nukri Revishvili pulled off a string of fine saves to keep the Croats at bay before substitute Otar Martsvaladze stole in behind the defense in the 89th minute and laid the ball off to Kobiashvili, who scored with his left foot.

Georgia Goes Green as Electric Cars Come to Tbilisi

Georgia announced plans last week to purchase thousands of electric vehicles from the Renault-Nissan Alliance and other manufacturers for the government’s fleet, in an effort to promote the country’s leadership in adopting clean-energy technologies. Georgia’s economy minister said the government will buy nearly 4,000 cars and eventually replace the entire existing fleet. She hopes the move will encourage the development of alternative energy resources and help reduce dependence on fossil fuels. “Georgia is a rapidly growing country exporting clean electricity that is produced in our hydroelectric power stations,” PM Gilauri said this month about Georgia’s electricity reserve capacity, adding that 19 hydropower stations will be built by 2013.

[BLOOMBERG: Renault in Deal to Provide Electric Cars to Ex-Soviet Republic of Georgia](#)

Georgia Delivers Aid to Japan Earthquake, Tsunami Survivors

Georgia lent its hand to the relief effort in Japan after the catastrophic earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster, donating \$1 million in humanitarian aid. “Japan has always stood beside us, economically and politically,” said Deputy FM Nino Kalandadze. “The Georgian government has decided to offer Japan a rescue team and financial assistance.” Fulfilling its humanitarian promises, Georgia deployed to Japan last week a 40-person rescue team and a cargo plane filled with relief packages containing medicine and other essentials. Georgia’s embassy is in contact with all 47 Georgian citizens residing in Japan, all of whom are safe.

[TREND DAILY NEWS: Georgian Humanitarian Aid to Japan](#)

Border Talks Between Sokhumi and Moscow Draw Tbilisi’s Condemnation

Tbilisi denounced as illegitimate border talks between Russian officials and de facto representatives of Georgia’s occupied territory of Abkhazia. “The so-called ‘negotiations’ between the occupier country, Russia, and the occupying regime imposed by this country on the delimitation and demarcation of the Abkhaz section of Georgia’s border are illegal and agreements reached between them will not have legitimacy,” the Georgian Foreign Ministry said in a statement, adding that only Georgia’s government has the authority to engage in border discussions regarding Georgia’s territory. A joint Abkhaz-Russian commission met last week for the second time to discuss border demarcation.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Tbilisi Condemns Sokhumi, Moscow ‘Border Talks’](#)

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

LE MONDE DIPLOMATIQUE: Georgians who can't go home

During and after the Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia, 192,000 people were forced to flee their homes in now Russian-occupied territories; 26,000 remain unable to return. Many of their homes were destroyed by S. Ossetian militias backed by Russia. Russian forces now patrol the administrative boundary line of Georgia's Russian-occupied territories, strictly controlling movement across the border. Residents of the southern Abkhazian province of Gali move across the line only at the discretion of border guards.

mondediplo.com

THE ECONOMIST: Revolutions compared—rose-tinted lessons

Can Arab revolutionaries learn from the Rose Revolution? Certainly, President Saakashvili said in a speech at Brookings. In 2003, a popular revolution led by the young and western-educated swept the old order. This was Georgia's first advantage. Experience has its merits; but in seeking to replace one system with another, youth was key. "We have ministers in their twenties who don't remember how the Soviet Union looked", he said proudly. Ultimately, the result has been a "mental revolution." His second lesson concerned expectations of immediate improvement. In Georgia, the new government handled this by embarking on radical reform. It disbanded the corrupt, 15,000-strong traffic police overnight, and began an extensive program of privatization. This upset entrenched interests. But backed by enormous popular support in the post-revolutionary honeymoon, the government survived the friction its reforms caused.

www.economist.com

REUTERS: Georgian economy returns to growth in 2010

Georgia's economy grew 6.4 percent year-on-year in 2010 thanks to rising bank deposits and credit portfolios, a revival in tourism, and new infrastructure projects, data showed last week. The growth follows a 3.8 percent decline in 2009 and is higher than the government's initial forecasts. According to the official figures, in nominal terms GDP was \$11.7 billion in 2010 compared with \$10.6 billion in 2009.

www.cnbc.com

EURASIANET: Bishkek looks to Georgia as role model for reform

The Kyrgyz justice-reform working group presented last week the findings from its trip to Georgia, whose anti-corruption achievements it has lauded. "That country was able to overcome organized crime and corruption, which had overrun practically all government bodies," the group head said upon returning from Georgia to study the country's 2004 high-profile anti-corruption campaign; he also praised Tbilisi for revising police procedures to better protect human rights.

www.eurasianet.org

RADIO FREE EUROPE: Georgia's ruling party, opposition seek consensus on electoral reform

President Saakashvili said earlier this month that Georgia wants to be "not only the No. 1 reformer or the No. 1 corruption fighter," but also the country which has "the cleanest elections." He went on to describe as positive the consultations that began last fall with eight opposition parties on amending the existing election law.

www.rferl.org

EURASIA DAILY MONITOR: Russian hard bargaining delays contract on French Mistral warships

Many disagreements, commercial and technical, are slowing down the contract-drafting process on the Mistral sale. Politically, however, the French and Russian defense ministries are rapidly developing their relations. Russian Defense Minister Anatoliy Serdyukov agreed in Paris with his new counterpart, Gerard Longuet, on a list of activities, including an air force command-and-staff joint exercise, a French naval visit to Russia, and separate visits there by Longuet and the French ground forces, naval, and air force commanders in chief, all during the current year.

www.jamestown.org



DEUTSCHLAND RADIO: Pink wave hunter

Germany's Kunsthalle Fridericianum museum will exhibit from March to June the architectural artwork (above) of renowned Georgian artist Andro Wekua. In the "Pink Wave Hunter" exhibition, Wekua combines collective and personal memories of his war-torn past into 15 poignant architectural representations of heavily destroyed and abandoned buildings to remind others of the ethnic cleansing in his native Abkhazia during the early 1990s. The death toll of the 1992 Sukhumi massacre was between 4,000-7,000, but the real humanitarian catastrophe occurred in the weeks that followed, when an estimated 250,000 ethnic Georgians were expelled from the land by armed Russians. The exhibition also includes paintings, collages, and sculptures that, in typical Wekua fashion, appear as mysterious figures whose context unfolds in the imagination, depending on the viewer's past experiences, and is only hinted at in its outlines.

www.dradio.de

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: Donald Trump to the rescue in Georgia?

Although foreign direct investment decreased by 16 percent in 2010 to \$553 million, following an even more dramatic fall of 58 percent the previous year, the Saakashvili administration has won praise from the World Bank for liberalizing the business environment. The administration's efforts to combat institutional corruption have also been acclaimed. "Georgia has real advantages because it is modern and competitive and gives you a springboard to do business in the region," said Fady Asly, a Lebanese businessman who has relocated to Georgia to invest in the country's burgeoning energy markets. Said Georgia's economy minister, Vera Kobalia: "When someone like Trump decides that Georgia is the right place to put his brand name, a lot of other companies will feel comfortable following in his footsteps."

www.france24.com

BLOOMBERG: Georgia seeks investors for 50-MW wind project

Georgia is seeking foreign investors for a 50 megawatt wind-power plant valued at \$100 million. "Georgia is trying to diversify its energy sources," Deputy Energy Minister Mariam Valishvili said. The plant, located in western Georgia, is due for completion by 2015. The project is part of the Government's plan to raise \$5 billion to develop the hydropower industry over the next seven years.

www.bloomberg.com

EURASIANET: Svaneti gold prospectors seek the monster nugget

The local addiction to gold prospecting in Svaneti is connected to the Inguri River. To Svans, this mighty, 213-kilometer-long river, which courses through western Georgia and into Georgia's Russian-occupied territory of Abkhazia, is a liquid gold highway. Many Svans believe that the Inguri hydropower station's dam, the world's highest arch dam, was built under Soviet rule to accumulate all the gold that flows with the river.

www.eurasianet.org