

GEORGIA UPDATE

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US Deputy Secretary of State William J. Burns—pictured above (middle) with US Ambassador to Georgia John Bass (left) and Georgian National Security Advisor Giga Bokeria—met yesterday with President Saakashvili, opposition representatives, and civil society members. He underscored the strength of US-Georgia relations and said Secretary of State Clinton will visit Tbilisi next year to further deepen bilateral relations in the context of the US-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership. Burns, in reiterating US support for NATO membership, said: “Georgia can invest in its future and make an even stronger case for itself on the value of integration into the Euro-Atlantic community by developing, over the next several years, the kind of democratic process that the people of Georgia deserve.”

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“We should embrace the vision of a united, democratic Georgia embedded in the institutions of a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace. As Georgia deepens its reforms to consolidate free-market democracy, the West must provide a credible road map to Euro-Atlantic integration.”

◆ US Senator Lindsey Graham in releasing the Atlantic Council report on “Georgia in the West”

“The WTO operates by consensus. That means Georgia must agree to Russian accession, something it has yet to do. The government of Switzerland has helpfully volunteered to serve as a mediator helping Russia and Georgia resolve their trade-related issues. We have made it clear to Russia that there is no way to go around Georgia: the two countries must resolve their differences through the mediation process.”

◆ Michael McFaul, the Obama Administration’s nominee to serve as US ambassador to Russia

“While the NATO Bucharest Summit and subsequent commitments with regard to Georgia’s NATO membership remain firm, I am confident that it is time to move forward. Allies should reaffirm that Georgia’s NATO integration is an irreversible process. We should also encourage the people and the government of Georgia to continue ambitious reforms, despite the security challenges they face today. Therefore I fully support a full and complete Membership Action Plan for Georgia at the NATO Summit at Chicago in May 2012.”

◆ Congressman Michael Turner, head of the US NATO Parliamentary Assembly delegation

UPCOMING MILESTONES

Oct. 20: 18th Round of Georgia-Russia WTO talks

Nov. 1-4: Parliament Speaker Bakradze visits US

Nov. 9-10: NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and North Atlantic Council in Georgia

Nov. 23: 8th Anniversary of the Rose Revolution

May 15-22: NATO summit in Chicago

TOP STORIES

US Senators Back Georgia on WTO as Talks Remain at Impasse

Two US senators urged the Obama administration on Wednesday not to sacrifice Georgia's security and sovereignty concerns in Washington's effort to help Moscow join the World Trade Organization. Georgia wants customs monitors on its internationally recognized borders, but has conceded these could be international officials. Because the WTO operates by consensus, Georgia has an effective veto over Russia's entry into the world trade body. This afternoon, after the latest round of talks between Georgia and Russia, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergi Kapanadze said: "This meeting ended with no result again. The situation is the same as it was after our last round of talks. We agreed that another meeting will be held at the beginning of next week."

In a letter to US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and US Trade Representative Ron Kirk, Senators Roy Blunt and James Inhofe came down strongly on the side of Georgia. "It should not come as any surprise that Georgian leaders are insisting on maintaining at least some semblance of territorial integrity through the customs process," they said. "Without such recognition, agreeing to Russia WTO accession could be tantamount to international ratification of a new border arrangement imposed by Russia through force of arms." The senators added: "We fail to see how this outcome could possibly be in the United States' national interest." Blunt and Inhofe, two usually reliable votes for trade, said in their letter they could only offer their support if Russia agrees to border and custom procedures that respect "Georgia's security considerations and future sovereignty."

[REUTERS: US senators back Georgia in WTO talks with Russia](#)
[REUTERS: Georgia—No WTO deal with Russia, to talk again](#)

Atlantic Council Report on Georgia: "The West must provide a credible road map to Euro-Atlantic integration"

An Atlantic Council task force chaired by Democratic Senator Jeanne Shaheen and Republican Senator Lindsey Graham calls on the US and Europe to take "concrete steps" to intensify support for Tbilisi's Euro-Atlantic integration. "We should embrace the vision of a united, democratic Georgia embedded in the institutions of a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace," said Senator Graham last Thursday in releasing the report—"Georgia in the West: A Policy Road Map to Georgia's Euro-Atlantic Future." He added: "As Georgia deepens its reforms to consolidate free-market democracy, the West must provide a credible road map to Euro-Atlantic integration."

The report offers a series of recommendations for the US, the European Union, and for Georgia aimed at accelerating Georgia's acceptance into Western institutions. It urges NATO members to establish a clear and unequivocal path to membership for Georgia. "Transatlantic allies should agree that the NATO-Georgia Commission is Georgia's path to membership and adopt a package of intensified cooperation at a first-ever NATO-Georgia summit in Chicago next May," the authors write. "NATO allies should respond to Georgia's non-use-of-force pledge by helping Georgia develop defense plans and purchase defensive arms." The task force also says US and European officials should hold Russia to account for its legal obligations, while pushing for the internationalization of ethnic Georgian-populated areas in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and propose a neutral international security presence in the occupied territories. The EU should push Russia to allow the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) to fulfill its mandate across the occupation line and invite US participation in the EUMM.

"In the 1990s, most were skeptical that the Baltic countries would one day be members of NATO and the EU," declares the report. "Yet their performance, and clear US leadership, transformed the idea of their membership from a radical notion to a natural outcome. Clarity in Western policy provided the incentives for painful reforms, while neutralizing Russian objections. Today we can draw from these lessons."

[ATLANTIC COUNCIL: "Georgia in the West—A Policy Road Map to Georgia's Euro-Atlantic Future"](#)



The USS Philippine Sea made a port call in Black Sea port of Batumi this week to hold joint training exercises with Georgia's coast guard. The visit by the guided missile cruiser is part of a series of routine port calls for training exercises with Georgian forces.

NDI Poll: Strong Support for Government, EU/NATO Integration

A new survey by the National Democratic Institute finds broad support for Georgia's governing party and its policies. Results from last month's survey show a growing confidence among the public in Georgia's democratic reform progress. The survey found that 62% of Georgian respondents either completely or partially agree that the government is making important changes that "matter." Notably, 76 percent of those surveyed concur with the goal of joining the EU, while 74 percent support Georgia's prospective NATO membership. Georgians ranked economic issues high on their agenda. Of those polled, 62 percent believe more needs to be said about inflation, with the majority believing that agriculture reform is among the most important issue for future reform. The survey was the 7th in a series of NDI-led public opinion polls carried out since November 2008.

[NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE: Public Attitudes in Georgia, September 2011](#)

Georgia Ranked 2nd After New Zealand in Ease of Access to Government Information

Georgia scored second after New Zealand in a new global survey analyzing public access to government information, out-ranking almost all developed states. In a study conducted by the Center for Law and Democracy, Georgian government officials were positive, compliant, and thorough when responding to the Center's requests for budgetary information. The Canadian think tank assessed the ease in accessing government data from 80 countries on areas including environmental protection, maternal health promotion, and foreign assistance.

[CENTER FOR LAW & DEMOCRACY: Ask Your Government, A Comparative Analysis of Access to Budget information](#)

"Georgia's NATO integration is irreversible"—US Delegation to NATO Parliamentary Assembly

Senior US lawmakers last week expressed confidence in Georgia's path to NATO membership, saying its integration with the Alliance is irreversible. "On behalf of the US NATO Parliamentary Assembly delegation, I would like to firmly support the aspirations of the Georgian people and their government to join NATO," said US Rep. Michael Turner, the delegation's leader. He said he "fully supported" a complete Membership Action Plan—the next step towards membership—for Georgia at the next NATO summit in May. "Georgia has made impressive progress in its democratic transformation and economic development including the establishment of nearly corruption-free environment, strengthened governance, enhances rule of law and a free market economy," he said.

[RUSTAVI: US Delegation Supports Georgia's Accession to NATO](#)

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

WASHINGTON POST: Editorial—Georgia on Mr. Putin's mind
 Putin's cynical and patently false charge is worth deconstructing for what it reveals about Russia's likely course during the next phase of Putinism, which, if the strongman has his way, will last a dozen years. Having accused Washington last week of employing Georgia to block progress, Putin added: "If they really want us to be part of the WTO, they can make things happen overnight." In other words, he expects Obama to strong-arm Georgia, forcing it to agree to Russia's terms.

www.washingtonpost.com

THE ECONOMIST: Tbilisi's Count of Monte Cristo

By Georgian law no citizen can hold another nationality; if you acquire citizenship abroad, you lose Georgian citizenship automatically. If you want to regain it, you must submit a formal letter—to the president. Bidzina Ivanishvili has played into the authorities' hands. The timing of the revocation of his citizenship does smack of pettiness. But Ivanishvili has only himself (and his advisers) to blame.

www.economist.com

LA CROIX: In Tbilisi, Nicolas Sarkozy feels like he's in Europe

Before a large crowd on Freedom Square in Tbilisi, President Sarkozy last week strongly encouraged Georgia's European aspirations. "This continued rapprochement with the EU depends, primarily, on your reforms and on the deepening of your democracy," he said. Sarkozy took care to praise the path already travelled in terms of reforms. Citing the Franco-German example, he also called for reconciliation between Georgia and Russia, reminding Moscow that "the Soviet Union does not exist anymore."

www.la-croix.com

LE POINT: When Nicolas Sarkozy tackles Vladimir Putin

For the South Caucasus, especially Georgia, the timing of Sarkozy's visit was particularly well chosen to remind Putin's Russia that there are limits not to cross. Sarkozy reaffirmed France's support of Georgia's independence and said Paris and Europe are still attached to the terms of the 2008 peace agreement, which Moscow continues to violate. Hailing Georgia's reform progress, the French leader said: "When I am in Tbilisi, I feel I am in Europe and not elsewhere."

www.lepoint.fr

BBC: Sarkozy warns Russia over Georgia threats during tour

President Sarkozy told thousands of Georgians in Tbilisi that Russia should stop making "threats" against its neighbor. He said Russia was considered a friend, but attempts to intimidate Georgia were "fully unacceptable," adding that Moscow should abide by the terms of the 2008 ceasefire agreement. He said Georgia should be able to express its aspirations to join the EU and NATO despite Russian opposition.

www.bbc.co.uk

REUTERS: Russia feeds arms addiction as soft power fails

While Western countries cut military spending to deal with the financial crisis, Russia plans to spend \$641.5 billion on defense through 2020. Russia is focusing on the Caucasus region and enemy Georgia, which it accuses of being one of Russia's biggest security threats. Earlier this year Moscow held its largest annual air force exercises in the region just north of Georgian airspace in the province of Kabardino-Balkaria.

www.reuters.com

EURASIA DAILY MONITOR: Georgia tycoon Ivanishvili ready to bid for state purchase

A presidential bid made by Bidzina Ivanishvili raises a challenge to the state itself. One person brings his personal wealth to bear on political processes and lifts him to power. He thus becomes a competitor to the institutional state. Given the delayed development of the concept of state as such in Georgian society, many, including Ivanishvili himself, might not grasp these implications of his quest for political power. If successful, this could amount to a wholesale buy-up of the state.

www.jamestown.org



*A boy jumps between ancient roof domes during the Tbilisoba, the capital city's annual festival. Hundreds of Tbilisi residents joined in the festivities on Oct. 8, featuring live music, traditional foods and costumes, and events such as a rafting down the Mtkvari River. Tbilisoba was held in the city's decorated Old Town quarter. **More pictures:** www.civil.ge*

NEW ZEALAND HERALD: Georgia's recipe for reform

PM Gilauri believes there is a formula to be followed for successful reform. "You need a leader who is clean himself, and who has very much determination to fight corruption. You need a team who is capable. You need the population's huge support. If you have these three, then it's doable." Gilauri said that the reforms, painful though they were, had been Georgia's biggest achievement "and it scares Russian top politicians."

www.nzherald.co.nz

EURASIANET: Russia to stay in Abkhazia, S. Ossetia, 49 more years

Russia's recently ratified defense agreements refer to the 7th military base in Abkhazia and the 4th in S. Ossetia, which have evolved from the peacekeeping bases that Russia maintained before its 2008 invasion of Georgia. The bases host about 7,000 troops, split evenly between the two regions. It would seem that legality is a bit of a fig leaf when it comes to the Russian presence in Georgia's occupied territories, especially in S. Ossetia, which is dominated by Russia in so many extralegal ways.

www.eurasianet.org

UEFA.COM: Georgia's Kobiashvili enjoys 100-cap honor

Georgia may have lost at home to Greece in their concluding UEFA Euro 2012 qualifier but Levan Kobiashvili had cause for cheer at Tbilisi's Mikheil Meskhi stadium after becoming his country's first 100-cap player. "I will cherish it for the rest of my life," he said. The midfielder has played more than 300 games in Germany's Bundesliga.

www.uefa.com

THE GUARDIAN: Tbilisi's stately, imaginative Rustaveli Theatre

Rustaveli Theatre, the winning landmark of this week's travel tip, hails from Georgia. The corners of this stately building on one of Tbilisi's tree-lined avenues still bear bullet holes from the independence struggles of the 1990s. There is a huge tradition of theatre in Georgia. The imaginative Shakespeare productions of the Soviet era made a huge impact at Edinburgh in the 1980s, and the Tbilisi International Festival of Theatre features international stars and the top national companies.

www.ivebeenthere.co.uk

LONDON REVIEW OF BOOKS: In Tbilisi

This has been the best ever year for tourism in Georgia, as peace returns after the 2008 war with Russia. In daylight, Tbilisi is revealed to be in need of urgent (but careful) repair and a reliable water supply. The city mixes unassuming vernacular buildings with substantial stuccoed mansions, embalmed during the Soviet years. Extravagant art nouveau houses, their febrile iron balconies clinging tenuously to crumbling façades, are a reminder that oil money once flooded in from Baku.

www.lrb.co.uk