

# GEORGIA UPDATE

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- NATO to Hold Disaster Response Exercises in Georgia Later This Month
- Foreign Direct Investment Continues to Climb, Rising 6.7% in First Half of 2012



NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen was one of a series of high-level foreign visitors to Georgia over the past week—a group that included numerous foreign ministers, a prime minister, and several US senators. The Alliance leader had high praise for Georgia, saying its democratic reforms are bringing the country closer to NATO, and adding that “Georgia is a special partner for NATO and a model of commitment.” But Fogh Rasmussen’s comments did not go over well in Moscow, where on Monday Russian foreign ministry official Aleksandr Lukashevich reacted by telling journalists: “Such statements show NATO still has not learned the lessons of the tragic events of 2008 in the South Caucasus and continues to send Tbilisi ‘encouraging’ signals.” [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org)

## INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

**WALL STREET JOURNAL:** Georgian democracy and Russian meddling

**RFE:** Moscow says NATO hasn’t learned lessons of 2008 Georgia war

**AFP:** Georgia leader seeks to trump rival with mass rallies

**XINHUA:** Georgian ruling party polled to lead parliamentary elections race

**FT DEUTSCHLAND:** Georgia—Massive progress in fighting corruption

**AFP:** Georgia detains Russian militant after border clash

**BUZZFEED:** Pro-Russian candidate in Georgia recruits US allies

**AFP:** US senators make wine for Georgian president

**ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER:** Teaching justice 8,000 miles away

**EURASIANET:** Who’s the healthiest of all in the Caucasus?

**HUFFINGTON POST:** Exploring Svaneti, Georgia

## QUOTES OF THE WEEK

“Georgia is again appealing to the world—this time by inviting international scrutiny of its democratic process and elections. Hopefully the West is wise enough to see the games underway to tarnish Georgia’s image and muddy its domestic waters.”

◆ Estonian Defense Minister Urmas Reinsalu in a *Wall Street Journal* opinion piece on Monday

“We will look to the election observation missions of long-established, well-respected international organizations, such as the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, and the OSCE, to monitor this vote and offer their objective views of its conduct. We urge all parties to do the same and to accept the final results peacefully.”

◆ US Senator John McCain

“The existing distribution of political power gives us reason to assume that these elections are going to be one of the most competitive elections in the history of Georgia.”

◆ Transparency International Georgia in a report released yesterday on the election environment

“Georgia is a special partner for NATO and a model of commitment. Soon to become biggest non-NATO troop contributor in Afghanistan.”

◆ NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen

## ELECTION MILESTONES

**Sep. 21:** Deadline for international observers to apply for CEC accreditation to monitor elections

**Sep. 24:** Deadline for local observers to apply for CEC accreditation to monitor elections

**Sep. 28:** Deadline for media CEC media accreditation

**Oct. 1:** Election day

**Oct. 15:** Runoff elections, if necessary, for majoritarian seats in Parliament

**Oct. 20:** Deadline for CEC to submit final results

**TOP STORIES****OSCE/ODIHR Election Observers Underscore Progress in Creating Inclusive, Transparent Election**

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Election Observation Mission in Georgia on Tuesday released its first interim report on the Oct. 1 parliamentary elections. The report emphasized that significant amendments were made to the election law and campaign finance law based on recommendations from the OSCE/ ODIHR, the Venice Commission, and the Council of Europe's Group of States against corruption, though some remain to be addressed.

The Georgian Central Election Commission is committed to enhancing inclusiveness, transparency, and stakeholders' trust in the elections, the report underscored. It also said the media environment is diverse, if polarized, and must-carry/must-offer provisions have expanded public access to a range of political views. Meanwhile, Georgia's new campaign-finance regulations are controversial, as is the implementation of them, but Bidzina Ivanishvili's campaign is nonetheless well-funded—near or above the maximum limit for party spending within a given campaign cycle—and Georgian Dream has been able to campaign actively across Georgia.

These views in the interim report largely reflect the findings of the OSCE/ODIHR report on the 2010 municipal Georgian elections, which were deemed largely free and fair, noting: The election administration managed the elections in a professional, transparent, and inclusive manner; contestants were able to campaign and to assemble freely; the large field of candidates provided voters with a genuine choice; the media broadcast a variety of election-related programs, including debates, allowing voters to make a more informed choice.

[OSCE: Interim Report No. 1](#)

**Ahead of Election, US Delegation Urges “All Political Parties to Participate Fully,” Abide by the Law**

US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Melia yesterday “urged all political parties to participate fully in the election process while abiding by the law” after leading an interagency delegation to Georgia this week. In offering his assessment of the electoral environment, he also “urged all parties to participate constructively and pursue political goals at the ballot box.” He underscored that peaceful protests and the freedom of assembly are “hallmarks of democratic society,” and that the delegation had assessed that the major parties could hold rallies, travel the country freely, and get their message out to voters. He also urged all parties to renounce violence. Melia welcomed election reforms passed late last year, which expanded access for parties to mass media during the campaign period. He noted that the passage of the “must carry” provision was also positive. Finally, Melia encouraged all parties to remember they must work together in parliament after the election.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: US Inter-Agency Mission on Elections](#)

**Governing Party Increases Lead Over Georgian Dream, Says New Independent Poll**

The governing UNM has increased its lead over Bidzina Ivanishvili's Georgian Dream coalition since June, says a new poll commissioned by the US National Democratic Institute (NDI). It found 37% of likely voters would vote for the UNM if the elections were held tomorrow, almost the same as in NDI's June poll. Georgian Dream suffered a 6% drop since June, with just 12% backing it now. As in June, the Christian-Democratic Movement (CDM) again had 3%. Meanwhile, Vano Merabishvili, who became prime minister in early July, has improved his standing, with 62% of respondents saying they “like” him, up from 55% in June, when he was interior minister. Ivanishvili's favorability suffered a 7% decline, with 39% of respondents saying they “like” him, according to the August poll. The survey was fielded by the Caucasus Resource Research Centers for NDI on Jul. 31-Aug. 12 and was funded by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. It was conducted through nationwide face-to-face interviews with 2,038 respondents, and has a margin of error plus/minus 3%.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: NDI Poll Shows UNM in Strong Lead](#)

**Georgia Holds First National TV Debate; Ivanishvili Fails to Show**

On Sunday, the first televised debate between candidates in a national election in Georgian history took place. Organized by GPB in partnership with USAID and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, it featured three candidates—PM Vano Merabishvili, Giorgi Targamadze, Christian Democratic Movement leader, and Shalva Natelashvili, who heads the Labor Party. Bidzina Ivanishvili, the Georgian Dream Coalition's candidate, refused to appear, indicating that the other candidates were not of the same stature; Georgian Dream was represented at the debate by an empty podium.

[GEORGIA ELECTION UPDATE: Candidates Debate Before Election](#)

**NATO Leader Praises Georgia's NATO Progress in Visit to Tbilisi**

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen praised Georgia for its strong commitment to NATO and to democratic reforms in a visit to Tbilisi last week. He said Georgia's reforms are bringing the country closer to NATO. “Georgia is a special partner for NATO and a model of commitment,” he said after talks with President Saakashvili.

“We are deeply thankful for the courage, determination and professionalism that your troops show every day,” Fogh Rasmussen said of Georgia's “very significant” contribution to the Alliance-led ISAF mission in Afghanistan. He also commended Georgia's commitment to finding a peaceful resolution involving its Russian-occupied regions of S. Ossetia and Abkhazia, and reiterated NATO's “unwavering support for Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty.”

[NATO: Secretary General Praises Georgia's progress Toward NATO](#)

**NATO to Hold Disaster Response Exercises in Georgia**

NATO disaster response exercises dubbed will be held in Georgia from Sep. 22-28. Teams from 11 Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council nations are planning to participate; all together, more than 1,000 members of civilian and military teams from NATO and partner countries will take part in the event. The scenario for the exercise will be a severe earthquake affecting the vicinity of Tbilisi, resulting in high numbers of victims and widespread damage to critical infrastructure, including chemical spills and a radiological incident. The exercise will allow NATO and partner nations to practice procedures and capabilities, in order to improve their ability to respond to a disaster. The exercise will also contribute to strengthening the stricken nation's capability to effectively coordinate consequence management operations.

[UPI: Georgia to Host Key Disaster Response Exercise](#)

**Foreign Direct Investment Continues to Climb, Rising 6.7% in First Half of 2012**

Foreign direct investment in Georgia grew 6.7% year-on-year in the first half of 2012 to \$488.8 million, Geostat said this week. Investment in manufacturing led the way, with \$106.5 million or 21.8% of the total, while \$96.2 million went to transportation projects, \$93.2 million went to energy, and \$81.1 million to the financial industry. German companies were the leading investors with \$135.3 million, followed by those from Turkey with \$43.1 million, and Azerbaijan with \$40.7 million.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Geostat Releases Q2 Preliminary FDI Figures](#)

## INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

**WALL STREET JOURNAL: Georgian democracy & Russian meddling**

It is hard not to see Ivanishvili's candidacy as a second phase of Russian designs against Georgia, writes Estonian Defense Minister Urmas Reinsalu. Polls show that two-thirds of Georgian voters believe Georgia is on the right track, and 55% intend to vote for the governing party. A vast majority support Georgia's NATO aspirations. Polls also show widespread doubt about Ivanishvili's message. Since victory at the ballot box is out of reach, he has laid the groundwork to reject the election results. Georgia is again appealing to the world—this time by inviting international scrutiny of its democratic process and elections. Hopefully the West is wise enough to see the games underway to tarnish Georgia's image and muddy its domestic waters.

<http://online.wsj.com>

**RFE: Moscow says NATO hasn't learned lessons of 2008 war**

Russian foreign ministry official Aleksandr Lukashevich was reacting to a Sep. 6 statement made by NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen during a visit to Tbilisi, in which he said Georgia's "future home is in NATO." He told journalists: "Such statements show NATO still has not learned the lessons of the tragic events of 2008 in the South Caucasus and continues to send Tbilisi 'encouraging' signals."

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

**AFP: Georgia leader seeks to trump rival with mass rallies**

Saturday's rallies were a show of strength after a series of events across Georgia by Ivanishvili over the past few months. At the biggest rally, in Kutaisi, a large convoy of flag-decked cars cruised into the city to cheers from tens of thousands of supporters gathered in a main square, chanting their leader's nickname: "Misha! Misha!" Said the President's Dutch-born wife Sandra Roelofs in fluent Georgian: "Behind your smiling faces there are still a lot of problems; we are going forward with huge steps but more is needed, and there is no doubt that we will do this." Most opinion polls have suggested that Saakashvili's party has a significant lead over the opposition.

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

**XINHUA: Georgian ruling party leads elections race**

The poll, conducted between July 31 and Aug. 12 by the Caucasus Resource Research Centers for the U.S.-based National Democratic Institute, showed that the ruling party had 37 percent of the voter support, and the major opposition Georgian Dream coalition had 12 percent of voter support.

<http://news.xinhuanet.com>

**FT DEUTSCHLAND: Georgia—Massive progress v. corruption**

Georgia has made a tremendous effort in fighting corruption. In no other country has corruption declined as much, says Transparency International. Corruption by contrast worsened sharply in Russia and Ukraine. Saakashvili made fighting corruption his top priority. This is one reason why the latest polls show his party with 55% support versus 33% for the opposition coalition led by Bidzina Ivanishvili. "He formed a modern state out of a corrupt, destroyed and criminal failing state," one Western diplomat says.

[www.ftd.de](http://www.ftd.de)

**AFP: Georgia detains Russian militant after border clash**

Georgia on Saturday said it has detained a Russian militant fighter, one of the remnants of an armed gang that recently clashed with security forces near the enemy states' border leaving 14 dead. "The Georgian interior ministry has detained one of the members of the armed group in the Lopota Gorge, Akhmet Chataev, a citizen of the Russian Federation from the North Caucasus," the ministry said. Officials have said the clash with the alleged Muslim militants broke out last month when Special Forces confronted an armed gang which had crossed over from Russia's North Caucasus region of Dagestan, where the Kremlin has been battling an Islamic insurgency.

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

**HUFFINGTON POST: The Allure Of The Greater Caucasus— Exploring Svaneti, Georgia**

Svaneti, the most famous and far-flung of Georgia's mountain provinces, has come to represent an idolized version of what is typically Georgian: a land of folk-heroes and strange mists, of crumbling towers and sacrificed goats, of atonal pandauri melodies and sequestered icons, one of the few places in Georgia to maintain a vestige of cultural purity against the onslaught of Ottoman, Mongol, Arab, Persian and Russian invasions that has come to define the splendid cosmopolis of Tbilisi. More beautiful still is Ushguli (above), the highest village in Europe, a rather more death-defying three-hour jeep drive up from Mestia—confirming my conviction that the beauty of most of Georgia's sites is inversely proportional to their accessibility—past the nearly as scenic villages of Adishi and Ipari.

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

**BUZZFEED: Pro-Russian candidate in Georgia recruits US allies**

A prominent group of American journalists and public figures appear to have gone on the payroll of a pro-Russian opposition leader in Georgia. Ivanishvili's television station, TV9, assembled the paid board. The station denies taking sides in the upcoming Oct. 1 parliamentary election, despite its close ties to a leading candidate. TV9'

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

**AFP: US senators make wine for Georgian president**

US senators John McCain, Joe Lieberman and Lindsey Graham picked the grapes with Western ally Saakashvili and then trampled them into pulp in a vat at the Georgian leader's country cottage on Thursday. "To you, Mr President, to our friendship, to our alliance, to your health," Lieberman said before clinking glasses with Saakashvili. Visiting Polish and Swedish foreign ministers Radoslaw Sikorski and Carl Bildt onard in the country's rural eastern region of Kakheti.

**EURASIANET: Who's the healthiest of all in the Caucasus?**

Bloomberg released its global health rankings of countries with a population of a million or more. At 71st, Georgia was the highest-ranked country in the Caucasus. That Georgia did well is surprising, given that 57% of the adult male population smokes, according to WHO data. That's the highest percentage in the Caucasus.

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

**ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER: Teaching justice 8,000 miles away**

The trip was Judge Carter's 14th to Georgia, all at the invitation of the Georgia Supreme Court. Georgian judges have sought Carter's advice, enthusiasm, and energy as they've been converting an old-style, Soviet, autocratic judicial system into an American-style jury system. With support from President Saakashvili, the elite jurists sought assistance from their US contemporaries to initiate changes in their justice system. Carter became close friends with the chairman and vice chairman of the Georgia Supreme Court; he host them and other Georgian judges in California.

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