

4. What was the timing of deployments/operations in Upper Kodori Valley? And which Forces were involved?

Georgian Police Presence in Upper Abkhazia

July 2006 - August 2008

Restoring Law and Order in the Kodori Gorge

1. By July 2006, the Kodori Gorge was controlled by an illegal armed grouping led by the former governor of the Gorge, Emzar Kvitsiani (dismissed in December 2004) and his nephew Bacho Argvliani. This group, which included members of the former militia battalion “Monadire” (abolished in April 2005), was involved in illegal arms trade, hostage taking and human trafficking. Mr. Kvitsiani and his relatives also appropriated humanitarian aid, which the Georgian government used to send to the population of the region. UNOMIG suspended monitoring of the Kodori Gorge since the hostage-taking incident in June 2003.
2. In July 2006, the Georgian government proposed that Emzar Kvitsiani lay down his arms and allow the newly appointed local administration and police to enter the Gorge. Mr. Kvitsiani disobeyed and organized an anti-government armed rebellion. In response to that, on 25-27 July 2006, the special forces of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, led personally by Minister Ivane Merabishvili, conducted an anti-criminal operation in order to restore law and order in the region. After an exchange of fire between the police and the criminals near the village of Sakeni on July 25, Mr. Kvitsiani, Mr. Argvliani and their closest accomplices escaped from the Gorge to the territory controlled by Abkhazian separatists, while most members of the former militia battalion “Monadire” laid down their arms. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia seized huge deposits of modern Russian armaments worth of several million US Dollars, freed a number of human trafficking victims and arrested numerous criminals that had been hiding in the Gorge for several years. Emzar Kvitsiani ended up in Russia and since then issued several terrorism threats against the Georgian government via Russian state TV channels.
3. After this successful operation, the Georgian government officially renamed the Kodori Gorge into Upper Abkhazia and relocated the legitimate Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (in-exile) to the region’s administrative center village Chkhalt’a. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia was tasked with rebuilding the infrastructure of the Gorge and by November 2006 it completed the reconstruction of the police station, houses for police officers, the hospital, the bank, the school, the administration building in the village of Chkhalt’a and communications in Upper Abkhazia. The Georgian government also started to build a new road connecting the Kodori Gorge with the rest of Georgia.

Georgian Police Forces in Upper Abkhazia

4. Since the end of July 2006 through early August 2008, the Ministry of Internal Affairs maintained from 380 to 580 police officers in Upper Abkhazia (the number varied at times according to security needs). A large part of these police officers, those from the Criminal Police Department and the Special Tasks Main Division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs were rotating on a monthly basis and a small part of them (up to 100) were recruited locally by the Border Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to guard the Upper Abkhazia section of the Georgian-Russian border.
5. Georgian police units (in average groups of 30-40 policemen) were permanently present in the villages of Kvabchara, Mramba, Ptish, Chkhalta, Ajara, Left Gentsvishi, Right Gentsvishi, Omarishara and Sakeni. They were armed with light weapons only and conducted routine patrols in these and other villages of the Gorge (22 villages in total).
6. On 12 October 2006, UNOMIG and the CIS CPKF resumed regular joint patrolling of Upper Abkhazia. During the next joint patrolling, on 14-16 December 2006, UNOMIG and CPKF witnessed the demolition of a large stock of armaments that had been seized by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in July 2006. The next UNOMIG/ CPKF patrols were on 5-7 March 2007, 14-15 May 2007 and 4-6 June 2007.
7. In July 2007, UNOMIG reestablished its team presence in the village of Ajara and since then began monitoring the whole Gorge on a daily basis until 9 August 2008. During this time, UNOMIG observers did not witness any violations of the 1994 Moscow Agreement by the Georgian side in Upper Abkhazia, while Abkhazian separatists, aided by the Russians, staged several serious armed provocations (see annex 1 for UN reports on Kodori Gorge).

Russian/Abkhazian Attacks on Upper Abkhazia Before the August War

8. On 25 October 2006, three “BM-21/Grad” missiles fell on the village of Ajara, one near the location of Ivane Merabishvili, Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia, who was visiting the Kodori Gorge at the time. The fire came from the Abkhazian controlled Tkvarcheli district.
9. On 11 March 2007, from 22:10 until 24:00, the Kodori Gorge suffered from simultaneous artillery and air attacks. At least 17 “BM-21/Grad” type missiles were fired from the ground, and at least one “AT-9/Ataka” type guided missile from the air. The target of the air-attack was the administration building in the village of Chkhalta. The targets of the artillery attack were: the administration building in the village of Chkhalta, the storehouse of oil and fuel materials and the police station in the village of Ajara. The highly precise air attack by modern missiles, the night flight of helicopters in a mountainous area and the massive artillery bombing indicate that this was a well-organized and planned military operation, which could have been conducted in this region only by Russian forces.
10. On 20 September 2007, a special task unit of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia neutralized an armed grouping of 10 people in the Kodori Gorge which had planned an attack on

the new road connecting Upper Abkhazia with the rest of Georgia. The commander of the grouping and his deputy were killed in the exchange of fire. They were identified as Igor Muzavatkin (Vice-Colonel of Russian armed forces, a former member of the CPKF, who served on the contract basis in the border troops division of the Abkhazian separatist security service) and Artur Zorin (Major of Russian armed forces, also a former member of the CPKF). Seven members of the subversive group that identified themselves as members of the border troops division of the Abkhazian separatist security service, were arrested and later, as a gesture of good will, released and handed over to the Abkhazian separatist government.

11. On 9 July 2008, Abkhazian separatist forces attacked a group of Georgian police officers near the Achamkhara heights above the Kodori Gorge. Georgian police fired back. As a result of the exchange of fire, three Georgian police officers and two Abkhazian militia fighters were wounded. On 26 July 2008, Abkhazian separatist forces shelled the valley of the Kvabchara River in the Kodori Gorge from mortars. Fortunately, no one was injured.

Russian/Abkhazian Invasion and Occupation of Upper Abkhazia during the August War

12. The Russian government asserts that the operations carried out by Russian armed forces in Upper Abkhazia and Zugdidi district were aimed at preventing possible offensive of Georgian armed forces on Abkhazia. However, the 2nd brigade of the Georgian armed forces based in Senaki (western Georgia) had been completely relocated to Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia early in the morning of August 9 – prior to the first air strike by Russian military aircraft on Upper Abkhazia at 13:40 on August 9 and the launching of ground operations by Russian troops in Zugdidi district and Upper Abkhazia, on August 10 and August 12 respectively. The absence of any sizable Georgian military contingent in western Georgia by the time Russian armed forces started their advancement in Upper Abkhazia and Zugdidi district refutes the Russian argument.

8 August

13. At around 23:45, two Russian military jets flew over the Kodori Gorge for reconnaissance purposes.

9 August

14. In the morning, the Abkhazian separatist authorities demanded UNOMIG to leave Upper Abkhazia as they, together with Russian army units, were going to start a military operation in order to oust Georgian police from the Gorge. UNOMIG complied and immediately left the area.
15. In between 13:40 and 14:40, Russian military aircraft bombed several villages in Upper Abkhazia, including the region's administrative center in the village of Chkhalta, as well as the villages of Omarishara and Ajara.
16. On 9 August, at 15:50 the Abkhazian separatist government openly declared that it had decided to start a military operation in order to drive out Georgian police from Upper Abkhazia. (see annex 2 for this statement)

17. From 22:20 to 22:30, Russian aviation again bombed the villages of Chkhalta and Gentsvisi.

10 August

18. In between 06:00 and 11:30, Russian aircraft bombed the villages of Chkhalta and Ajara.

19. At around 11:00, Georgian police started to evacuate the civilian population from the Gorge.

20. In between 12:20 and 15:15, Russian aviation heavily bombed a large part of the Gorge, including the village of Chkhalta.

21. From 16:10 to 16:15 and from 17:20 to 17:55, Russian aviation again bombed parts of Upper Abkhazia. Four civilians and three police officers were wounded as a result of this bombing. Later they were evacuated from the Gorge.

22. At 17:40, Abkhazian de facto leader Sergey Bagapsh declared mobilization and martial law on the territory of Abkhazia. (see annex 3)

23. From 19:40 to 20:05 and from 20:20 to 20:30 Russian aircraft bombed parts of Upper Abkhazia.

24. From 22:00 to 22:10, Russian aviation bombed the village of Gentsvisi.

25. At 22:30, Russian troops crossed the administrative border at river Enguri and entered Zugdidi district, which was empty of Georgian armed forces since, as noted above, Georgian regular troops stationed in western Georgia had been relocated to Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia early in the morning of August 9.

11 August

26. In between 00:20 and 03:30, Russian aviation bombed parts of Upper Abkhazia, including the village of Chkhalta.

27. By 12:00, Georgian police finished the evacuation of the civilian population from the Gorge (about 2,000 people in total).

28. At 16:05, the Abkhazian de facto Defense Minister Merab Kishmaria threatened to use “all means to establish Abkhazian jurisdiction over the Kodori Gorge.” (see annex 5 for this statement)

29. From 19:05 to 19:10, Russian aviation bombed parts of Upper Abkhazia.

30. At 20:00, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia learned that some of the Russian army units that had entered Zugdidi district the day before, started to move in the direction of the Jvari pass and the town of Khaishi in Svaneti (northwestern Georgian province adjacent to Upper Abkhazia), from where they could easily enter the Kodori Gorge and encircle Georgian police units there. This Russian column consisted of 70 units of heavy armor and around 600 Russian soldiers. Thus, in order to avoid the siege, the Ministry of Internal Affairs immediately decided to withdraw its

forces from Upper Abkhazia. (see annex 3 for the depiction of Russian movement towards Kodori Gorge)

31. During the night Georgian police left the Gorge (up to 450 police officers), passing on the road above Khaishi towards Mestia.

12 August

32. At 03:00, the last group of Georgian police officers left Kodori Gorge. At 08:00, all Georgian police units that had come out of the Gorge passed above Khaishi and by 12:00 they arrived in Mestia.

33. At 11:00, Russian airborne troops and Abkhazian paramilitary forces launched a ground attack in Upper Abkhazia.

34. At 17:00, Abkhazian paramilitary forces occupied the villages of Zemo Ajara and Kvemo Ajara.

35. By 19:00, a Russian military column consisting of 70 units of heavy armor and 600 soldiers moved through the Jvari pass and reached the town of Khaishi, blocking the road to the Kodori Gorge from the east.

36. By 20:40, Abkhazian paramilitary forces fully occupied Upper Abkhazia.

Detailed Timeline of Russian Air Attacks on Upper Abkhazia

Date and time of air bombing	Area
9 Aug – 13:42-13:50	Large part of Kodori Gorge
9 Aug – 14:03-14:11	Village Omarishara
9 Aug – 14:26-14:39	Village Ajara
9 Aug – 14:26-14:39	Village Chkhalta
9 Aug – 22:20-22:30	Village Chkhalta Village Gentsvisi
10 Aug – 06:02-09:15	Village Ajara Village Chkhalta
10 Aug – 12:22-12:26	Village Chkhalta
10 Aug – 13:51-13:55	
10 Aug – 15:05-15:15	Large part of Kodori Gorge

10 Aug – 16:09-16:14	Large part of Kodori Gorge
10 Aug – 17:21-17:55	Large part of Kodori Gorge
10 Aug – 19:40-20:05	Parts of Kodori Gorge
10 Aug – 20:23-20:27	Parts of Kodori Gorge
10 Aug – 22:03-22:09	Village Gentsvisi
11 Aug – 00:19-00:39	Parts of Kodori Gorge
11 Aug – 02:09-02:40	Village Chkhalta
11 Aug – 03:03-03:29	Parts of Kodori Gorge
11 Aug – 19:05-19:10	Parts of Kodori Gorge

Occupied Villages in Upper Abkhazia

Georgian government has lost control over 22 villages in Upper Abkhazia, which used to be under its administration prior to the August war:

1. Sakeni
2. Omarishara
3. Gvandra
4. Left Gentsvishi
5. Right Gentsvishi
6. Khutia
7. Zemo Ajara
8. Kvemo Ajara
9. Nakhari
10. Mramba
11. Khetskvara
12. Left Ptish
13. Right Ptish
14. Chkhalta
15. Budzguri
16. Shabatkvara
17. Zemo Zima
18. Kvemo Zima
19. Kvabchara
20. Buchukuri
21. Adzgara
22. Tvibrasheni