



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Secretariat

Conflict Prevention Centre

Vienna, 30 July 2008

To: All OSCE Delegations in Vienna

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Re: OSCE Mission to Georgia

Spot Report:

Firing Incident in Sveri/Andzisi Area in the Georgian-Ossetian Zone of Conflict



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Mission to Georgia**

Spot Report

Topic	Firing Incident in Sveri/Andzisi Area in the Georgian-Ossetian Zone of Conflict
Date:	30 July 2008

On 29 July, at the morning meeting at the Joint Peacekeeping Forces Headquarters (JPKF HQ), the Commander of the JPKF ordered a Joint Monitoring to the area close to the Georgian administered village of Sveri, and the Ossetian administered village of Andzisi, respectively 13 and 14 kilometres north of Tskhinvali. The Joint Monitoring was ordered to confirm information received by the JPKF HQ of firing occurring in the area in the early hours of the morning.

The Joint Monitoring Team (JMT) departed the JPKF HQ at 09:45 and proceeded north along the Transcaucasus Highway (TransCam) towards Sveri. At approximately 10:10, when the JMT was about 300 metres south of Sveri, intensive shooting began. The JMT “UAZ” vehicle stopped and its personnel immediately left the vehicle and took cover in a trench which was on the left hand side of the road. The initial fire was from automatic and machine gun weapons and this fire continued. The OSCE vehicle attempted to reverse out of the area, and at that moment the OSCE MMOs noted one explosion with blue smoke in front of it. This was swiftly followed by another one under the vehicle. While reversing, a third explosion occurred on the right hand side of the road. It is assessed that this fire was either from AGS-17 (Russian acronym for automatic grenade launcher) or GP-25 (Russian acronym for under-barrel grenade launcher (mounted on assault rifles), and came from different directions. The OSCE vehicle drove back down the road approximately 200 metres and during this time OSCE MMOs heard very intensive machine gun fire.

The attackers then attempted to direct their fire at the JMT “UAZ” vehicle and the JPKF Military Observers (MO). The OSCE MMOs contacted the Chief Military Officer (CMO) in Tbilisi, and informed him of the situation. The CMO, in turn, contacted the Commander of the JPKF and requested that the Quick Reaction Force (QRF) be dispatched to the scene.

The firing ceased after 5 minutes. Shortly after, OSCE MMOs observed one red “Lada Niva” 4x4, with Georgian number plates, approaching the OSCE vehicle. As the AGS-17/GP-25 began firing again towards the “Niva”, it came to a halt and two men and one woman left the car and began videotaping the event. The woman was talking on her mobile telephone throughout [*Comment: It appears it was Georgian Press. Comment Ends*]. The OSCE MMOs strongly requested that they leave the area immediately due to the dangerous situation, which they eventually did. The firing lasted approximately 25 minutes. About 30 minutes after the firing ceased, the JPKF “UAZ” and the JPKF MOs joined the OSCE vehicle. After 5 minutes a Georgian Police car arrived with five armed policemen, and escorted the JMT out of the area.

At 11:30, the JMT returned at the JPKF HQ and reported on the shooting incident to the Commander of the JPKF.

At 14:00, the Commander of the JPKF ordered a follow-up patrol to the same area to ascertain further details of the incident that took place in the morning. At 14:40, the JMT reached the Georgian Police post in Sveri, which was manned by five armed policemen. They informed the JMT that on 29 July at 04:30, firing began from the South Ossetian side from four different directions towards their post (from two directions from the area of Andzisi village and two directions from the area of the Ossetian administered village of Kitsina, approximately 15 kilometres north north east of Tskhinvali). The Georgian policemen stated that they waited for 30 minutes and then opened return fire towards Andzisi and Kitsina. They showed the JMT their UAZ car with holes from automatic weapons and one tree close to the Post, damaged by a grenade, possibly RPG-7 (the Russian acronym for a shoulder-launched anti-tank rocket propelled grenade launcher). The policemen added that they heard one truck, operating in the Kitsina area. According to them, the shooting finally stopped at 10:30. Several houses in Sveri received damage to walls and roofs.

At 15:10, the JMT arrived at the South Ossetian “Militia” post in Andzisi and was stopped by four armed individuals, who came from the South Ossetian positions. They confirmed that the outbreak of fire started at 04:30 but stated that it originated from the Georgian Police post, and they returned fire. They claimed they did not possess AGS-17 and automatic weapons of large calibre.

This incident is symptomatic of the level of tension in the zone of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. Neither of the sides commented on the fact that the JMT came under fire, or admitted firing upon the JMT. The likelihood of such incidents re-occurring is extremely high.