

GEORGIA UPDATE

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Michael Posner—US assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights, and labor—visited Tbilisi this week to continue the expansion of bilateral relations under the US–Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership. The focus of Posner’s mission was democratic development, and he identified Georgia’s key challenges as “diversifying media outlets and media ownership, promoting civil society engagement, and ensuring accountability for police and other law enforcement.” Deputy Foreign Minister Bokeria welcomed the work being done under the aegis of the Charter, and, commenting on the country’s democratic development, he said: “Georgia is a country where criticism of the government is a normal part of everyday life and that is how it should be.” The US delegation also met with a range of political party, media, and civil society representatives. [CIVIL GEORGIA: U.S.-Georgia Talks on Democratic Reforms](#)

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

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QUOTES OF THE WEEK

“Nowhere in Europe should teenagers be detained as a result of political and security issues. As Secretary General and Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, we call for their immediate release.”

—Secretary General of the CoE, Thorbjørn Jagland, and Chairman of the CoE’s Committee of Ministers, Samuel Žbogar, in a joint statement on the Nov. 4TH abduction of 4 Georgian teenagers

“Georgia is a country where criticism of the government is a normal part of everyday life and that is how it should be.”

—Deputy Foreign Minister Giga Bokeria

“I can say people trust the media in Georgia more compared to neighboring countries because the Georgian media is very diverse, but not yet as professional and independent as we ultimately want it to be.”

—Nino Danelia, media researcher at the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management

UPCOMING MILESTONES

Nov. 23: Sixth anniversary of Rose Revolution

Nov. 26: FM Vashadze on official visit to Paris

Nov. 26: PM Gilauri travels to London to promote investments in Georgia

Dec. 1: PM Gilauri travels to New York to promote investments in Georgia

Dec. 16: PM Gilauri travels to Abu Dhabi to promote investments in Georgia

Dec. 1-2: OSCE Ministerial in Athens

Dec. 3-4: NATO Ministerial in Brussels

TOP STORIES

Global Calls Escalate for Release of Georgian Teenagers Held by Russian-Backed Forces; Defiant Occupiers Extend Detention

The chorus of calls for the release of four Georgian teenagers held by S. Ossetian authorities reached a crescendo this week, as reports emerged that their detention could last at least two months. The youth, at least one of whom is suffering from pneumonia, have not been allowed to see their families. The Council of Europe demanded their "immediate release," as did the EU and the US. "Nowhere in Europe should teenagers be detained as a result of political and security issues," said the secretary-general of the CoE, Thorbjørn Jagland, in a joint statement Monday with the Chairman of the its Ministers Committee, Samuel Žbogar. Last week the Swedish presidency of the EU "urged for the rapid release of all detainees." President Saakashvili said he was encouraged by the international mobilization. "We welcome the EU's very sharp statement that demanded the unconditional release of Georgian minors—children who were going to see an ailing father of one of the detained child in a house from where he was expelled in 2008; such cynicism has not been seen in this region." Meanwhile, Georgia has filed a lawsuit in the European Court of Human Rights over the detention of teenagers, who have now been held for over two weeks.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: CoE calls for immediate release of Georgian teens](#)

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Saakashvili hails EU statement on detained teens](#)

Georgia Media Most Trusted in the Caucasus, New Independent Study Shows

Georgia's media is more trusted than outlets in neighboring Caucasus countries, a new EU-supported study revealed. The survey, done by the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC), showed that nearly 47 percent of respondents partially or fully trust the media in Georgia, compared with 43 percent in Azerbaijan and 39 percent in Armenia. "People trust the media in Georgia more compared to neighboring countries because the Georgian media is very diverse, but not yet as professional and independent as we ultimately want it to be," said researcher Nino Danelia. "We have pro-government media, including the national TV broadcasters, and we have opposition TV channels covering Tbilisi and the region," she said. Added Ana Karlsreiter of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe: "Journalists have no risk of being imprisoned. The country has probably the best laws in the region but the print media is very much polarized." The research is based on a public opinion survey of 1,768 Georgian respondents and on interviews with focus groups, television stations, journalists, media managers and academics; it was conducted over the past three months.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Findings of Georgia Media Research](#)

[RIGHT VISION NEWS: Georgian media most trusted in Caucasus, poll reveals](#)

Eighth Round of Geneva Talks Stumble on Issue of Children Held by Proxy Regime

The eighth round of the Geneva peace talks between Georgia and Russia ended last week without no significant progress, as detention of four teenagers by S. Ossetian authorities cast a pall over the proceedings. The mediators of the talks—the EU, OSCE, and UN—had hoped to finalize a non-use of force agreement and other international security arrangements. "Russia does not want international engagement in this process; they do not want the international community to act as a guarantor of a renewed non-use of force commitment," said Sergi Kapanadze of the Georgian foreign ministry. Deputy Foreign Minister Bokeria also said that Georgia would insist on the "de-occupation" of its territory as part of any non-use-of-force agreement. Meanwhile, international monitors expressed concern about a number of cases of detentions of Georgian citizens in the vicinity of the administrative borders with the occupied territories. A ninth round of talks will be held in January.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Georgia says no progress in eighth round of Geneva talks](#)

International Monitors to Employ Satellites to Monitor Occupied Territories, After Russians Deny Access

The EU plans to use satellites to monitor military activity in the occupied Georgian regions of S. Ossetia and Abkhazia, the head of the European Union Monitoring Mission said. The decision to use satellite imagery was made after Russia and the rebel regions refused to grant EU monitors access to their territory, said Hansjorg Haber, the head of the EUMM. "This will in no way replace our access to these areas, which is absolutely necessary for us to fully implement our mandate," he said. "At the same time, it's better than nothing. As a result, we will be able to document any major military movements or construction works." The EU Satellite Centre, located near Madrid, is tasked with supporting EU decision-making by providing analysis of satellite imagery and collateral data.

[AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: EU satellite centre to monitor Georgia rebel zones: official](#)

EU Delegation Visits Georgia, Assesses Monitoring Mission, Discusses Election Reform

Diplomats from the EU's Political and Security Committee visited Georgia last week to assess the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia's (EUMM) work in Georgia. The delegation met with senior President Saakashvili; PM Gilauri; FM Vashadze; State Minister for Reintegration Iakobashvili and other senior officials, discussing stability and security-related issues, EU-Georgia ties and Georgia's reform process. The European side reiterated its support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within the internationally recognized borders.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: EU diplomats visit Georgia](#)

IMF Offers Optimistic Assessment of Georgian Economy, Forecasts 2% Growth in 2010

Georgia's economy can meet the government's growth forecast of 2 percent next year with as little as \$1 billion in foreign investment. According to a senior IMF representative in Georgia, the government's growth target is "very realistic" even if it attracts less investment than planned. Georgia's \$12.8 billion economy suffered about \$1 billion in damage when Russian forces invaded Georgia in the August 2008 war over the now-occupied Georgian region of S. Ossetia. President Saakashvili has turned to the Middle East for investment to drive the Georgian economy, securing millions of dollars in investment projects from foreign investors.

[BLOOMBERG: IMF Says Georgia Can Grow 2% in 2010](#)



Georgia's 2nd brigade of the 32nd battalion deployed to Afghanistan Monday to assist NATO in its operations there. The American-trained company will serve under the French command. Georgia will increase the number of its troops in Afghanistan next year, when it plans to send a battalion to serve under the US command. Defense Minister Bacho Akhalalua said the total number of Georgian troops to support the Alliance's mission will reach 800.

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

WEEKLY STANDARD: Rewarding Russian aggression—France's dangerous "Mistral" dealing with Russia

In little over a week, a modern French warship is scheduled to visit St. Petersburg. If the Russians like what they see, and a deal can be reached, the French government has signaled that it is willing to sell Moscow a ship of its own. Should the sale go through, it will be the first ever arms sale of its kind to Russia from a NATO member. It will also be a remarkable bit of appeasement by an allied president, Nicolas Sarkozy, whose signature is on the cease-fire agreement between Russia and Georgia from the August 2008 war—the terms of which Moscow has been violating ever since. Such a sale would send a signal to Moscow about just how unserious the West is in holding Russia's feet to fire over its invasion of Georgia and the terms of the subsequent agreement.

weeklstandard.com

ARMENIAN REPORTER: Georgia to remain vital transit route for Armenia

For Armenia, the border with Georgia is more vital because the main land, rail, and seaborne transportation routes, which allow Armenia to connect with the outside world, pass through Georgia. About 70 percent of Armenia's foreign commodity circulation is realized through Georgian territory—via the Georgian rail system and the ports of Batumi and Poti. In the coming decades Armenia will be using Georgian rail lines more than cheaper Turkish transit because the Turkish railroad, which was built a hundred years ago, is simply not in a condition to carry out cargo transportation.

reporter.am

RFE/RL: Former US diplomat Asmus—chances of another Russia-Georgia conflict "can't be ruled out"

After the release of the EU-funded inquiry of the origins of the Russian-Georgian war, former US diplomat Ron Asmus warns the conflict still exists. "The chances of another conflict at some point in the future can't be ruled out," said Asmus, former US deputy assistant secretary of state who also chairs the German Marshall Fund. "We should be having a debate over what are we going to do differently to make sure that there's never another war in Georgia again, or that we can see other crises coming, in Ukraine or elsewhere."

www.rferl.org

EDM: Nabucco investment decision postponed

The Austrian OMV-led Nabucco management announced last week that the investment decision on the project will be postponed, from early 2010 to the fourth quarter of that year. After almost two years of obstruction, Ankara seems entrenched in its refusal to sign a transit agreement for Azerbaijani gas to Europe. Its strategy, however, relies mainly on Russia to fulfill Turkey's AKP government's grand ambition to finalize terms of the South and Blue Stream Two, Samsun-Ceyhan, and other gas and oil pipeline projects in Turkish territory.

jamestown.org

BBC: Wrecks tell tale of growing violence

A suicide bomber attack on a police headquarters in Nazran, Ingushetia, last August illustrates growing violence in Russia's volatile southern republic. "The security services of several foreign countries, working together with the illegal terrorist groups, are seeking to destabilize this part of southern Russia," said a local policeman. When pushed he refuses to name the foreign countries, but hints strongly that Georgia is one of them, and by implication Georgia's best friend, America. This seems a bizarre conspiracy theory. His explanation for what is going on in his tiny republic smacks of Moscow-scripted propaganda.

news.bbc.co.uk

EURASIA DAILY MONITOR: Kidnapping and extortion—Russia's modus operandi in Georgia

Kidnapping has been a usual Russian practice ever since Russia invaded Georgia in August 2008 and seized nearly 20 percent of its territory. But the latest abductions are truly unprecedented since they involve four Georgian schoolboys, whose age's range from 14 to 17. It is quite possible that Moscow is trying to discredit President Saakashvili's government by showing its inability to provide security to Georgian citizens living in territories adjacent to the zones of Russian occupation in Tskhinvali and Abkhazia

www.jamestown.org

EURASIANET: Tbilisi waiting for Pentagon to expand military assistance

Tbilisi waits for the Pentagon to expand military assistance and training in Georgia, while the White House delays permitting the US Defense Department from broadening assistance. A Georgian official claimed that Washington is hesitant to go the whole hog in helping to rebuild the Georgian army since the US is now caught between its commitment to Tbilisi and its desire to mend fences with Moscow. "One thing I can tell you for sure is that our American friends are fully aware of Georgia's defense needs and challenges," said an MP on Georgia's foreign relations committee. "We hope to continue cooperation in a low-profile, non-politicized way, but we do not want this to become a bargaining chip in Russia's foreign policy," he said.

www.eurasianet.org

ASSOCIATED PRESS: Georgia accuses Russia of holding 5 fishermen, demands their release

Georgia accused Russia of detaining five Georgian men who were fishing in Georgian territorial Black Sea waters last week and demanded their release. Russian authorities accused the men of illegal fishing and handed them to de facto authorities in Georgia's Russian-occupied and militarized territory of Abkhazia. "A chain of Russia's extremely dangerous and dirty provocations still continues, and it has acquired a clear form of hunting people," the Georgian Foreign Ministry said. Georgia also accused the Russian troops in Georgia's breakaway province of Abkhazia of firing on a minibus that carried a four-year-old child to a hospital along with several other people.

www.foxnews.com

WALL STREET JOURNAL: Sarko the freedom fighter?

French President Sarkozy's continues to adhere to the old French instinct of treating the former communist nations as just a gaggle of unruly children. A French president who himself hails from that region is uniquely placed to launch a new policy. This means a dialogue between equals in eastern and western EU member states and an understanding—particularly coming from France and Germany—that East European fears about Russia are both understandable and largely justified. Eastern Europe deserves a better proof of Sarkozy's commitment to their freedom.

online.wsj.com

NEW YORK TIMES: From Texas to Tbilisi—Dallas basketball player Is hero in Europe

During the war between Georgia and Russia last year, many Georgians felt abandoned when their closest ally, the US, did not enter the conflict. But they remained steadfast in their support of Tyrone Ellis, a former Georgian national team basketball player from Dallas. On the court, Ellis did something his fellow Americans had not done during the war: He fought for Georgia, and he won. Ellis will not stay in Europe forever, and he is trying to lay the groundwork for an N.B.A. coaching career. But he vowed to represent Georgia for as long as he continues to play

www.nytimes.com