



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Secretariat

Conflict Prevention Centre

Vienna, 8 July 2004

To: All OSCE Delegations in Vienna

- as agreed
- as per telephone
- as per your/our letter
- for information
- back with thanks
- please telephone
- awaiting your comment

Re: OSCE Mission to Georgia

Spot Report: Informal JCC meeting and other developments in the zone of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict



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

Spot Report

Topic: Informal JCC meeting and other developments in the zone of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict

Date: 7 July 2004

Informal JCC meeting on 6 July 2004

On 06 July 2004, an informal JCC meeting took place in Tskhinvali with the participation of the JCC Co-Chairmen of the Georgian, South Ossetian and North Ossetian sides, the JPKF Joint Command, and the Mission.

At the meeting, the South Ossetian JCC Co-Chairman Boris Chochiev informed that the South Ossetian side would implement the JCC decisions of 2 June 2004 and in particular remove all the South Ossetian checkpoints, which were set up unilaterally and without endorsement by a JCC decision. He stated that from 15.00 hours, the South Ossetian side would remove four of its checkpoints: 1- between Tskhinvali and Tamarasheni, 2- Eredvi, 3- Znauri, 4- Shamkhai. He stressed that this decision was an additional demonstration of the South Ossetian goodwill to contribute to the reduction of the current tensions. He invited the Georgian side to reciprocate and to remove six checkpoints: 1- Eredvi, 2- Vanati, 3- Bershueti, 4- Tqviavi, 5- Tamarasheni, 6- Pkhvenisi.

State Minister on Conflict Resolution and Georgian JCC Co-Chairman Giorgi Khaindrava welcomed the decision by the South Ossetian side to remove four checkpoints, but also asked for two additional measures. First, he asked the South Ossetian side to remove its "Immigration" block road post and "Customs" checkpoint located between the Ergneti market and Tskhinvali. He stressed that such a post and checkpoint were impeding the movement of persons in the zone of conflict and that they had never been endorsed by JCC decision. Secondly, he asked the South Ossetian side to abstain from impeding humanitarian actions offered by the Georgian side to the population in the zone of conflict. Also, he invited the South Ossetian side to co-operate with the Georgian side on customs issues and at the Roki tunnel. He stressed that upon an agreement towards such co-operation the Georgian side would remove all its checkpoints. Finally, he stated his readiness to have another informal meeting in Tskhinvali on 8 July 2004.

At the meeting, General Nabzdorov informed of his intention to organise on 12, 13 and 14 July 2004 shooting exercises for the JPKF on the occasion of the twelve-year anniversary of the JPKF deployment on 14 July 1992. The Georgian, South Ossetian and North Ossetian JCC Co-Chairmen emphasised that under the current tensions such a proposal was untimely.

Visit of the EUSR to Tskhinvali

On 6 July 2004, the Mission facilitated a visit to Tskhinvali of the EUSR, Ambassador Talvitie. The Ambassador of the Netherlands in Georgia (representing the EU Presidency), Harry Molenaar, and the Charge d'Affaires of the EC Delegation in Georgia, Jacques Vantomme, also participated in the visit. After receiving a briefing by the Mission in the

OSCE Tskhinvali Field Office, they met with the South Ossetian JCC Co-Chairman Boris Chochiev and with the South Ossetian Leader Eduard Kokoety. They also visited the railway station in Tskhinvali.

At the meeting with the South Ossetian Leader Kokoety, the EUSR invited the South Ossetian side to consider taking political initiatives and to abstain from isolation. Also, he stressed the importance of completing the rehabilitation of the railway line between Gori and Tskhinvali.

OSCE Monitoring in the zone of conflict

On 1 July 2004, Mission Monitoring Officers observed that the South Ossetian side had set up a new road block on the approach to Tskhinvali, between the Ergneti market and the South Ossetian "Immigration" post. On 02 July 2004, the Mission observed that the road block was manned by ten armed men, reportedly from the South Ossetian "Defense Ministry" and that Georgian nationals from outside of South Ossetia were not being allowed through.

On 1 July 2004, the Mission observed that the South Ossetian side had maintained its checkpoint between Tskhinvali and Tamarasheni (Georgian village, located North of Tskhinvali). Mission Monitoring Officers observed that vehicles carrying heavy goods with Russian and Armenian number plates were being stopped, checked and then allowed to proceed. The Mission also observed that the Georgian side had maintained the deployment of an observation post approximately 30 meters North of the South Ossetian checkpoint.

On 2 July 2004, Mission Monitoring Officers noted that the Ergneti Market was back in operation with a large number of fuel trucks, and stalls offering a whole variety of goods. The level of manning by South Ossetian militia and police had greatly reduced and the Georgian police appeared to have been completely withdrawn from the market area.

On 3 July 2004, an OSCE Monitoring Officer, while driving in the direction of Dzari (North West of Tskhinvali) to conduct monitoring, was stopped and checked by two South Ossetian militias. They did not let him continue to Dzari and summoned him to return to Tskhinvali.

On 3 July 2004, three employees of the Georgian State Security Ministry (who reportedly had been detained three days prior to the JCC meeting in Moscow, scheduled for 30 June – 1 July, on charges of alleged spying) were released, on the eve of the meeting in Moscow between President Saakashvili and President Putin.

Incident with a JPKF convoy on 7 July 2004

On 7 July 2004, at approximately 06.00 hours, the South Ossetian JCC Co-Chairman Boris Chochiev informed the OSCE Tskhinvali Field Office that Georgian police had detained lorries of a convoy of the Russian Joint Peace Keeping Forces (JPKF) in the zone of conflict.

A Mission Member from the OSCE Tskhinvali Field Office went immediately to the JPKF Headquarters, while an OSCE Monitoring Team was sent from Tbilisi to the zone of conflict.

At the JPKF Headquarters, the OSCE Monitoring Team was informed by the JPKF Commander, General Nabzdorov, that at approximately 03.00 hours Georgian police at the Kekhvi checkpoint (located north of Tskhinvali) had inspected a convoy of ten military

transport vehicles. During the course of this inspection, the police had discovered military equipment and notified the Ministry of Interior.

At the JPKF Headquarters, General Nabzdorov stated that apart from the basic re-supply materials for the Russian battalion of the JPKF, the convoy had also been carrying spare-parts and ammunitions for helicopters in view of plans to equip the JPKF with helicopters, as recommended in Article 1.7 of the JCC Protocol No. 32 of 2 June 2004.

Detention of the Commander of the Georgian battalion of the JPKF

On 7 July 2004, at approximately 09.30 hours, the Georgian Senior Military Representative in the JPKF Command, Colonel Keadze, while reportedly on his way to negotiate the release of two Georgians held in South Ossetian custody, was apprehended and detained by South Ossetian armed personnel. He was released after half an hour upon the intervention of representatives of the JPKF Joint Command and an OSCE Monitoring Officer.

Deployment of South Ossetian forces in the zone of conflict

On 7 July 2004, at 09.30 hours the OSCE Tskhinvali Field Office was informed by the JPKF of an alleged deployment of South Ossetian armed personnel (approximately 400 soldiers) along the “bypass road” linking the Georgian villages located North of Tskhinvali to the rest of Georgia and bypassing areas inhabited by Ossetians. Shortly after that an OSCE Monitoring Officer could confirm the presence of South Ossetian armed units along the “bypass road”.

While monitoring the handover of a tanker of fuel to the JPKF, which had been detained by the Georgian finance police approximately two weeks ago, the OSCE Monitoring Team was informed by Mikheil Kareli, Representative of the President for Shida Kartli and Governor of the Gori region, about an alleged deployment of South Ossetian military personnel (30 soldiers) in the Georgian village of Prisi, located North-East of Tskhinvali. Meanwhile, inhabitants of Prisi approached the OSCE Monitoring Team claiming that they had been forced from their homes by the South Ossetian military personnel. They also claimed that the South Ossetian military personnel were digging trenches and destroying the road by means of excavators.

When the OSCE Monitoring Team made an attempt to enter Prisi at 15.30 hours, it was prevented by the South Ossetian armed units. The OSCE Monitoring Team observed that the South Ossetian units in Prisi were equipped with one armoured personnel carrier and one armoured infantry combat vehicle.

At approximately 12.00 hours the OSCE Monitoring Team and Colonel Keadze initiated an urgent meeting with the JPKF Joint Command to express grave concern over the situation. At the meeting, General Nabzdorov agreed to immediately deploy a unit of the Russian JPKF battalion to disperse the South Ossetian military personnel and to reopen the road as well as to set up a JPKF checkpoint in the area with a tripartite Military Observation Team (Russian, Georgian, North Ossetian).

When the OSCE Monitoring Team returned to the vicinity of Prisi at 18.00 hours. They observed that the road to Prisi had not been reopened. South Ossetian military personnel was still present and prevented the Team to proceed from the Georgian portion of the village to the South Ossetian portion. The South Ossetian forces had significantly reinforced the road block post and placed hardened defensive positions on the Southern approach to Tskhinvali.