

## Q1 Legal/Reference 59

Available at: [http://www.parliament.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=1329&info\\_id=21926](http://www.parliament.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=1329&info_id=21926)

D. Kezerashvili. The first question was regarding the information submitted to the Ministry of Defense. As you know there are several agencies working on obtaining the information, namely, the Foreign Intelligence, the Counter- Intelligence of the Ministry of Interior and the Intelligence Department under our Ministry. At the Ministry of Defense we used to receive the information in so called online regime; quite often when we had some meetings, depending to the type of information, who urgent it was to carry out the analyze, delivery. The information also was among our structures, obviously. Therefore I had and the Defense Ministry had all kinds of information, including the information that Mr. Vano Merabishvili provided yesterday. There was some new information that hadn't been released before. On the basis of such information and its analysis we made the plans, I mean the military plans, but it was done at the General Staff. As far as I know the Chief of Staff Mr. Zaza Gogava has already told you. The Ministry of Defense, the General Staff – they are the live bodies and the plans there are deliberated in accordance with the expected threats, of the actions of enemy. proceeding from the aforementioned and the reality there is a constant process of deliberation, reformulation and planning. As for the information, I just can repeat the same information that you heard yesterday; of course I have it and I know it. I can tell you that in fact everything started during my term as a Minister. Of course there were talks about threats, and they existed then, but the process went into the decisive phase, as I think, in spring, in early spring, more specifically on 6 March, when then President of Russia announced the unilateral withdrawal from the CIS Agreement on embargo regarding Abkhazia, including embargo on armament. It was followed with the range of events, and we knew about them from the open sources, I mean media. Namely, it was the delivery of Russian military equipment in Abkhazia. You remember that "D-30" howitzers were showed by one of the TV channels along Ochamchire-Gali district border; and it was prohibited and they shouldn't have to be there. They also deployed the landing regiment in the territory of Abkhazia and took certain position. It happened approximately in April. In April-June the Russian Federation considerably increased the number of heavy equipment in Abkhazia, and at the same time the landing forces are there, I've mentioned about it, and later it was published in the newspaper of the Ministry of Defense "Krasnaia Zvezda". They also allocated in Abkhazia the Reconnaissance Battalion "Votok", this is so called Chechen battalion, which later was dispatched to the South Ossetia, in Tskhinvali. In April-June Russians delivered to Abkhazia 3 air-defense systems "Buk", also 40 additional howitzers "D-30", 10 Grad systems of "BM-21", 20 "Shilka" 23-2 and 23-4 air-raid cannons, 120 anti-tank missiles, 2 "Mi-23" helicopters. 50 specialists, 30 military experts and 100 communication and air-defense specialists were sent to Abkhazia. It is illustration Mr. Goka of an open "Military Buildup". In parallel, the construction and reconstruction of military bases was in progress, in including in Ochamchire. You saw these pictures, the bases on the territory of Ossetia. Within the same April-June the Russian Black-Sea fleet participated in 8 drills, where 3 of them were focused on landing operations; and this also was the certain indication. Under the Decree by the *de facto* president of Abkhazia, the former Commander of Russian Peacekeepers Pavlushko was appointed as the *de facto* Deputy Minister of Defense. And it took place on 30 April. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of may the Russian Federation rather promptly opened the new check-point at every strategic spot along the roads in Ochamchire and Tkvarcheli districts, among them, in Nakalakhi, Ardzakhisi and Kamara. Under the Agreement of 1994 they had no right to have their any check-points. On May 3 five units of 120mm artillery systems and a few air-defense systems "BUGEM-1" were registered at the military base of Ochamchire sea-port. On 26 May Russia sent to Abkhazia the railway troops, and it was published by open sources. It doesn't require in-depth analysis. Everybody, who has the idea about the structure of the Russian Military Forces, can simply realize that the Russian Forces cannot move without railway, as a rule. That's why they delivered so called "Zhelstroibat" there and renovated and restored the railway connection. This is another indication that something was being prepared.

In Gudauta, at "Bombora" military base the landing and take-off of a few "SU-25" and "SU-27" aircrafts were registered. That airport had been out of order and of course they renovated it. You may remember June 17, when the Georgian police arrested the column in Zugdidi carrying 20 units and anti-tank guided missiles –

and the peacekeepers shouldn't have had them. This type of weapon, as a rule, is not included in the peacekeepers mandate. And we seized them. On June 25 the Russian General Maslov arrived in Tskhinvali and Mr. Vano also talked about it. He met the peacekeepers and the leadership of the *de facto* Defense Ministry. On July 3 the Ossetian separatists carried out the assault on the Head of Interim Administration of South Ossetia Dimitri Sanakoev. The *de facto* Minister of Defense reported to the Russian Information Agency "Utro" that the Russian instructors trained the Abkhaz soldiers. On July 8 additional 4 units of military equipment, 4 "Berdens" and a few anti-aircraft systems were delivered in the base located in Abkhazia. Construction of the military base in Okhurei, as well as of the base in "Shukura" district of Sukhumi were completed in the spring of 2008. Russian aircrafts again violated the Georgian airspace on 10 July. That day Ms. Condoleezza Rice was in Georgia. From 15 July until 2 August Russian carried out wide-scale military drills near the northern border of Georgia; 8000 military servicemen, 700 units of equipment, 30 aircrafts and helicopters were involved in that training. On June 18 the representative of Abkhaz separatist regime rejected the peace plan offered by the German side and refused to take part in the meeting in Berlin. On July 20 the units of Landing Division of Pskov were dispatched at Roki Crossing; on 22-24 July the representatives of skhinvali separatist regime refused to participate in the meeting in Brussels planned by the EU, were Russian side also was invited. On July 25 the units of motor-rifle brigade of Budionovst was dispatched to Roki Crossing. On 28 July separatists opened fire to the peacekeepers and the OSCE observers, which were moving in the direction of Chorbauli, Znauri district. and ... on 29 July, first time after ... completion of military operations in Tskhivali Region, the separatists started shelling the Georgian villages under Georgian authority with large-bore artillery, including those where the peacekeepers were deployed. I would like to underline this, it was first time, before, during attacks and shootings never ever ...

\_\_\_\_\_ Mr. David, what did you say, July 28?

D. Kezerashvili. 29 July. I speak about 82 mm and above; this fact was confirmed in the report signed by Russian general Murad Kulakhmetov. To the best of my knowledge General Kurashvili submitted these documents to you, every violation. At the end of July of 2008 the Acting President of the OSCE, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland proposed the meeting of Georgian and Ossetian sides in early August. Separatists rejected this proposal too. By that time they completed Ugadangi military base in Java, construction of which had started in 2006 and the military base in Tskhinvali, which started in 2008. The field camps were arranged for the 33<sup>rd</sup> brigade of the 58<sup>th</sup> Army, for 1500-2000 people and they started their gradual accommodation. On August 1 Georgian policemen were blown up using the remote-controlled mines. On August 2, in the evening, Ossetian separatists, from the villages of Khetagurovo and Ubiati opened fire to the direction of Georgian villages Avnevi and Nuli thus damaging a few residential houses. Russian media reported that there was a mobilization of volunteers to send them to Georgia as mercenaries. Separatists reported on evacuation of population from Tskhinvali and villages under their control. From Tskhinvali separatists shelled Nikozi and Egneti, and from Frisi and Sarabuk – Eredvi. What I will say now it happened on August 3. The reconnaissance battalion of the 42<sup>th</sup> Division was dispatched to the territory of South Ossetia. On August 4, late in the evening, Ossetian separatists opened fire to block-post of Georgian peacekeepers in Sarabuk; two peacekeepers got wounds. The fact of shelling Georgian villages was confirmed by Russian general Marat Kulakhmetov, in his report. On August 4 at the settlement Elbaqita 1200 military servicemen were registered. On August 5 three tanks and 2 military trucks went to the direction of Avnevi. There is an interception of the telephone conversation of Mindzaev, the Minister of Interior of South Ossetia; you heard it yesterday how he says that the village Nuli should be razed to the ground. On August 5 40 units of self-running artillery systems and armored vehicles went in through Roki Tunnel. 30 units of cannon was brought from Kvdari Crossing. In addition, the following units were mobilized at the Georgian border by that day: 135<sup>th</sup> and 693<sup>th</sup> regiments of the 58<sup>th</sup> Army; 104<sup>th</sup> and 234<sup>th</sup> assault regiments of the 76<sup>th</sup> Division; 217<sup>th</sup> paratroopers' regiment of the 217<sup>th</sup> Division and some special units; 11693 military servicemen, 891 units of armored vehicles, 138 units of artillery. The military equipment and artillery were allocated in the Ossetian villages in the conflict zone. ... 4 artillery units near the village Tbeti; 5 "BNP" at Ertekhi, 10 "BNP" and cannon at Kokhati. on August 6 of 2008, at 16h00 Ossetian separatists opened fire from Frini, Ubiati and Ketagurovo to the villages Nuli and Avnevi. On August 5-7, upon the request of the President Saakashvili, his representative Temur Iakobashvili tried to start negotiations with the separatists,

but in vain. As it was reported by local TV, 150 mercenaries from the North Caucasus went in Tskhinvali. Russian and local citizens working in Tskhivali Military Base were dismissed from their positions. Local TV reported that the shops and other organizations were closed. On August 7 forty cannons and 20 armored units were found at the settlement Tbeti. At 3:41 am telephone conversation ... you've heard that, confirming the delivery of considerable amount of manpower and techniques. On August 7, at 9:45 artillery fired Avnevi and Nuli from Ubiati and Khetagurovo, including the "D-30" howitzers, the prohibited weapon. At the village Avnevi separatists blew up the armored vehicle of Georgian peacekeepers; 2 peacekeepers perished, and 5 got the wounds. The special representative of Russia, Mr. Popov, failed to organize the previously agreed meeting on ceasefire allegedly due to the refusal from the side of separatists, though before he made rather funny statement about flat tire. General Kulakhmetov said that he had failed to contact the leader of separatists and that the Russian peacekeepers couldn't stop the attack of separatists. Kulakhmetov also confirmed that the separatists fired without agreement with Russian peacekeepers. It happened on the 7<sup>th</sup>, in the afternoon, when 2 of our peacekeepers were killed. We contacted General Kulakhmetov, many times, ... and we asked for even temporary ceasefire, in order to take those who were wounded, or perished. ... and he said that he had no control over separatists and he is, let's say this way, leaving the game. The Secretary of the Security Council of separatists, Barankevich, made the statement in local TV that the groups of Cossacks entered in Tskhinvali region to fight against Georgian military forces; despite of casualties ... at 19:10 President Saakashvili announced ceasefire, and asked for starting the negotiations. However, the shelling was continued and at 20:30 from Khetagurovo they shelled Avnevi, then the intensive fire was directed to Tamarasheni, Kurta and the positions of Georgian peacekeepers. At 23:55 Georgian military forces opened fire, and how it was done I will tell you later, and you have questions about it. I forgot to provide one information regarding the indications of readiness from the side of Russia. Of course they prepared it, as there was the military training of the aforementioned battalion very close to the Georgian border; and it hadn't happened before. Proceeding from the aforementioned, of course the plan was being prepared at the General Staff and also its modification according to the situation, namely – the number of manpower, ammunition etc. As for the assault plans, I don't know how it could be referred so. I will tell you about... that some forcible methods to take over the separatist territory weren't discussed; of course in case of attack and provocation, in case of turning the situation into military actions, quite naturally we had such plans. Once again about retreat, the plans for retreat, they existed to some extent, that the bars were prepared for retreat; from the military point it was assumed that Russian could attack Georgia and such plans were being prepared. I, personally, until August 7 was not sure how Russia would be ready to make such political decision; and not only I, but also none of our friendly states or politicians, or diplomats... At least, they all stated that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Russia wouldn't make such step to exercise direct intervention against Georgia. But, of course, I say again, from the military point, the plans were being prepared.