

3. What were the roles and activities of the components of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces (which had a mandate in the Tskhinvali Region) as well as those of the CIS Peacekeeping Forces (which had a mandate in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict zone) in August 2008?

The Joint Peacekeeping Forces, which were deployed in the Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone on the basis of the 1992 Sochi Agreement between Russia and Georgia, consisted of three peacekeeping battalions: the Russian battalion, the Georgian battalion and the battalion of North Ossetia, Russian Federation (which was in fact staffed by South Ossetian militia fighters¹). Each battalion was manned by 500 soldiers (in an emergency situation the personnel of each battalion could be increased up to 900 soldiers).

The Joint Peacekeeping Forces had two headquarters in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, in what is commonly called "Nizhniy Godorodok" in the central part of the town of Tskhinvali, where the Commander of the JPKF had his office and at "Verkhniy Gorodok" in the southwestern part of the town.

By August 2008, the peacekeepers were stationed at 14 checkpoints in the following villages of Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia.

Joint Checkpoints

1. Kekhvi (1 Russian platoon, observers: 1 Russian, 1 Georgian, 1 Ossetian).
2. Frisi (1 Russian platoon, observers: 1 Russian, 1 Georgian, 1 Ossetian).
3. Tstveriakho (1 Russian platoon, 1 Georgian platoon, observers: 1 Russian, 1 Georgian, 1 Ossetian).
4. Megvrekisi (1 Russian platoon, observers: 1 Russian, 1 Georgian, 1 Ossetian).
5. Vanati (1 Russian platoon, observers: 1 Russian, 1 Georgian, 1 Ossetian).
6. Kverneti (1 Russian platoon, observers: 1 Russian, 1 Georgian, 1 Ossetian).
7. Tamarasheni (1 Russian platoon, observers: 1 Russian, 1 Georgian, 1 Ossetian).
8. Artsevi (1 Russian platoon, observers: 1 Russian, 1 Georgian).
9. Avnevi (1 Russian platoon, observers: 1 Russian, 1 Georgian).

Russian Checkpoints

10. Eredvi (1 Russian platoon).

Georgian Checkpoints

11. Avnevi (1 Georgian platoon).
12. Sarabuki (1 Georgian platoon).
13. Kekhvi (6 Georgian peacekeepers).
14. Tamarasheni (6 Georgian peacekeepers).

¹ See: International Crisis Group, Georgia's South Ossetia Conflict: Make Haste Slowly, pp. 17-18.

When tensions in the conflict zone started to mount in July 2008, the Joint Peacekeeping Forces, as on many occasions before (*see answer to question 3 of the legal set of questions and annex 1 the Georgian MIA report on the JPKF activities in August 2004*) failed to abide by their mandate in terms of reporting on and curbing the illegal activities of South Ossetian de facto regime irregular forces, which were engaged in an illegal military build-up in the conflict zone. In addition, these forces were regularly firing in the direction of Georgian government controlled villages in Big Liakhvi, Small Liakhvi and the Frone valleys, as well as towards the villages south of the administrative border of the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia.

On July 29, at 16:00, South Ossetian de facto regime irregular forces shelled the central government controlled villages in Big Liakhvi valley for 40 minutes, using mortars and grenade launchers and at 22:00 shelled the Georgian peacekeeping checkpoint on the Sarabuki heights with 100mm and 120mm artillery. On August 1, from 21:30 onwards, South Ossetian de facto regime irregular forces shelled the Georgian villages of Zemo Nikozi, Kvemo Nikozi, Avnevi, Nuli, Ergneti, Eredvi and Zemo Prisi with large caliber artillery. The shelling continued overnight and stopped only in the morning on August 2.

On August 2 and 3, the JPKF conducted monitoring of most of the villages damaged by the shelling and on August 4 issued a report confirming the fact of the shelling of Zemo Nikozi, Kvemo Nikozi, Nuli, Eredvi and Zemo Prisi with 82mm artillery, as well as the earlier shelling of Georgian peacekeepers on the Sarabuki heights with 100 mm and higher caliber artillery.² However, the JPKF report did not specify who had shelled these villages although the leadership of the North Ossetian peacekeeping battalion and, presumably, the commander of the JPKF knew perfectly well that only South Ossetian proxy regime irregular forces could have been responsible for this shelling on Georgian-controlled villages.

Numerous telephone conversations intercepted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia reveal that Russian and Ossetian peacekeepers were aware of these violations, but did not report them and on several occasions even collaborated to hide the evidence of these violations. Moreover, at times South Ossetian de facto regime irregular forces and “North Ossetian” peacekeepers coordinated their attacks on Georgian peacekeepers and police. The most vivid examples of such violations are listed below:

- On July 29, at 22:40, a duty officer of the North Ossetian peacekeeping battalion, Mr. Ruslan Makeev informed the Senior Commander of North Ossetian peacekeepers, Mr. Kazbeg Friev that a unit of the North Ossetian peacekeeping battalion had opened fire towards the Georgian peacekeeping battalion.
- On July 30, at 10:42, Mr. Alik Lagkoev, the chief military observer in the North Ossetian peacekeeping battalion telephoned a duty officer at the South Ossetian de facto Ministry of Defense and warned them that monitoring was going to be conducted by the JPKF in the area close to the Sarabuki heights.
- On August 1, at 22:57, Mr. Arsen Kvezerov, deputy Commander of the 7th battalion of the South Ossetian de facto Ministry of Defense told Mr. Philip Khachirov, the head of North Ossetian peacekeeping battalion to pass a request to militants to support his fire and offered to give the coordinates of either Georgian police or Georgian peacekeepers.

² See annex 23 of the answer to the question 1 of the military set of questions.

- On August 2, at 21:01, Mr. Arsen Kvezerov, Deputy Commander of the 7th battalion of the South Ossetian de facto Ministry of Defense and Mr. Philip Khachirov, Head of the North Ossetian peacekeeping battalion discussed a scheme for the future shelling of positions of Georgian peacekeepers and police.
- On August 4, at 14:44, the Senior Commander of Georgian peacekeepers, General Mamuka Kurashvili contacted the Commander of the JPKF General Marat Kulakhmetov on the phone and asked him to conduct additional monitoring of the places from where the Sarabuki heights might have been shelled since he was sure that the trace left by a 100mm shell on the Sarabuki heights could show the direction from where it originated. At 15:34, the de facto Defense Minister of South Ossetia, Russian Colonel Vasily Lunev, who was already informed that the shells were traceable, telephoned Mr. Valeri Kokoev, the Commander of the 7th battalion of the South Ossetian de facto Ministry of Defense that was responsible for the shelling, and instructed him to change something on the firing position in order to conceal the trace.
- On August 6, at 11:58, a person named Alan reported to Mr. Alik Lagkoev, the chief military observer in the North Ossetian peacekeeping battalion that “their people” shelled the positions of either Georgian police or Georgian peacekeepers. Mr. Lagkoev has never reported this fact.
- On August 6, at 19:06, Mr. Alik Lagkoev, the chief military observer in the North Ossetian peacekeeping battalion asked Mr. Ibragim Gaseev, the de facto Deputy Defense Minister of South Ossetia to report about the results of shelling of an armored vehicle of the Georgian peacekeeping battalion.
- On August 6, at 21:18, Mr. Valeri Kokoev, the Commander of the 7th battalion of South Ossetian de facto Ministry of Defense informed the Senior Commander of North Ossetian peacekeepers Mr. Kazbeg Friev that during the night “something” was going to be brought into the area. Mr. Friev interrupted and warned him not to talk about this via Georgian mobile communications.
- On August 7, at 00:22, Mr. Alik Lagkoev, the chief military observer in the North Ossetian peacekeeping battalion asked Mr. Ibragim Gaseev, the de facto Deputy Defense Minister of South Ossetia to correct their artillery fire at Georgian peacekeepers because some of the shells mistakenly fell near the location of Russian peacekeepers.
- On August 7, at 06:51, Mr. Philip Khachirov, Head of the North Ossetian peacekeeping battalion gave advice to Mr. Arsen Kvezerov, Deputy Commander of the 7th battalion of the South Ossetian de facto Ministry of Defense in choosing targets for their artillery attack.

(See annexes 2-23 for these telephone intercepts and their transcripts)

From August 6 onwards no monitoring was conducted by the JPKF in the conflict zone, despite requests by the Georgian battalion of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces. On August 7, at 14:00, the Georgian peacekeeping checkpoint in Avnevi was heavily shelled with 100mm and 120mm artillery, by South Ossetian proxy regime irregular forces located in the village of Khetagurovo, destroying the Georgian peacekeeping unit’s armored vehicle, killing two Georgian peacekeepers, Mr. Shalva Trapaidze and Mr. Vitali Takadze and wounding five others.³ Georgian peacekeepers returned fire in self-defence. Later the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia intercepted a phone call, during which a member of the de facto regime irregular forces confirmed the fact of blowing up an armored

³ See annex 33 of the answer to the question 1 of the military set of questions for the list of casualties among Georgian peacekeepers.

vehicle of Georgian peacekeepers in Avnevi with a cannon.⁴ At around 17:00, after the Commander of the JPKF Marat Kulakhmetov refused to give additional security guarantees to Georgian peacekeepers in Tskhinvali. The Commander of Georgian peacekeepers Mamuka Kurashvili ordered officers of the Georgian peacekeeping battalion to leave the headquarters of the JPKF in Tskhinvali. At 17:10, despite casualties among Georgian peacekeepers and the shelling of central government controlled villages, Georgian peacekeepers unilaterally ceased fire to defuse tensions. This decision was communicated by the Georgian State Minister for Reintegration, Mr. Temur Yakobashvili to the Commander of the JPKF General Marat Kulakhmetov at 17.00.

In the evening of August 7, at 20:30, South Ossetian de facto regime irregular forces resumed their shelling of Georgian peacekeepers and police officers located in the village of Avnevi, and the Frone valley and at 23:30, intensified their artillery fire on all positions of Georgian peacekeepers and police in Big Liakhvi, Little Liakhvi and the Frone valleys.

From August 8 to 9, the Georgian peacekeeping battalion continued to serve at its checkpoints until the evacuation of the civilian population from Big Liakhvi, Little Liakhvi and the Frone valleys was completed in the afternoon of August 9. It is important to note that none of the checkpoints of the Russian and North Ossetian peacekeeping battalions located outside the town of Tskhinvali were targeted by the Georgian armed forces. The situation at such major locations of the JPKF units such as Tstveriakho mountain, the villages of Megvrekisi and Artsevi remained calm despite the ongoing hostilities. However, the situation was different in Tskhinvali.

Units of Russian and North Ossetian battalions of the JPKF located at their headquarters in "Nizhniy Godorodok" (in the central part of Tskhinvali) and "Verkhniy Gorodok" (in the southwestern part of Tskhinvali) were actively involved in the hostilities. On multiple occasions, they contributed to the war effort of the Russian Army and South Ossetian militants by providing peacekeepers' facilities and infrastructure to high-ranking officials of the proxy regime and representatives of the de facto regime irregular forces. Moreover, these headquarters were used for directing aerial bombardments and artillery fire of the Russian Army and South Ossetian militants against Georgian government forces.

It should be noted that earlier, at 00:23, the Commander of the JPKF, General Marat Kulakhmetov a in telephone conversation with the Head of the Georgian peacekeeping contingent Gen Kurashvili admitted that the Russian peacekeepers had been providing coordinates for artillery shelling to the proxy militants.⁵ Importantly, the above took place well before any Russian claims of alleged Georgian attacks on peacekeepers.

On August 8, at around 06:00, Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs special forces equipped with "Cobra" type armored vehicles and reinforced by several tanks from the Ministry of Defence of Georgia, moved from the village of Zemo Nikozi towards the outskirts of Tskhinvali in order to suppress the fire opened at that village by the de facto regime irregular forces located in the southwestern part of the town, the so called "Shanghai" district. The Ministry of Internal Affairs Special Forces encountered sniper and massive armoured vehicle cannon fire from the Russian peacekeeping headquarters "Verkhniy Gorodok" located on the southwestern edge of the town and

⁴ See annexes 75 and 76 of the answer to the question 1 of the military set of questions for the telephone intercept and its transcript.

⁵ See annex 87 A and B of the answer to the question 1 of the military set of questions for the telephone intercept and its transcript.

were compelled to return fire and ask for tank support. In fact, the roof of the main building of “Verkhniy Gorodok” was used by South Ossetian de facto regime irregular forces for correcting their artillery fire against Georgian armed forces, which is confirmed by an article in the South Ossetian press.⁶ In the result of fire returned by Georgian forces towards the headquarters, a lieutenant of the Russian Artillery Intelligence Division Oleg Golovanov was severely wounded and later died. According to the article, “[h]is surveillance post was located on the roof of the Russian Peacekeeping Battalion building in the southern outskirt of the town” from where “Oleg corrected artillery fire.”⁷

According to an interview of Colonel Kazbek Frieв, the Commander of North Ossetian peacekeepers to the South Ossetian de facto regime’s radio, parts of the battalion under his command “have taken pre-planned positions and acted jointly with the battalions of the Ministry of Defense [of Russia]” and “were halting the advancement of Georgian troops.”⁸ Colonel Frieв also states that the mission of the peacekeepers was “not to allow Georgians to pass through the town.” He organized positions of his soldiers and armored vehicles (BMPs and BTRs) in Tskhinvali, namely, in Shanghai, Tsarz and the Mamisaantubani districts in the south of the town. As mentioned above, they acted jointly with Russian Ministry of Defense troops.⁹

Since late afternoon on August 7, 2008, part of the leadership of the de facto regime, particularly “all the power ministers” started to gather at the peacekeepers’ headquarters at “Nizhniy Gorodok.” Parts of the scattered irregular forces also gathered at this place, which was used as one of the centers for “coordinating the town’s defense effort.”¹⁰

The JPKF headquarters “Nizhniy Gorodok” was the place where Anatoly Barankevich, the Security Council Chairman in the South Ossetian proxy regime, appeared to request help.¹¹ According to Barankevich, he “proposed to Kulakhmetov [the Commander of the JPKF] to hold the circle of defense together, and to stand until Russian troops approached.” Simultaneously, on the territory of the peacekeepers’ base he was provided with a mobile phone by which he contacted the Russian leadership and demanded “the promised reinforcements.” Mr. Barankevich, aided by a number of South Ossetian militants, also decided to secure the roads to the JPKF headquarters. For that purpose, they occupied the surrounding houses, from where they ambushed and attacked Georgian police and military moving around the town.¹²

Despite the above-mentioned evidence, which was apparent on the ground during the military operation, Georgian armed forces never opened fire towards “Nizhniy Gorodok.” The latter area, as well the town of Tskhinvali in general, came under heavy Russian artillery fire upon the entry of the Georgian forces into the town. The analysis of the footage broadcasted by the Russian NTV (see annex 24) shows that the GRAD missile that exploded next to the peacekeepers’ headquarters came

⁶ See annex 90 of the answer to the question 1 of the military set of questions., <http://osradio.ru/genocid/10778-oleg-galavanov-pogib-projaviv-muzhestvo-i-geroizm.html>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ See annex 91 of the answer to the question 1 of the military set of questions., <http://osradio.ru/news/all/eid/15376.html>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See annexes 93 and 94 of the answer to the question 1 of the military set of questions. <http://www.izvestia.ru/special/article3119348/index.html>,

<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=1089120>

¹² Ibid.

from the north. In another open source interview, a Russian soldier admits firing GRADs at the town of Tskhinvali.¹³

In spite of the overwhelming evidence of the direct involvement of the peacekeepers in the hostilities, Georgian armed forces treated them with due precautions, and never launched an offensive unless the hostile activities were initiated by peacekeepers or persons or vehicles wearing peacekeepers identifications. For instance, on the morning of August 9, at 12:00-13:00, the 41st Battalion of the 4th Infantry Brigade of the Georgian armed forces was moving into the town of Tskhinvali in order to reinforce the MIA special forces. Immediately before they entered the town a chain of armored vehicles and tanks full of armed persons appeared. The chief of the Battalion ordered the troops to allow the chain of vehicles and tanks to come unhindered until they reached visible distance in order to confirm their identification. Soon it became known that the tanks and armored vehicles had easily identifiable sign of Russian Peacekeeping Forces (yellow “MC” on the blue background). The Commander of the Battalion ordered to withhold fire and to allow the peacekeepers to pass. The column penetrated deep into the 41st Battalion and suddenly attacked the Georgian unit with automatic rifle fire and hand-grenades. The Commander of the Battalion, Major Shalva Dolidze, as well as several other members of the Battalion died and dozens of Georgian soldiers were wounded.

In the course of the hostilities, it became finally evident that Russian armed forces were using the Russian peacekeeping battalion of the JPKF to conduct reconnaissance of the area long before the invasion. For example, units of the Special Battalion “Vostok” (centered in Gudermes, Chechnya, under the GRU command) were first deployed in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia as part of the JPKF in the summer of 2007 and underwent at least two rotations since then. The Group Commander of the “Vostok” battalion, Mr. Rasul Baimuradov, who was in charge of these units in 2007, led his group into the battle as part of Russian regular troops in August 2008 (see annex 25 for a video of Baimuradov as a peacekeeper in Tskhinvali Region in 2007, annexes 26-28 for photos and a video of Baimuradov in Tskhinvali in 2008 and annex 29 for a video of his testimony).

On August 10, Russian armed forces, mostly with peacekeeper identification marks, started the occupation of western Georgia.

By August 2008, the Collective Peacekeeping Forces, which were deployed in the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict zone on the basis of the 1994 Moscow Agreement between Russia and Georgia, were stationed on the following checkpoints: no. 301 Rukhi; no. 302 Khudoni; no. 304 Eristskali; no. 305 Fakhulani; no. 306 Shamgona; no. 306a Shamgona; no. 308 Ganmukhuri; no. 309 (base) Anaklia; no. 310 Knurcha; no. 311 (base) Rikhe; no. 312 (base) Potskho-Etseri; no. 201 Chuburkhinji; no. 202 (base) Tagiloni; no. 203 Tkvarcheli, mine no. 5; no. 204 (base) Enguri power plant; no. 205 Saberio, Samkervalo settlement; no. 206 Enguri power plant, settlement Najikhuri; no. 207 (base) Kvishona; no. 208 Meore Otobaia; no. 209 Nabakevi; no. 210 Pichori; no. 211 Samarkvalo; no. 101 bridge on Gali canal; no. 102 (base) Rechkhi; no. 103 Repho-Etseri; no. 104 Primorski; no. 105 Zemo Bargebi; no. 106 (base) Kvemo Lata; no. 107 Zemo Lata; no. 108 Kvemo Gumurishi; no.109 Sida.

On August 10 2008, at about 22:30 Russian troops, including Russian Peacekeepers and Abkhazian de facto regime irregular forces crossed the administrative border at the Enguri River and entered

¹³ See annexes 95 and 96 of the answer to the question 1 of the military set of questions.

the Zugdidi district. Russian “peacekeepers” occupied most administrative buildings in the town of Zugdidi and presented an ultimatum to the local police to surrender their weapons.¹⁴ The occupation of the towns of Zugdidi, Senaki and Poti, villages in Khobi and Tsalenjikha districts by the “peacekeepers” was finalized by August 12.

On August 12, at 11:00, Russian airborne troops and Abkhazian de facto regime irregular forces launched a ground attack in the Upper Abkhazia/Kodori Gorge. The operation to occupy the Kodori Gorge was planned by Mr. Aleksandr Pavliushko, de facto Deputy Minister of Defense of Abkhazia since April 30, 2008, who used to serve as the Head of Russian peacekeepers’ staff in the Collective Peacekeeping Forces. From his experience as a peacekeeper frequently accompanying UNOMIG observers in Kodori Gorge in 2006-2008, he knew every location of Georgian police in the area (see annexes 30 and 31 for photo and video).

Thus, Russian Peacekeeping forces have actively participated in the military invasion and occupation of Georgia. Russian peacekeepers were present at many checkpoints of the Russian occupying forces throughout August 2008, which was a clear violation of their peacekeeping mandate and the basic norms of international law.

A huge amount of evidence showing different kinds of violations by Russian peacekeepers of their mandate, including how Russian peacekeepers were looting a Georgian military base in Senaki and the Coast Guard’s buildings in Poti, can be found in the footage of Georgian TV (see annexes 32- 33 for the TV footage and its description).

The Russian Federation had repeatedly asserted that the attack on Russian peacekeepers was one of the principal reasons for their invasion. At 02:37 in the morning of the August 8, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Gregory Karasin telephoned his Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs Gregory Vashadze and informed him that Russia will respond militarily to the death of its peacekeepers in Tskhinvali. About hour and half later, the Russian ambassador to Georgia, Viacheslav Kovalenko visited Georgia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs to officially convey the same message. Although, the first encounter between Georgian forces and Russian peacekeepers took place at 06:00, at least three hours later than Karasin’s phone call.

The evidence herein shows that Russian peacekeepers both in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia not only fell short of fulfilling their mandate but guided and assisted proxy militaries before the war and directly participated in the hostilities during the active phase of the Russian invasion.

¹⁴ See annexes 104 and 105 of the answer to the question 1 of the military set of questions.