

A Peaceful Solution to Georgia's Conflicts

By Alexandros Petersen

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Russia's continuing occupation of internationally recognized Georgian territory in Abkhazia and South Ossetia creates an unsustainable tinderbox which could at any moment destabilize the region and disrupt European security. There is ample evidence that Russia is not just annexing these territories, but is using them as bases to violently destabilize Georgia from within.**
- **In contravention of ceasefire agreements, and in contrast to Georgia, Russia has blocked all access to international observers in the occupied territories. This is not only a human rights issue, but a conflict monitoring issue with implications beyond Georgia's national interests.**
- **The international community and the United Kingdom in particular should make concerted efforts to ensure that the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) is able to fulfil its mandate, with which Russia agreed, to monitor both sides of the occupation lines. The EUMM's capacity should also be expanded and eventually transform into a peacekeeping mechanism. Only this will ensure that the 2008 conflict is not repeated.**

The Soviet Union is over and no sphere of influences policy can replace it. So declared French President Nicholas Sarkozy in early October 2011 when he addressed the crowds in Tbilisi's Freedom Square. Three years earlier, it was Sarkozy that did the high-level diplomatic legwork that brought a ceasefire to Russia's invasion of Georgia: Moscow's clearest attempt since the break-up of the Soviet Union to enforce its so-called sphere of privileged interests. But since then, no Western leader or institution has successfully followed up on Sarkozy's ceasefire to make sure that one party to the conflict – Russia – abides by the agreement it signed.*

Shortly after the 2008 war, the European Union deployed a 200-person monitoring mission (EUMM) to the administrative border lines (ABLs) between Georgia's Russian-occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the rest of the country. But the EUMM has been barred by Russian forces from fulfilling its mandate, agreed upon by Moscow, to monitor developments on the Russian-controlled side of the lines. By all accounts, Tbilisi has complied with the terms of the ceasefire, known as the Six Point Agreement, and cooperated closely with the EUMM. There is ample evidence, however, that Russia has during the same period used Abkhazia and South Ossetia as staging points for provocations against Georgia, including a number of bomb attacks. This is while effectively turning both areas into military zones, complete with new permanent military bases, heavy weaponry and thousands of troops and security service personnel. In short, Russia's posture in Georgia is threatening to long-term peace and stability in the region.

This report, based on dozens of interviews and investigative research in Georgia (including Abkhazia), Russia and European capitals, details the current dangerous situation in Georgia's occupied territories and spells out the need for a greater international force on the ground to monitor developments, keep the peace and serve as a deterrent against further large-scale conflict. While it touches on the diplomacy and international imperatives surrounding the conflicts, this report is not focused on the stalled negotiations over the conflicts in Geneva, nor is it about the West's relations with Russia. Instead, it seeks to make plain why the international presence in Georgia's conflict areas must be increased now.

GEORGIA'S SECURITY IS STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT FOR THE WEST

Sitting in Brussels, London or Washington, it is easy to forget the strategically vital location of Georgia's conflicts. Despite its obvious European cultural bent, Georgia often seems far removed, peripheral to European affairs, exotic even. But, when one reads about developments in the Black Sea-Caspian region with the aid of a map, it quickly becomes clear that Western actors not only have a stake in the region's future, but could be profoundly affected by what unfolds there. It is not just the enlargement of NATO in 2004 and the European Union in 2007 to the Black Sea's shores that compels a greater comprehension of its littorals' strategic significance. Georgia's conflicts in particular offer warnings and opportunities for the Euro-Atlantic Community.

1. Abkhazia and South Ossetia – and thus Russia's occupying forces – are dangerously close to the key East-West energy and transport corridor that flows through Georgia. Another conflict, that over Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan, just to the south means that Georgia is the only passageway independent of Iran and Russia to the Caspian region's vast oil and gas reserves and Central Asia's overland trade routes to East and South Asia and military supply corridors to the Afghanistan theatre. The importance of this thread through the needle head that is the South Caucasus is difficult to underestimate. The extant BTC oil pipeline – bringing up to a million barrels of oil to global markets every day – is one of these threads. As is the proposed Southern Energy Corridor that would supply strategically important natural gas pipelines such as Nabucco, the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline, Southeast Europe Pipeline (SEEP), the Interconnector Turkey-Greece-Italy (ITGI) and the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) in their quest to diversify energy supplies for European consumers. NATO's Northern Distribution Network (NDN) brings thousands of tons of military supplies through this corridor every day and numerous international institutions, from the Asian Development Bank to the World Bank have labelled the corridor the world's fastest growing trade route – an essential link in the transcontinental chain that forms the New Silk Road.

Flows along this corridor were briefly disrupted during Russia's 2008 invasion. Russian bombs fell very close to the BTC pipeline. Although trade across

Georgia rapidly increased again after violence had subsided, the events of August 2008 illustrated just how close regular Russian military forces, and potential future instability in the occupied territories, is to choking off a vital artery for Europe and the West. Without a greater presence on the ground, the Euro-Atlantic community will have little warning of potential future disruptions.

2. Discussion of Georgia's internal politics and leadership personalities is beyond the scope of this report. However, it is worth noting that despite disinterest and even scorn from many Western partners, the Georgian people have for almost a decade sought to serve as contributing, cooperative and responsible members of the Euro-Atlantic community. Almost all long-term indicators point to that trajectory continuing for the foreseeable future. Whatever one's opinions on the current Georgian government, it should be abundantly clear that a disregarding of Georgia's conflict areas would be a major strategic blunder for the standing and effectiveness of Euro-Atlantic institutions.

With almost 1,700 troops involved in combat in Afghanistan, Georgia is the largest non-NATO contributor and largest contributor overall per capita to the Western effort there. Georgia forces, serving without caveats, have been deployed to Helmand and Kandahar provinces and have suffered at least 16 deaths. Many hundreds of Georgian troops have also served in Kosovo and Iraq. Despite being denied a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) at four successive Alliance summits, Georgia has steadily continued military and political reforms in line with NATO standards. With up to 80% of the population consistently in support of Euro-Atlantic integration, Georgia has been commended for its Western-oriented governance reforms, sometimes scoring record progress, by OSCE election monitors, the World Bank, Transparency International, UNDP, the Council of Europe and the European Commission, amongst others. While there is much room for improvement in Georgia, would a Western Balkans country have made such efforts, it would now be fully integrating into NATO and the EU. But, Georgia's geography and simmering conflict zones provide an excuse for Western policymakers to ignore its accomplishments. This is all the more reason to increase the international presence there.

3. An expanded international presence also presents a number of opportunities for Western governments in forging their foreign policies. For the European Union, the opportunity to more fully implement the mandate

of the EUMM and to expand its activity in the future is a crucial test of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in the wake of the creation of the External Action Service. The EUMM is the EU's most strategically important deployment. Its future depends on a strong EU external policy and vice versa. Should the EUMM remain constrained, as it currently is, or melt away, as it may well do, the EU as an institution will suffer in the implementation of the Eastern Partnership program, in its relations with Russia and other key external actors and will probably not recover from the loss of face and perceived impotence that would stem from such a disappointment.

For European governments, such as the UK, that tend to employ a strategic outlook when engaging the Black Sea-Caspian region and Russia, expanding the activity of the EUMM and pushing for a greater international presence on the ground in Georgia's conflict areas provides an opportunity to hold leverage with Moscow in other foreign policy areas. This is not to say that Russia's occupation of Georgia must engender a confrontational stance with Russia. But, on issues from energy security to human rights, European actors often find that they lack concrete leverage with Moscow. For European governments such as Sweden and Poland, that understand the strategic importance of continued Euro-Atlantic integration in the Black Sea-Caspian region, the international presence in Georgia is of paramount importance in contributing to the stability required for integration-oriented reforms and cooperation. A number of factors converge to make the expansion of the international presence in Georgia's conflict areas a positive boon for the Euro-Atlantic community.

There are other arguments for why Western policymakers should be more concerned with Georgia's conflicts. But, the most compelling reason for why the international presence in Georgia's conflict areas should be expanded is the current worsening situation in those areas.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF GEORGIA'S CONFLICTS

The beginning of conflict in Abkhazia and South Ossetia was intimately tied to Georgia's struggle through independence during the break-up of the Soviet Union. In the midst of Georgia's civil war of the early 1990s, three autonomous regions within the former Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic: Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Adjara effectively established their own de facto governing structures. Forces loyal to Tbilisi attempted to re-establish control over these territories but failed, due partly to Russian military intervention. In the process, close to 300,000 Georgians, as well as more than 100,000 representatives of other ethnic groups, were ethnically cleansed from Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Acting as both a party to and ostensible mediator of the conflict (even after its invasion in 2008, Moscow insists that it plays the latter role) Moscow arranged ceasefires for the South Ossetia conflict in June 1992 and for the larger conflict over Abkhazia in May 1994. Adjara, in Georgia's southwest, did not experience a conflict, but remained outside of Tbilisi's control, operating as a tiny bandit enclave. Tbilisi's bargaining position at the time was so weak that it had to accept Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), in reality Russian, so-called peacekeepers in Abkhazia and a bilateral Russia-Georgia peacekeeping mechanism, with the participation of the OSCE Observer Mission, in South Ossetia, which was two thirds Russian/Ossetian and only one-third Georgian.

The 1,000 or so Russian/Ossetian troops in South Ossetia and the approximately 1,800 Russian troops in Abkhazia locked the two internationally-recognized Georgian regions out of Georgia's subsequent post-Soviet development, keeping them essentially as Russian protectorates. Despite widespread ethnic cleansing of Georgians, Abkhazia retained a district under its territorial control – Gali – which was and still is majority ethnic Georgian. The district's inhabitants became disenfranchised, marginalized and relatively poor. They were subject to regular harassment by Russian troops and Abkhaz militias. The Kodori Gorge in Abkhazia (also known as Upper Abkhazia) was a control-free zone until 2006 when the Georgian central government ousted a local warlord and re-established its authority there, but Russian forces occupied the Kodori in August 2008 and

expelled most of its Georgian residents. In South Ossetia, since the 1990s the Georgian central government maintained control over three enclaves – the Big Liakhvi Valley, the Little Liakhvi Valley and the Frone Valley, with a total of 22 villages and a population of more than 13,000 – until Russian forces overran, devastated and ethnically cleansed these areas in August 2008. The Akhlagori district, which was occupied by Russian forces on August 16, 2008, i.e. four days after signing the cease-fire agreement, was administratively part of Georgia's central Mskheta-Mtianeti region and was under Tbilisi's control until August 2008. The vast majority of the population of the district (more than 6,000 people, mostly ethnic Georgians) were expelled. Since the 1990s both Abkhazia and South Ossetia settled into a simmering state – far from the 'frozen conflict' misnomer – in which minor, localized provocations threatened to reignite tinderboxes kept calm only by fragile ceasefires. Over time, Moscow began a gradual annexation process: providing the residents of the two enclaves with Russian passports and increasingly 'seconding' Russian officials to serve in the region's de facto administrations. Moscow also rescinded a previous ban on men of military age crossing from Russia into Abkhazia, while implementing a strict visa for Georgian citizens to enter Russia (a violation of CIS agreements).

Georgia's Rose Revolution in 2003 brought a young, reforming, Western-leaning government to power that promised not only to tackle corruption and move the country's toward NATO and EU membership, but also to deal with Georgia's problem of territorial integrity. One of the first major acts of the new president, Mikhail Saakashvili, was to reintegrate Adjara – the bandit enclave – through peaceful means. Adjara's major city, Batumi, is now Georgia's second city and a booming port and tourist destination. It was hoped that a similar outcome might come about in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. But, the main difference between these two enclaves and Adjara was their major Russian presence (although Russian operatives did try to distribute Russian passports in Adjara). Over a decade, Russian forces had become accustomed to running nebulous enclaves that facilitated military spending and smuggling activity that benefitted commanders on the ground. Moscow – now with Vladimir Putin in charge – had grown to see the value of two significant pawns in the region – affording Russia destabilizing leverage over Georgia and its new Western-leaning government and an ace in the hole should outside powers seek to engage the South Caucasus.

Saakashvili's government enacted new policies of reaching out to the de facto administrations in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but Georgia's ambitions to

attain NATO membership challenged Russia and personally angered Putin. A Georgian anti-smuggling operation in 2004 established Tbilisi as the more responsible actor in the conflict areas and strengthened the central government's legitimate control over the ethnic Georgian and the mixed ethnic Georgian-Ossetian villages in South Ossetia. But, it was also around this time that Russian military planners began to set in motion preparations to undermine Georgia's Western integration (and eventual departure from Russia's CIS) by lighting the tinderboxes of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

In 2003, the Russian military provided twelve T-55 battle tanks and in 2004 seventy-five T-72 tanks, thirty self-propelled artillery, twenty rocket launching systems and over two hundred anti-aircraft guns to South Ossetia's separatists. More armaments were intercepted by Georgian forces. Around the same time, Russia's newly installed South Ossetian "president" Eduard Kokoity, unveiled a plan to his cabinet to provoke a conflict with Tbilisi in order to become fully absorbed into the Russian Federation. South Ossetian military cadets were simultaneously provided with new training facilities in Russia's North Caucasus and Russian military advisors were sent to the enclave to mould its militias into a more professional force. Later in 2004, electricity transmission lines from Russia to Georgia were cut and in 2005 a bomb was detonated outside the Georgian police station in Gori, killing three people. This was followed by a halt in Russian natural gas flows to Georgia in the dead of winter.

In 2006, Russian forces began building a new base in South Ossetia, while upgrading existing installations there and in Abkhazia. Russia enacted an embargo on Georgian products, including very popular Georgian wine and mineral water. This was followed by the deportation of Russia's ethnic Georgian population en masse: flown to Tbilisi in cargo planes by the thousands. Russia's parliament then called for the recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. Flagrant acts of provocation now became common, with Russian helicopters attacking Georgian forces in a Tbilisi-controlled part of Abkhazia to South Ossetian militia raids on Georgian villages and peacekeepers. Russian naval vessels were put on alert to blockade Georgia should full-scale conflict erupt. Tbilisi repeatedly demanded internationalization of the peacekeeping forces in both enclaves.

Tensions between Moscow and Tbilisi and violent incidents on the ground reached a breaking point in the summer of 2008. By late July, localized small arms attacks and roadside bombings had become an almost daily activity

of South Ossetian militia, while Georgian forces had moved closer to the enclave's only major urban centre, Tskhinvali. On 7 August, South Ossetian militia launched an offensive against those positions and Georgian forces responded by shelling and closing in on Tskhinvali, taking control of it the next day. Almost immediately Russian tank columns and troops begin pouring into Georgia (though Georgia later presented records of intercepted radio communications according to which the first units of Russian regular troops started entering the Roki Tunnel in the early morning of 7 August, which can also be substantiated by numerous testimonies of Russian soldiers featured in Russian media), while Moscow's air forces began a four-day bombing campaign throughout the country. Russian forces took Tskhinvali on August 10 and continued pursuing the Georgians out of South Ossetia, taking Gori and only stopping short of Tbilisi. Meanwhile, Russian forces moved out of Abkhazia, taking the Georgian port of Poti. As Russian forces took the initiative, their rearguard and irregulars from the North Caucasus, Abkhazia and South Ossetia swept into ethnic Georgian communities, burning down villages, attacking and forcefully evicting the inhabitants. This was particularly destructive in South Ossetia, where Georgian villages had existed in a latticework with Ossetian villages. Up to 22,000 internally displaced people were driven out of their homes in an internationally recognized campaign of deliberate ethnic cleansing.

As part of the international reaction to Russia's invasion, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who held the EU's rotating presidency at the time, negotiated a ceasefire agreement on August 12, known as the Six Point Agreement. By late August, Russian forces had begun to withdraw from some of Georgia's territory, including Poti. But, no more than a week later, Russian troops had stopped their retreat and seemed to be entrenching themselves in strategic spots throughout the country, some outside the areas previously not controlled by Tbilisi. This, along with Russia's refusal to allow IDPs to return to their homes in the conflict zones, was an almost immediate violation of the ceasefire agreement signed that same month. On August 26, Russia stunned the world by declaring that it recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia, areas with populations akin to some British 'villages', as independent countries. Even though the international community responded with condemnations and a flat refusal to accept Russia's recognition, Moscow artfully used these 'changed circumstances' as an excuse not to abide by the ceasefire agreement it had signed, citing the need for agreement from Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

In early 2012, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, internationally recognized parts of Georgia, have effectively been annexed by the Russian Federation. Both areas have been significantly depopulated: Abkhazia's population is roughly estimated at 180,000-200,000 while South Ossetia's is up to mere 20,000-22,000. Hundreds of thousands of ethnic Georgians, as well as others, who questioned Russia's role, were forced to leave due to two rounds of deliberate ethnic cleansing. Tens of thousands of ethnic Abkhaz and Ossetians have emigrated to Russia's North Caucasus and urban centres for security and economic reasons. This was made possible by Russia's pre-2008 war policy of providing the inhabitants of Georgia's occupied territories with Russian passports.

The depopulation has allowed for Russian forces to transform South Ossetia and large parts of Abkhazia into what can only be described as Russian military zones. There are over 10,000 Russian troops and security service personnel in Georgia's occupied territories, armed with battle tanks, heavy artillery and aircraft. Georgian villages have been burnt and bulldozed to make way for Russian military installations: fully-fledged military bases, smaller outposts, as well as housing for troops and military families. Existing civilian infrastructure has been converted to military use, while much of the remaining civilian population has been engaged to provide food and other provisions for Russia's seemingly permanent military deployments.

The entire South Ossetian "government" budget is funded by Russia, as is approximately 70 percent of Abkhazia's. Ethnic Russians, government officials and intelligence agents, occupy key decision-making positions in both of the self-proclaimed governments. South Ossetia's so-called ministers of defence, finance and health, the head of the security service and an assortment of top military advisors are all Russian nationals, most of them GRU and FSB agents. Abkhazia's so-called vice prime minister, minister of labour and social care, deputy ministers of defence, interior and agriculture and the deputy head of the national security council join numerous advisors as the overt Russian contingent in Sukhumi. Abkhazia's 2011 elections were not only unrepresentative as a result of ethnic cleansing and voter disenfranchisement, but were also manipulated by Moscow to achieve Russia's desired result. Ethnic Abkhaz leaders, who a number of Western observers have argued should be the target of engagement due to their perceived frustration with Moscow's heavy hand, have been effectively muzzled.

The events surrounding South Ossetia's 2011 elections were more dramatic. In November 2011, an "opposition candidate," Alla Dzhioeva actually won the so-called "presidential elections" in South Ossetia, but the election results were annulled since they apparently did not fit in with the initial Russian preferences. When Dzhioeva unilaterally announced her own "inauguration" as "president", Dzhioeva's office was assaulted by armed people in masks who appeared to be members of South Ossetian militia (though, some of Dzhioeva's supporters reported on their internet blogs that Russian FSB troops were also involved). Dzhioeva herself and her supporters were severely beaten. Dzhioeva had a stroke and ended up in the hospital. Despite Dzhioeva's pro-Russian credentials, her attempt to gain the "presidency" turned out to be unacceptable to the Kremlin probably because, on the one hand, Moscow did not want to witness an example of "opposition" victory over corrupt regime in its own realm, especially at a time when Vladimir Putin's regime itself was facing challenges from the Russian protest movement, and also because, on the other hand, groups in the Russian government with financial interests in South Ossetia, considered Dzhioeva's meddling undesirable. In March 2012, Leonid Tibiliov, a career Soviet KGB (then Russian FSB) officer and a new favorite of the Kremlin was chosen as "president" of South Ossetia.

Despite total political control and military lockdown, the presence of Russian forces has an inverse affect on stability in the region. They have not adopted a 'peacekeeping' stance as they had before the 2008 war. According to military experts, the nature and structure of their capabilities remains decidedly non-defensive. Georgia views the presence of so many Russian troops about an hour's drive from Tbilisi as a clear and present danger to the country's security and political stability. Most importantly, Russia has so far refused to abide by the cease-fire agreement to which it lent its signature in August of 2008. Russian forces have not withdrawn to pre-war lines, nor have they been reduced to pre-war levels. FSB 'border guards' patrols the ABLs. Ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia's Gali district are routinely harassed. The EUMM is barred from fulfilling its agreed mandate within Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The clearest manifestation of instability to do with the conflict zones in recent months has been a series of Russian-sponsored bombings and bombing attempts throughout Georgia, including most visibly next to the U.S.-embassy in Tbilisi. While Moscow naturally denies its involvement in these incidents, the culpability of Russia's GRU and FSB in planning and

funding these operations has been verified by a U.S. investigation team sent to Georgia for this purpose. That, together with convincing evidence provided by the Georgian government has led most Western governments and institutions to conclude that GRU and FSB agents in Abkhazia were in fact behind clandestine attacks aimed at fomenting political and/or civil unrest in Georgia. As Georgia's 2012 parliamentary and 2013 presidential elections loom, the occupied territories should be expected to serve as staging points for similar provocations.

It is important to fully understand the nature of Russia's gradual annexation of these territories, as well as the current state of affairs within Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in order to grasp the urgency with which the international community, particularly Western actors with a stake in the region, should act to positively alter the status quo in Georgia's conflicts. It is a common misconception in the West – one encouraged by Russian statements – that the presence of Russian forces in the conflict zones provides for stability that would not exist should Georgia's so-called warring ethnicities be left to their own devices. Not only has this opportunity not presented itself since the break-up of the Soviet Union (Russia has always been a party to the conflicts), but it is clear that Moscow is using its major presence on Georgian territory as a basis from which to foment instability in Georgia and the wider South Caucasus.

RUSSIAN MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN ABKHAZIA

- 50 Main Battle Tanks (T-90);
- 145 Infantry Combat Vehicles (BMP-2);
- 160 Armored Personnel Carriers (BTR-80);
- 2 Divisions of 152mm Self-Propelled Howitzers (2S3 "Akatsia");
- 2 Divisions of 122mm Multiple Rocket Launchers (BM-21 "Grad");
- Air Defense Systems: 2S6M "Tunguska", 9K33 "OSA", ZSU-23-4 "Shilka" and 1 Division of S-300 (PS);
- 1 Division of Ballistic Missiles OTR-21 "Tochka";
- 1 Flight of MI-24 Helicopters.

RUSSIAN MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN SOUTH OSSETIA

- 50 Main Battle Tanks (T-72);
- 160 Infantry Combat Vehicles (BMP-2);
- 95 Armored Personnel Carriers (BTR-80);
- 2 Divisions of 152mm Self-Propelled Howitzers (2S3 "Akatsia");
- 1 Division of 122mm Multiple Rocket Launchers (BM-21 "Grad");
- 1 Division of 300mm Multiple Rocket Launchers (BM-30 "Smerch");
- Air Defense Systems: BUK-M1 and 2S6M "Tunguska";
- 1 Division of Ballistic Missiles OTR-21 "Tochka";
- 1 Flight of MI-24 Helicopters.

RUSSIAN-SPONSORED BOMB ATTACKS AGAINST GEORGIA

- June 2, 2009: Explosion of Khobi-Ingiri Railway bridge, Samegrelo region
- June 22, 2009: Explosion of 500-kilowatt electricity transmission tower near village Mujava, Samegrelo region
- May 5, 2010: Assassination of Dimitri Kordzadze, Head of Adjara Division of the MIA's Emergency Situations Management Department
- September 22, 2010: Explosion at the wall of the US Embassy in Tbilisi
- October 2, 2010: Failed explosion of Railway bridge near village Chaladidi, Samegrelo region
- October 21, 2010: Two explosions at Tbilisi Central Railway Station
- November 28, 2010: Explosion at Labour Party headquarters in Tbilisi – One civilian killed
- November 28, 2010: Explosion at a supermarket and public square in Tbilisi
- Explosions foiled on March 31, 2011: targets were regional administration building, Justice House, and Labour Party office in Kutaisi
- Explosion foiled on April 3, 2011: target was Zugdidi Central Boulevard
- Attack foiled on June 2, 2011: target was a crowded location in the town of Senaki, Samegrelo region
- Attack foiled on June 6, 2011: target was NATO Liaison Office in Tbilisi

RUSSIAN OFFICIALS SERVING IN ABKHAZIA AND SOUTH OSSETIA'S DE FACTO ADMINISTRATIONS AS OF FEBRUARY 2012

ABKHAZIA

So-called Prime Minister's Office

Alexander Viktorovich Stranichkin - 'vice prime minister' in Abkhazia since March 2006. A Russian citizen, he previously worked as an economist in Russia.

So-called National Security Council

Alexander Aleksandrovich Voinsky – 'deputy secretary of the national security council' in Abkhazia since August 2010. A Russian citizen, he previously serves as a Soviet KGB officer and Russian naval officer.

So-called Ministry of Defence

Aleksandr Pavliushko – 'deputy minister of defence' in Abkhazia since August 2008. A Russian citizen, he previously served as chief of staff for the Russian so-called peacekeeping contingent in Abkhazia before the 2008 war.

Anatoli Innokentievich Zaitsev – 'head, military academy, ministry of defence' in Abkhazia since 2010. A Russian citizen, he previously served as a Lieutenant General in the Russian Army.

Aleksandr Danilovich Antipov – 'head, operative department, ministry of defence' in Abkhazia since 2009. He is a Russian citizen.

So-called Ministry of Interior

Vladimir Gaidukov – 'deputy minister of interior' in Abkhazia since 2005. He is a Russian citizen.

So-called Ministry of Labour and Social Care

Olga Viktorovna Koltukova – ‘minister of labour and social care’ in Abkhazia since March 2005. She is a Russian citizen.

SOUTH OSSETIA

So-called Prime Minister's Office

Vadim Vladimerovich Brovtsev – ‘prime minister’ of South Ossetia since August 2009. A Russian citizen, he was previously chairman of the board of a Russian construction company.

Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Zelig – ‘vice prime minister’ of South Ossetia since September 2009. He is a Russian citizen.

Iuri Shkretov – ‘chairman of government administration’ in South Ossetia since December 2009. A Russian citizen, he used to be a legislator from Russia's Chita district.

Andrei Agapov – ‘deputy chairman of government administration’ in South Ossetia since August 2009. A Russian citizen, he previously served as town councilman in Ozersk in Russia's Chelyabinsk oblast.

So-called Presidential Administration

Arsen Alanovich Gagloev – ‘head of presidential administration’ in South Ossetia since August 2009. A Russian citizen, he previously served in a number of local government positions in Vladikavkaz in Russia's North Ossetia.

Lev Viktorovich Pavliuchkov – ‘deputy head of Presidential administration’ in South Ossetia since October 2009. A Russian citizen, he previously served as a political consultant and campaign manager at the regional and national level in Russia, most recently in support of a third term for Vladimir Putin.

Viacheslav Nikolaevich Sedov – ‘head of presidential press service’ in South Ossetia since October 2010. A Russian citizen, he previously served in the Russian Defence Ministry's press center.

So-called Ministry of Defence

Valeri Adamovich Iakhnovets – ‘minister of defence’ in South Ossetia since July 2010. A Russian citizen, he previously served as head of intelligence for Russia’s airborne troops. He coordinated Russian drone flights over Georgian territory during the 2008 war.

So-called State Security Committee (KGB)

Boris Mazhitovich Atoev – ‘chief of state security committee’, the KBG, in South Ossetia since November 2006. A Russian citizen, he previously served in the Moscow division of Russia’s internal intelligence service, the FSB.

So-called KGB Border Guard Service

Oleg Genadievich Chebotariov – ‘head of FSB border guard service’ in South Ossetia since 2007. A Russian citizen, he heads a service made up entirely by Russian intelligence agents, patrolling the ABL within Georgia.

Alan Hadjimurzaevich Koliev – ‘chief of road management office, ministry of economic development’ in South Ossetia since August 2009. A Russian citizen, he previously served as a regulatory official in Russia’s North Ossetia.

Dimitri Breusov – ‘chairman of the state committee for architecture, urban development and land related issues, ministry of economic development’ in South Ossetia since September 2009. He is a Russian citizen.

So-called Ministry of Finance

Irina Andreevna Sitnik – ‘minister of finance’ in South Ossetia since September 2009. A Russian citizen, she previously served as financial director of the Moscow Banking Institute.

So-called Ministry of Health and Social Development

Otar Mikhailovich Gasiev – ‘minister of health and social development’ in South Ossetia since September 2010. A Russian citizen, he previously served as a member of the Guriev district council in Russia.

RUSSIA CONTINUES TO VIOLATE THE CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

THE CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT OF 12 AUGUST, 2008 CONTAINED SIX MAIN STIPULATIONS:

1. Non-use of force
2. A definitive halt to hostilities
3. Provision of free access for humanitarian assistance
4. Georgian military forces must withdraw to the places they are usually stationed
5. Russian forces must withdraw to their positions prior to the outbreak of hostilities
6. Opening of international discussions on security and stability modalities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia

Four days after the ceasefire agreement was signed, Russia immediately violated it by occupying Akhgori, part of the autonomous district of South Ossetia in Soviet times, but not controlled by Moscow or the de facto administration in Tskhinvali prior to the 2008 war. Given its military build-up in the occupied territories and the acts of provocation it has sponsored against Georgia, it is not clear that Russia seeks a definitive halt to hostilities. Quite the opposite, Russia seems to be preparing for future conflicts. Furthermore, the insecurity for local people that persists along the ABLs seriously calls into question day-to-day commitment to the non-use of force.

While some humanitarian assistance is on rare occasions allowed across the ABLs, Russia's barring of EUMM monitoring in the occupied territories means that there is no international verification that aid is being used for humanitarian purposes. Russian forces usually restrict humanitarian assistance to entering Abkhazia and South Ossetia only via Russia, and ethnic Georgians within the occupied territories are denied any assistance: a far cry from 'free access'.

Russia has not only flouted point 5 of the ceasefire agreement by not

retreating to positions status quo ante, but is in the process of building permanent military structures on territory controlled by Tbilisi prior to the 2008 war. Akhagori, the Kodori Gorge (often called Upper Abkhazia) and 22 villages across South Ossetia are parts of Georgia that Russia effectively annexed after it signed the Six Point Agreement. After the 2008 war, Russia vetoed the renewal of mandates for the OSCE and UN missions, respectively in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and it has consistently stood in the way of the EUMM's activities.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS) REGISTERED IN GEORGIA BY 2012

(MANY MORE HAVE LEFT GEORGIA UNREGISTERED)*

IDPs from the conflicts of the 1990s:

From Abkhazia	225,197
From South Ossetia	11,236
Total:	236,433

IDPs from the August 2008 conflict:

From Akhagori district	6,491
From Upper Abkhazia/Kodori Gorge	1,287
From Big Liakhvi, Little Liakhvi and Frone Valleys	13,401
Total:	21,179

Total: 257,612

THE EUROPEAN UNION MONITORING MISSION (EUMM)

So far, the EUMM is both a success on which to build and a disappointment that has not been able allowed to reach its full potential. EUMM is an unarmed, monitoring mission without any peacekeeping mandate, consisting of approximately 200 monitors from the 27 EU member states. Its mission is to monitor, but not enforce compliance with the Six Point Agreement and the Agreement on Implementing Measures. According to its official documents EUMM is tasked with providing for 'stabilisation', 'normalisation' and 'confidence-building', but its ability to contribute to all three areas is severely limited by its restriction to monitoring and most importantly because it has been barred by the Russians from entering Abkhazia and South Ossetia. EUMM representatives have only on a handful of occasions been permitted to even cross the ABLs for meetings with Russian military officials. According to EUMM officials on the ground, these meetings have been further restricted in recent months.

The Georgian Defence and Interior Ministries have concluded memoranda of understanding with the EUMM in compliance with and going beyond the ceasefire agreement. Thus, the Tbilisi-controlled side of the ABLs has been demilitarised, with only a limited police presence on the front lines. This was confirmed by the author on visits to the ABLs. The Russian side, however, is fully militarised, even with some permanent military installations very close to the ABLs. The author observed evidence of a major military presence on the Russian side in Akhagori. The EUMM is also tasked with monitoring the passage of local civilians back and forth across the ABLs. At the moment, Russian forces severely restrict this movement. Locals can cross, but unpredictable searches and detentions by Russian forces make most reticent to do so. Licit commercial activity across the ABLs is virtually non-existent. In 2009, the EUMM created Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs) to prevent escalation of disputes along the ABLs. In theory, these would provide for joint visits on both sides of the ABLs and regular meetings with Russian and Abkhaz or South Ossetian representatives every three weeks. In practice, Russia has refused to comply with the joint visits and has often blocked IPRM meetings through either Abkhaz or South Ossetian proxies. In April 2012, Russia instructed the Abkhaz de facto authorities to declare the head of EUMM, General Andrzej Tyszkiewicz as "persona non grata" in Abkhazia.

The EUMM's original mandate was for 12 months after the 2008 war. Due to the urgent need for an international presence, that mandate has been extended three times, now until September 2012. Future extensions, however, are not guaranteed, even if the conflict situation worsens. In fact, discussions with EU officials revealed that France recently pulled its contingent of monitors and has no plans to replace them. Italy will also likely not provide further monitors in 2012. In addition, there are serious questions about Germany's commitment to providing further monitors. These developments are worrying, not just for the Georgians, but for any stakeholders concerned about stability in the South Caucasus. The fact that continental Europe's 'big three' are abrogating their duties towards a strategically important EU mission sends a message to Moscow that the West does not take Georgia's security seriously. It opens the door for further Russian flouting of the ceasefire agreement and potential new aggression towards Georgia.

Whether or not the EUMM's future is secure, the fact remains that its current activities are not sufficient to ensure long-term, dependable peace in Georgia and the region. As has been discussed above, the EUMM is not able to ensure that Abkhazia and South Ossetia do not serve as staging points for aggressive Russian actions in Georgia and the region, whether these take the form of disruptions to the upcoming election processes in Georgia, or larger-scale violent provocations. This is partly because the EUMM does not have access to monitor activities in the occupied territories. But even if it did, should evidence of aggressive Russian actions become obvious – as is likely to be the case – there is very little that EUMM monitors can do. The idea behind the monitoring mission is that observations of this evidence would be relayed back to Brussels and other European capitals so that a decision could be made there on how to act. Apart from the obvious inefficiencies of this process in the face of potential future Russian actions, a European response still depends on political will. In contrast, a genuine peacekeeping force would serve as a credible deterrent on the ground.

GEORGIANS IN GALI: DENIED MONITORING

Russia's barring of EUMM monitoring in the occupied territories has precipitated a human rights crisis in the majority ethnic Georgian enclave of Gali district within Abkhazia. According to Abkhazia's de facto authorities Gali has a population of approximately 37,500. As has been detailed by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and Human Rights Watch, without so-called Abkhaz passports (or Russian documents) ethnic Georgians cannot vote, buy or sell property, receive high school diplomas, serve in the public sector or move unhindered across the lines of Russian occupation. Russian forces have closed three of four official crossing points and ethnic Georgians must obtain permits to cross from the administrative centre in Gali, which they often do not receive. Most schools in the district are compelled to teach in Russian, a language that many young ethnic Georgians in the area do not speak. Ethnic Georgians complain of regular harassment by authorities, targeted criminal activity, kidnappings and sometimes extrajudicial killings. According to Human Rights Watch, de facto Abkhaz officials have stated that ethnic Georgians have to choose on which side of the border they want to settle. Before the 2008 conflict, the OSCE and the UN had a monitoring presence in the area with access to Gali. Today, both of these missions have been disbanded after being effectively expelled by Russian forces. There is no international monitoring available to the people of Gali, despite EUMM capabilities being available just across the Russian occupation line.

UPGRADING THE EUMM TO A PEACEKEEPING DEPLOYMENT

In light of Russia's actions in the conflict areas and the genuine destabilizing effect they will continue to have on Georgia and the region, it behoves the EU and key member state capitals to pressure Moscow and begin arrangements for three, potentially graduated, changes to the situation on the ground:

First, the EUMM must be allowed to fulfil its mandate as stipulated in the 2008 Six Point Agreement and the Agreement on Implementing Measures. Russia has already agreed to allowing EUMM access to Abkhazia and South Ossetia; it is just not implementing these commitments on the ground. This is the least that international stakeholders can demand, but it would at least provide for better information on the situation inside the occupied territories and allow for an early warning mechanism of sorts should the current simmering situation deteriorate quickly. Monitors could also potentially investigate actions such as those surrounding the GRU's and FSB's sponsorship of bombings in Georgia.

Second, EU or international peacekeepers should be deployed to areas now held by Russian forces but not controlled by the de facto administrations in Abkhazia and South Ossetia before 2008, such as Akhagori and the Kodori Gorge. According to the ceasefire agreement, Russian forces should have retreated from these areas after the 2008 war, but they are now the site of Russian military installation construction and other intense activity. While Russia is not likely to halt this activity without serious international pressure, peacekeepers should at least be allowed to patrol these areas to ensure that this military activity does not constitute preparations for violence against Georgia. In addition, international peacekeepers should be deployed to Abkhazia's majority ethnic Georgian enclave of Gali (see above text box) to ensure that interethnic violence does not erupt there. International peacekeepers could also supervise the return of IDPs to these areas, as agreed by Russia in the ceasefire agreement. The Georgian government has already stated publically that it would welcome international peacekeepers on the territory it controls and would work with a potential peacekeeping force to provide for the return of IDPs.

Third, EU or international peacekeepers should patrol both sides of the ABLs

in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Although not part of the original EUMM mandate, this proposal is not as revolutionary as it might seem. It would essentially be a restitution of the peacekeeping mechanisms in place before the 2008 war, only under EU or other international auspices. The geographical scope of Russia's so-called peacekeepers before the war was adequate. They presented a problem because they were provided by a country that was a party to the conflict and actively exacerbated the unstable situation on the ground. An EU or international peacekeeping presence would have precisely the opposite effect. At the initial stage, Russian forces would not have to retreat or change places of their deployment in the occupied territories other than to allow peacekeepers full access to both sides of the ABL. Such a mission would present a deterrent and ensure that local civilians could cross the ABL without harassment, and could also potentially allow for more IDPs to return to their homes. It would not present a direct challenge to Russia, as its role would not be to confront Russian forces except if violence breaks out. It would, however, ensure that the sort of events that led to the 2008 war would not happen again.

This would not be the first peacekeeping mission undertaken by the EU, nor could it be the first successful one. Remarkably, given the low international profile of its peacekeeping ventures, the EU has a strong record of effectively deploying peacekeepers in the Balkans, the Middle East and in sub-Saharan Africa. Most of these, such as EUFOR Concordia in Macedonia and EUFOR DR Congo, have been limited in scope. But, their discreet mission and clear end-date have distinguished them from UN and other peacekeeping missions that often become embroiled or sidelined in protracted conflict situations without having substantially contributed to stability.

EUFOR Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina presents a potential model for Georgia's conflicts. Its peacekeepers, which have ranged from 2,500 to 1,300 over time, maintain compliance to the stipulations of the Dayton Agreement. All 27 EU member states have contributed forces, as have a few other international stakeholders such as Chile, Switzerland and Turkey. EUFOR Althea is the successor to a previous NATO peacekeeping mission and still works closely with NATO in its efforts to apprehend war criminals in the Balkans. Given the sensitivity of NATO's involvement in the South Caucasus, there is no need for a potential Georgian mission to incorporate the same cooperation. But, the EU's own monitors present a sufficient precedent and on-the-ground presence to allow for a EUFOR Althea-style transition in Georgia's conflict areas.

EUFOR Althea also potentially presents an opportunity to solve the capacity

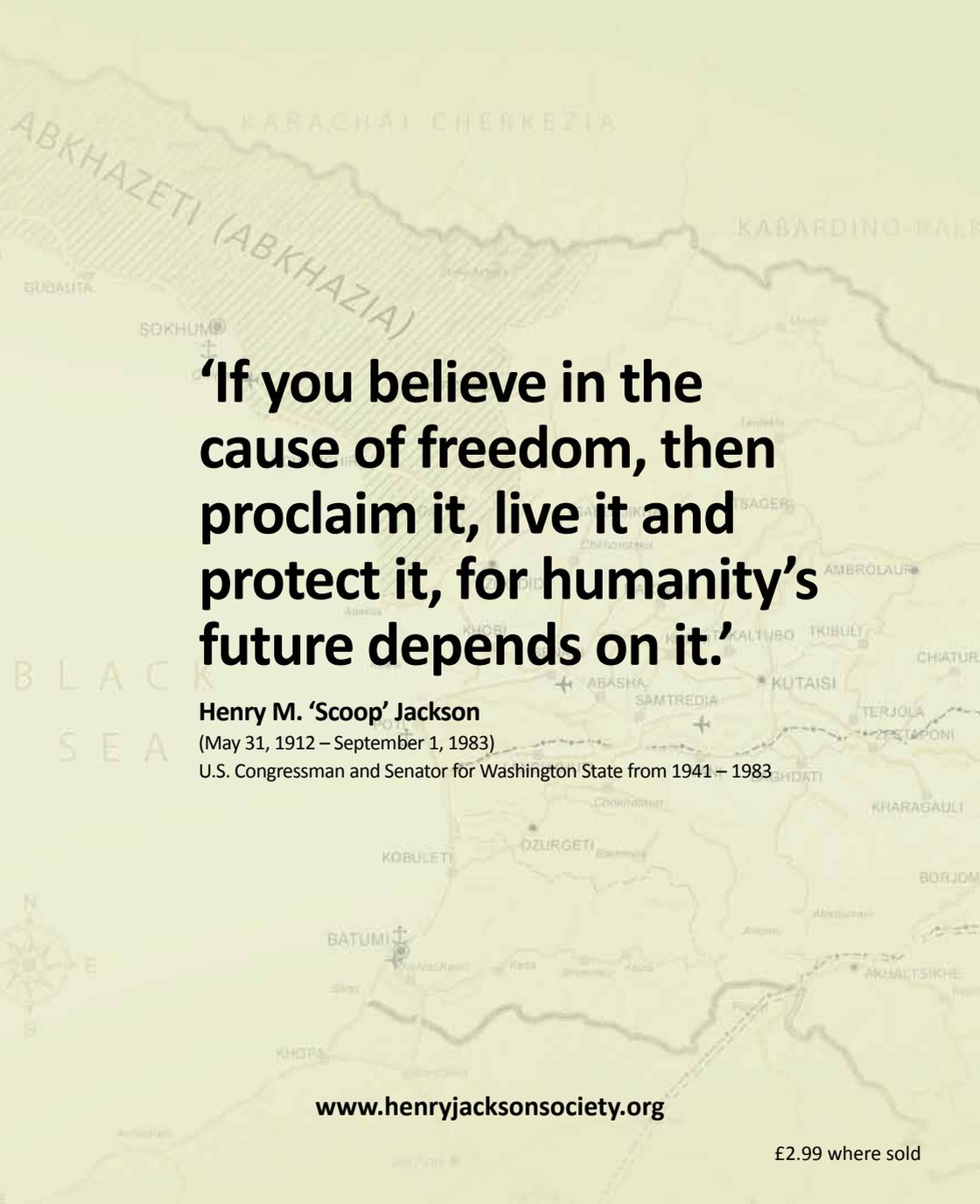
challenge that would in all likelihood dominate the practical application of a potential peacekeeping force in Georgia. In late 2011, Brussels announced that EUFOR Althea's force numbers will be cut in half, from 1300 to approximately 600. Despite the political stalemate in Bosnia-Herzegovina, EU officials, as well as outside analysts have concluded that the mission should transition from security towards efforts to improve governance and the rule of law, as well as move towards eventual EU integration. This potentially frees a number of European peacekeepers with valuable experience in the Balkans to be deployed in Georgia.

Should a potential international peacekeeping mission in Georgia not be organized under EU auspices, the EU still has a good record in contributing to the success of other missions. It participates or has participated in tens of UN missions around the world, its contributions ranging from advisors on governance and the rule of law to troops actively providing for peacekeeping on the ground. The ideal setup of a peacekeeping mission in Georgia would be under EU auspices, fully implementing and building on the EUMM mandate. But, the imperative is not EU involvement, it is growing the international presence on the ground in the conflict areas.

Should the political will not exist for the EU's role to be expanded, the best alternative peacekeeping setup would be a so-called coalition of the willing, bringing together wide-ranging international (not just Western) stakeholders committed to providing small contingents of peacekeepers. The presence of a NATO force would not contribute to stability due to the region's geopolitical sensitivities. The OSCE's record as a sponsor of pre-2008 war peacekeeping mechanisms was deeply flawed and as an OSCE member, Russia would surely seek to undermine the mission from within. A coalition of the willing would have to seek legitimacy from major stakeholders, including Russia, but it could potentially be far more flexible in its make-up, mandate and deployment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Before the EUMM's 2011-2012 term elapses, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy should make it a public objective to achieve fulfilment of the monitoring mission's mandate, including access to the Russian-controlled areas across the ABLs
- Simultaneously, the EU Commission, together with member state governments and international partners, should pressure Moscow to allow for an international presence, at least monitors, but ideally peacekeepers in areas that came under Russian control after the 2008 war, such as Akhagori and the Kodori Gorge
- The UK Foreign Office should convene talks, as an offshoot of official negotiations in Geneva, involving EU institutions, Georgia and Russia to come to agreement on an international peacekeeping mechanism for both sides of the ABL. A key stipulation of these talks should be that if agreement is not reached by a certain date, EU or international peacekeepers will be deployed to the southern side of the ABL
- The UK should simultaneously announce that it plans to commit 300 peacekeepers to a new EU or international peacekeeping force for Georgia's conflicts
- The UK should simultaneously recruit non-EU international partners to participate in talks on implementing a peacekeeping force and commit peacekeepers to a potential mission. Candidates could include Albania, Chile and Macedonia, that have contributed to EUFOR Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina and do not have significant interests involved in their relationships with Russia. Other potential candidates include Western Balkan states, such as Croatia or Slovenia, that benefitted from peacekeepers themselves after the wars of the former Yugoslavia. London should, initially at least, attempt to avoid building a coalition of 'Russia's detractors'



**‘If you believe in the
cause of freedom, then
proclaim it, live it and
protect it, for humanity’s
future depends on it.’**

Henry M. ‘Scoop’ Jackson

(May 31, 1912 – September 1, 1983)

U.S. Congressman and Senator for Washington State from 1941 – 1983