

The Army and Society in Georgia

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THE GHOST OF A COUP IN GEORGIA ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE 21ST CENTURY

By Vakhtang Maisaia

Georgian law-enforcement agencies have exposed a conspiracy aimed to assassinate the president and overthrow the government. It is already the third assassination attempt against Shevardnadze (the first two took place on August 29, 1995 and on February 9, 1998; however, one should also remember three other cases: December 1991 military coup carried out by the National Guards and "Mkhedrioni" paramilitary organisation, June 1992 attempted coup organised by ex-president Zviad Gamsakhurdia's supporters, and October 1998 mutiny in western Georgia led by Colonel Akaki Eliava). Unlike previous ones, this last attempt actually was not carried out but checked by preventive operations of the law-enforcement bodies which managed to arrest some 10 suspects (including one army general) in advance. According to available information, the conspiracy seems to have rather far-reaching implications. Particularly, it aimed to launch an anti-government military coup. By its structure and scale the 1999 conspiracy exceeds its two predecessors and, if compared with previous attempts, displays political and military aspects. Generally speaking, each of them may be specified as follows.

Political aspects of the unimplemented coup

The 1999 conspiracy, as opposed to the other attempted coups, has a clear "political trace". Although the investigation is still under way, several MPs (for instance, Boris Kakubava) were alleged to have been involved in the conspiracy, while Igor Giorgadze, former chief of the state security service who is wanted by the law-enforcement authorities in connection with the August 29, 1995, assassination attempt against the president, was reported to be the conspirators' leader (by the way, some sources claim that he is going to run the next presidential elections). Besides, the army general Gudjar Qurashvili's involvement in the case to some extent indicates political implication of the action since he used to hold a rather important office in the MoD.

The society responded to the news about the exposed conspiracy inadequately. Unlike previous attempted coups, the country's population actually did not react to the exposure of the conspiracy, as if it was an ordinary event. People's such

political indifference may be viewed as a "latent political protest" against the current social and economic situation of Georgia.

Considering Georgia's and foreign country's concern about functioning of the Caspian oil pipeline, correlation between the conspiracy and this issue looks rather interesting. First of all, the case seems connected with the April 17 inauguration of the Supsa oil terminal. The fact that the conspiracy came out in the open a month after the "small pipeline" began to operate clearly indicates its geopolitical implication and involvement of a country (or a group of countries) which is not interested in its further development.

It must be mentioned that the exposure of the conspiracy coincided with the outset of the pre-election campaign in Georgia (first parliamentary and then presidential elections). It is interesting also that law-enforcement authorities, according to official reports, began to watch the conspirators already last December. One may find some similarity between the case and the last year's October 19 mutiny in western Georgia led by Colonel Akaki Eliava which occurred right three weeks before local elections. Somehow this aspect may be viewed as a political step aimed to manipulate public opinion.

Military aspects of the unimplemented coup

Because former and active-service officers of power agencies are main subjects of the case one may conclude that the conspirators were going to launch a large-scale military coup with military operations focused mainly in Tbilisi and neighbouring areas. Concentration of forces in the country's capital might have been enough to seize power. Not by chance General Gudjar Qurashvili, the commander of the MoD training centres who was able to mobilise most efficient army units for the action, appears to have been involved in the case. Participation of former officers of special task forces in the conspiracy is also noteworthy as they have passed special combat training and are better adapted to street fighting. That is to say they are more capable of achieving the goal in time than loyal and larger governmental troops.

KODORI DIRECTION

By Irakli Aladashvili

Previous two issues of the "Army and Society in Georgia" informed about the structure and functions of two newly created territorial commands of the MoD - Eastern and Western Direction Troops.

The given issue examines the third such territorial command - Kodori Direction Troops (KDT) - which was created to control the so-called Abkhazian Swaneti, more exactly the Kodori Gorge (a territory of Abkhazia along the Kodori river). At first sight, KDT differs from both Eastern and Western Direction Troops for particular reasons. First of all, there is a different recruitment procedure: KDT is manned entirely with local Swans (a Georgian sub-ethnic group).

The Kodori Gorge is the only region of Abkhazia the separatist Abkhaz government cannot control. That is why this direction is greatly important. Such missile systems as MRL BM-21 ("Grad"), if deployed in the middle part of the gorge, can bomb even Sukhumi as their range amounts to 21 km. The Abkhaz government is well aware of the danger of such tactical attack. Therefore, it has been always anxious to take control over the whole Kodori Gorge and oust the local Georgian population.

At the end of September-beginning of October 1993 dozens of thousands of refugees and Georgian governmental troops fled Abkhazia just through the Kodori Gorge. Abkhaz forces and North Caucasian mercenaries launched their main offensive in the Ochamchire-Gali direction and soon reached the Enguri river. But their movement in the Kodori direction was slow. As a result, local Swans

and regular army units managed to fortify the area and checked the Abkhaz offensive.

Defensive warfare is relatively easy in such narrow canyons as the Kodori Gorge since a dozen of combatants are able to resist much bigger enemy forces there. It seems that just this decisive reason accounts for the failure of the Abkhaz army's successive attacks on the Georgian villages of the Kodori Gorge. However, by 1995 Abkhaz forces managed to take a strategically important automobile tunnel near the village of Lata and thus substantially strengthened their positions.

Nowadays, Abkhaz units control the lower part of the Kodori Gorge, including the Lata and Zemo Lata villages, while Georgian troops are stationed in the village of Kvabcha. Currently, there is no danger to other Georgian villages - Chkharta, Kvemo Azhara, Zemo Azhara, Gentsvishi, Omarishara, Sakeni - as an automobile bridge near the Kvabcha village has been destroyed and, therefore, Abkhaz forces cannot deploy heavy armaments in the region. However, not only Georgian MoD units stay in the Kodori Gorge. There is also a battalion of the Internal Troops (commander, Vice-Colonel Nugzar Pangani) and a unit of the SDFD (Capt. Ghia Djatchvliani). The KDT itself is under Colonel Emzar Kvitsiani.

Several days ago the battalion of the Internal Troops was re-subordinated to the MoD. At first sight, this decision is quite justifiable and aims to reinforce the KDT. On the other hand, however, one must consider rather tense personal relations between Colonel Kvitsiani and Vice-Colonel Pangani. This may lead to conflicts not only between the two commanders but between their units as well.

Hard crime situation must be also taken into account: about 50 murders of local residents have been committed in the region in recent times. Unfortunately, for some reasons the central government's control in the region is rather weak. Almost all the locals possess at least a submachine gun, while many have grenade launchers and even cannons.

Independent military experts think that defence of the region must be the main mission of the KDT. The Kodori Gorge can be threatened from two directions - from Sukhumi and Tqvarcheli (Abkhaz forces have already prepared artillery positions near Tqvarcheli, capable of bombing the Kodori Gorge). Operationally, it will be greatly difficult to deploy additional troops in the Kodori Gorge on "X-day", as the Tchuberi-Sakeni pass, the only mountainous road to connect the region with the rest of Georgia, is hard to drive even in summer time, while in winters the region may be reached only by helicopters. On the other hand, if it ever comes to restore the territorial integrity of Georgia by force (by military means), the region will gain an extreme importance, first of all, because just the Kodori Gorge provides an opportunity to control the Ochamchire-Sukhumi automobile and railway roads by long-range artillery systems.

The region's main advantage, however, is the possibility to completely destroy the Babushera airport (near Sukhumi) by the use of long-range artillery and missile systems, and thus substantially limit air transportation from/to Abkhazia (the other airport of Abkhazia is located in Gudauta and belongs to the Russian military). Another advantage of the Kodori Gorge must be also taken into account: Kodori-deployed troops are able to check ground and air routes between Abkhazia and the North Caucasus, particularly Kabardino-Balkaria (just these routes were used by Abkhaz forces for transportation of weapons from the North Caucasus during the war in Abkhazia).

However, as mentioned above, the current crime situation in the Kodori Gorge is rather hard, negatively affecting combat efficiency of the KDT.

HOW GEORGIAN OFFICERS ARE TRAINED

By Irakli Aladashvili

The problem of personnel training, especially regarding the officer corps, is extremely important for the army-building in Georgia. In 1992-93 mainly former Soviet officers and ordinary civilians enlisted the newly created Georgian army. By that time the Abkhazian and South Ossetian armed conflicts had already unfolded and there was no time to train officers in military colleges or academies - volunteers gained military experience directly in combat. However, the situation changed by 1994. Hostilities ceased, while the Joint Military Academy (JMA) began to function with the following three faculties - ground troops, air force and navy. The faculty of ground troops teaches artillery, tank and motorifle specialities. After graduating the four-year course of these specialities, cadets are awarded the rank of Lieutenant and are assigned as platoon commanders to motorifle, tank or artillery units.

Although the JMA operates under the MoD, the word "joint" in its title means that it is available for cadets of other Georgian military forces as well - Frontier Troops and Internal Troops. To this end, the JMA faculty of ground troops has introduced one more speciality - frontier and internal troops - which is taught in two separate subgroups. The educational process in both subgroups is similar to that of the faculty of ground troops. But unlike the latter, the frontier subgroup studies specific operations in frontier areas, particularly, arrangement of the border line and adjacent zones, frontier patrolling, hidden sentry posts, etc. Would-be officers of the Internal Troops also learn specific disciplines in the JMA since the Internal Troops still embody convoy units which guard prisons and colonies. Therefore, a certain part of the JMA curriculum is focused on convoy training, which includes conveying prisoners, the use of specially trained dogs, etc.

As mentioned above, apart from the faculty of ground forces, there is also the air force faculty in the JMA. Its curriculum includes piloting, aircraft engine service, aircraft electric equipment, aviation tools and armaments. After learning the theoretical course of the JMA, cadets pass practical training in the Bolnisi airfield. As to the naval faculty of the JMA, it is located in Batumi and teaches the following specialities: craft captains, navigation officers and mechanics.

Besides the JMA, servicemen of the Internal Troops also study in the police academy of the MIA - officers and sergeants get the profession of a lawyer there. In addition, the MIA-Internal Troops run special training courses for officers and sergeants. The six-month officer training course aims to improve qualification and skills of junior commanders of the Internal Troops, while the sergeant training course provides clever sergeants with the opportunity to get junior officer ranks. At the same time, a sergeant school functions in the Internal Troops. To begin with, the school selects most clever recruits who will afterwards complete a six-month training course and take the position of a squad commander. The school trains sergeants for both motorifle and convoy units. All of them - the officer and sergeant training courses, as well as the sergeant school - are subordinated to the Training Battalion, the only such one in the Internal Troops, which has the status of a separate military unit.

Apart from the above, seven junior officers of the Internal Troops are learning in the Turkish military academy, while some senior officers in the military academy of Ukraine. However, their number is rather small in comparison with the number of the MoD officers who study in foreign military colleges or academies. More than 200 Georgian officers are studying in Frunze military academy (Moscow) and military colleges of Russia, and almost 250 of them are learning in the USA, Germany, Turkey, Greece and some other countries.

Officers of the SDFD also get education abroad. The West is interested in efficient control at the Georgian ground and marine borders implemented by local forces and, therefore, frontier officers have a lot of opportunities to improve their skills in the USA, Turkey, Great Britain and other countries. Special two-month courses began to function in the Lilo training centre of the SDFD in

April. By the end of the year, Turkish instructors will train several groups of Georgian frontier officers there. Each of the groups consists of 20 officers. After completing the course in Lilo, they will pass training in Turkey.

It seems that the Georgian military forces are more or less able to train the required number of officers. However, independent military experts think that education of Georgian officers in various foreign military colleges (which often do not match each other) may not yield positive results. It must be also taken into account that security services of some countries where Georgian officers study may attempt to "recruit" them for intelligence operations.

Military Chronicle

Georgian press reports

State security

Georgian law-enforcement authorities arrested a group of suspects who were allegedly going to assassinate the president and carry out a coup on May 26 (Independence Day), including General Gudjar Qurashvili, the head of the MoD training centres and former commander of the ground troops of the Georgian army; former bodyguards of Djaba Ioseliani (imprisoned leader of the outlawed Mkhedrioni paramilitary organisation) - Merab Lutidze and Goga Toidze; an officer of the "Alfa" commando unit (MSS) Kakhaber Kantaria (former bodyguard of Igor Giorgadze); former MSS officer Temur Papuashvili (a brother of Gela Papuashvili, former officer of the "Alfa" commando unit sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment for participation in the August 29 assassination attempt against the president); and some others. Some time later, Toidze and Lutidze were released without any charges. In Papuashvili's house the police revealed and confiscated placards with photos of Igor Giorgadze, the former chief of the state security service (who is wanted in connection with the August 29 assassination attempt), and a number of armaments: two "Nagan" revolvers, one "Makarov" pistol, two noiseless pistols PB, one automatic pistol APC-B (or AU-44), several submachine guns and carbines CKC, explosives, night-vision sights and optic devices, etc. According to Elena Tevdoradze, the chair of the parliamentary penitentiary subcommittee, the conspiracy was exposed greatly by help of one of the countries which tipped off the Georgian security services. She abstained, however, to identify this country. Later on, the police arrested several more suspects. According to the investigation service of the MSS, the arrests were sanctioned by the Supreme Court. The suspects are charged with high treason and participation in an anti-government conspiracy (Articles 65 and 67 of the Criminal Code).

According to Temur Goksadze, Qurashvili's lawyer, the court sanctioned his arrest in breach of the Criminal Procedure Code - in the absence of both the defendant and his lawyer. In his words, Qurashvili sent a letter to the president, pleading not guilty of high treason.

Despite General Qurashvili's good reputation, his career includes one discreditable event. On June 24, 1992, ex-president Zviad Gamsakhurdia's supporters led by Valter Shurgaia entered Tbilisi and took control of the State TV. They were armed by the armaments (one T-55 tank, armoured vehicle BRDM-2 and about 250 submachine guns) which were ceased the same morning in the operational brigade of the Internal Troops commanded by Qurashvili at that time. It is noteworthy that Georgia owes its success in retaining Kodori Gorge in 1993 mainly just to Qurashvili.

Colonel Temur Papuashvili is one of the main figures among the arrested suspects. He began to work in the security service in 1984. Till September 1995 he was the head of the MSS operational-technical department. After his brother was arrested he was removed from office. Although he was also suspected of being involved in the August 29 assassination attempt against the president, the

Procurator's Office failed to get any evidence against him. Until recently he has worked in a private guard company.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 141, 142; May 25, 27, pp. 1,2

"Meridiani 44" No. 59, May 24-26, p. 2

"Resonance" No. 138, 140; May 24, 26; pp. 1, 3

"Droni" No. 54, 56; May 25-27, May 29; pp. 1, 2

"Kviris Palitra" No. 22, May 31-June 6, p. 9

Conflict zones

A bomb exploded in front of the Abkhaz parliament in Sukhumi on May 15. No casualties were reported. Sokrat Djindjolia, the chairman of the parliament, blamed the incident on Georgian terrorists.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 136, May 20, p. 2

Two Russian peacekeepers were badly wounded by unidentified gunmen at the 307th RPF check-point in the village of Tsatskhvi, Zugdidi district, on May 21. The gunmen stole submachine guns, flack-jackets and some other ammunition. Leri Chitanava, the mayor of Zugdidi, suggested that the incident might have been caused by an argument between the peacekeepers and local residents, while Tamaz Nadareishvili, the chairman of the Tbilisi-based Supreme Council of Abkhazia, claimed it to be a provocation aimed to break stability in the region. He pointed to the fact that the RPF mandate had already expired and such destabilisation may be used to justify the Russian military presence in the region. On the whole, some 70 Russian peacekeepers were killed and almost 100 of them wounded in the conflict zone for the last five years.

"Resonance" No. 136, May 22, p. 2

"Droni" No. 53, May 22-25, p. 2

Abkhaz authorities are going to prosecute nine Georgian mariners of the ship "Alioni" for "illegal fishing in Abkhaz home waters". The ship was detained by Abkhaz naval forces nearby Ochamchire on April 3. Negotiations between Sukhumi and Tbilisi on the problem have been unsuccessful so far, except that one of the crew - a woman - was unconditionally released.

"7 Dge" No. 61, May 28-30, p. 1

According to Vladimir Mikamba, the Abkhaz defence minister, about 60 percent of the Abkhaz armed forces - ground troops, navy, air force and air defence troops - took part in a two-day military exercise in the Ochamchire district of Abkhazia. Abkhazia did not want a war but the Abkhaz army was ready to resist any enemy, Mikamba said. The RPF Command and UNOMIG were informed about the exercise in advance but Sukhumi did not allow UN observers to attend it.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 144, May 28, p. 3

Army building

According to Valeri Chkheidze, the SDFD chairman, in the first quarter of the year the SDFD received only 37 percent of the money allocated to frontier defence by the state budget. At the same time, Georgian Frontier Troops are going to take over the whole length of the country's borders in accordance with the last year's Georgian-Russian agreement. The process must be completed by September. In May Russia began to withdraw its frontier troops from Abkhazia. Their ammunition and equipment will be partly pulled out and partly turned over to the RPF, while the immovable property will be filmed and ceded to Georgia in kind of photo- and video-materials. Although Sukhumi keeps claiming that Abkhazia will not allow Georgian Coast Guard to control Abkhaz coastal waters, the SDFD hopes to achieve the goal with the help of naval radar systems granted by the USA and installed on Georgian patrol boats. They are supposed to provide the Coast Guard with an opportunity to control Abkhaz coastal areas from a long distance and check every vessel trespassing the Georgian marine border. "If the Abkhaz fire at us, they will get a good response", Chkheidze said. As to Adjara, it seems that Tbilisi has come to terms with the Adjarian leadership, which previously demanded that Adjara would control its borders only by itself.

Reportedly, the centre and the region have in principle agreed on creation of an Adjarian regional frontier bureau under the SDFD.

"Droni" No. 45, May 4-5, p. 5

"Akhali Taoba" No. 134, May 18, p. 2

According to Valeri Chkheidze, the Georgian frontier troops are creating special mobile units - 80-150 servicemen in each - to control bypassing cross-border routes which allow smugglers to evade border check-points. They will be deployed in all the Georgian regions. The whole process will take 2-3 years.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 120, May 31, p. 2

Thirteen conscripts from the villages of the Liakhvi Gorge (Tskhinvali Region - South Ossetia) were drafted into the Frontier Troops of Georgia. They have become the first local conscripts to serve in the Frontier Troops since the Georgian-Ossetian conflict burst out. Three of them entered the frontier faculty of the Joint Military Academy.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 99, May 6, p. 5

Following the president's order, the state scientific centre "Delta" and experts of the MoD began inspection of former Soviet air force bases in Georgia. Vartsikhe base was the first to be inspected - there are about 2 million shells, 73 thousand missiles and 50 thousand aviation bombs. Afterwards, the inspection will be carried out in Kopitnari, Telavi and Dedoplistzqaro bases. The whole process will last till June 1. According to Givi Lekishvili, the director general of the "Delta", all outdated ammunition will be exported out of Georgia for utilisation.

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 117, May 5, p. 1

The defence minister ordered to lay off the entire MoD department of psychological training and personnel breeding. This does not mean that all of its personnel will be dismissed but radical changes in the department seem inevitable. According to official version, the minister's decision was in line with his new cadre policy. It must be mentioned that most of the department's officers come from the former political department of the Soviet ZakVO - Transcaucasian MD.

"Droni" No. 48, May 11-13, p. 1

Dimitri Bit Suleiman, 20, appealed for alternative non-military service. However, Omar Gogichaishvili, the head of the district drafting office, said his application must be rejected: "His demand must not be satisfied as it will be followed by five others, five by ten, and so on. As a result, we will have no army at all. We think that there are serious forces behind this case, which want to disappoint the Georgian nation". In his words, the current service conditions of the army are much better than living conditions of about 60 percent of the Georgian population. Suleiman's case must be examined by the central drafting commission of the MoD in a month. Although the law on alternative service was adopted by the parliament last year, it does not work in practice.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 99, May 6, p. 15

"Alia" No. 73, May 11-13, p. 3

According to Leri Kvakhadze, the head of the standing military medical commission, the MoD still applies an old Soviet list of diseases subject to deferment from the military service. In his words, it was merely translated from Russian and does not take into account the Georgian specific. During the last call-up, about 6,000 conscripts were drafted into the armed forces and 36 of them were later demobilised for health problems - mainly psychic disorders and ulcers.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 129, pp. 6, 8

Financial situation in the military medicine is steadily getting worse. In 1994 the field received 55% of the planned budgetary sums, in 1995 - 81%, in 1996 - 88%, in 1997 - 69% and in 1998 - 20%. This year the MoD military medical department requires 3.2 mln GEL (about \$1.6 mln) to purchase medicines and equipment but the defence budget allocates only 300 thousand GEL (about \$150

thousand) to this end. At present, the military medicine of Georgia relies entirely on humanitarian aid. Not long ago, Germany presented the MoD with dental equipment, while France with a field military hospital (150 beds with surgery). Meanwhile, the medical situation in the army remains hard. In the first four months of the year 113 servicemen have been injured during various incidents, including 36 cases of hazing and 12 road accidents. Three of them died in hospitals. Medical treatment is more or less satisfactory in the 11th MRB, 21st MRB and 22nd MRB, and the National Guards. Although the first military medical officers will graduate Tbilisi Medical University next year, the number of vacancies of medical officers is still too high and will hardly reduce in the near future.

"Meridiani 44" No. 56, May 17-19, p. 6

The spring 1999 call-up (May 1-June 30) is carried out with some innovations. Particularly, there are now two main drafting medical commissions - in Tbilisi and Kutaisi (previously, there used to be only one in Tbilisi). Besides, conscripts are drafted on the basis of territorial conscription, i.e. they will serve in the units located close to their homes. This measure is expected to reduce transportation costs and somewhat improve the food situation as servicemen will be allowed to spend weekends at home. The whole conscription process is now supervised by the MoD mobilisation department. The Main Military Commissariat that did it before has been abolished. To make the process more efficient, the department proposed that drafting commissions should be chaired by heads of gameoba (local self governments). The parliament will examine this proposal in the near future.

"Meridiani 44" No. 56, May 17-19, p. 6

The government has worked out a program to create a special training centre of the MoD for six-month courses on the Georgian language and history for ethnic minorities of Georgia. The decision was made after a certain number of recruits were demobilised from the army for complete inability to speak Georgian. The centre will have the capacity to train 500 cadets at the same time. However, the lack of finance may hamper implementation of the program.

"Meridiani 44" No. 56, May 17-19, p. 6

The president appointed Merab Kvekveskiri deputy defence minister for finances and economics, and Vazha Ramishvili deputy defence minister for law. Both had been nominated by the defence minister.

Merab Kvekveskiri, Ph.D. in economics, was born in Ochamchire in 1960; he graduated the Vienna institute of the IMF in Austria in 1993. His track record includes the following positions: a senior expert of the parliamentary economic commission, state advisor of the apparatus of the head of state and chief state advisor of the State Chancellery (1993-95). In 1997 he was appointed deputy chairman of the Customs Department, while the same June - deputy parliamentary secretary of the president.

Vazha Ramishvili was born in the Saguramo village, Mtskheta district, in 1945. He is historian and a lawyer by education. His track record includes the following positions: the head of one of the departments of the People's Control Committee (1990-91); deputy head of the personnel department of the Ministry of Justice and then the head of the department (1991-94); deputy minister for justice (1994-98). To date, there have been no such positions in the MoD. They were introduced in the framework of the ongoing military reform. "7 Dge" No. 60, May 26-27, p. 3

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 111-112, May 26, p. 2

According to the MoD press centre, Paata Gaprindashvili, 26, first secretary of the Georgian embassy in Greece, was appointed head of the MoD department for international military co-operation. He has graduated Tbilisi State University in international law and foreign relations. In 1995-96 he worked as first secretary of the MFA military-political department.

"Resonance" No. 134, May 20, p. 3

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 111, May 20, p. 2

The MoD blamed the Ministry of Economy for improper selection procedures during tenders for supplies to the army, claiming that winner companies often provide goods and services at much higher prices than on the market. For his part, Lado Papava, the minister for economy, pointed to the fact that the tender commission was made up of representatives of all the involved ministries, including the MoD. He also emphasised that last December the parliament adopted a new law on tenders which gave every ministry the right to launch such tenders on their own. However, no power ministry has used this right so far.

"Resonance" No. 145, May 31, pp. 1, 2

According to Michael Kebabze, the military commandant of the Tbilisi garrison, desertion and other problems of the army cannot be solved without fundamental military reforms. The military commandants' office of Tbilisi, which is in charge of not only the capital but Qazbegi, Sagaredjo, Koda and Kaspi districts, lacks resources to carry out efficient control. For the lack of fuel the patrol unit of the office has been abolished. At present, military patrols in Tbilisi consist entirely of cadets of the Joint Military Academy.

"Meridiani 44" No. 62, May 31-June 2, p. 6

Colonel Koba Kobaladze, 30, was appointed chief of the WDT (Western Direction Troops - newly created territorial command of the MoD) Staff. When 24 years of age Kobaladze was awarded the rank of Colonel and assigned to command the Shavnabada Battalion during the war in Abkhazia. Afterwards he was appointed commander of the 11th MRB (which was earlier commanded by David Tevzadze). After the war in Abkhazia ended Kobaladze graduated the Ryazan paratroop military college (Russia) and Frunze military academy in Moscow.

"Droni" No. 49, May 13-15, pp. 5, 7

Visits, negotiations, co-operation

David Tevzadze visited Ukraine, Czech republic and Germany. His negotiations in Kiev were focused on the prospects of training Georgian officers. It seems that Ukraine offers better training opportunities than Russia. Its training courses are adequate to the hardware and armaments of the Georgian army and, more importantly, will be free-of-charge for Georgian cadets, while Russia requires \$1,000-2,000 to educate every Georgian officer. So the number of Georgian cadets in Ukraine will increase in 1999-2000. They will pass mostly short-term (six-month or one-year) courses there. In Prague the Georgian and the Czech MoD signed a military co-operation agreement, while when in Germany Tevzadze attended the NATO multi-national exercise "Combined Endeavour" of communication troops. A Georgian radio relay vehicle commanded by Major Metreveli participated in the exercise, using, for the first time in the modern history of the Georgian army, NATO-standard radio equipment.

"Droni" No. 51, May 18-20, p. 4

David Tevzadze visited Adjara and introduced newly appointed chief of the WDT Staff Colonel Koba Kobaladze and Ilia Pavnenko, advisor of the commander of the Navy, to Aslan Abashidze. According to official information, Tevzadze-Abashidze talks were also focused on army-building problems and prospects of taking over Batumi-deployed former Soviet military objects.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 103, May 11, p. 2

"Droni" No. 49, May 13-15, pp. 5, 7

In accordance with the Georgian-Turkish co-operation agreement in the field of frontier defence, Turkish instructors will train Georgian frontier guards in the Lilo training centre till the end of the year - several groups (20 servicemen in each) will pass two-month training in turn.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 103, May 11, p. 5

A NATO delegation led by General Tony Kolsteren, the director of the PfP co-ordination centre, visited Georgia to examine prospects of carrying out a PfP multi-national exercise in Georgia in 2001. During his talks with the Georgian military leadership he proposed that Georgia should take more active part in the

PfP. Georgia is going to form a peacekeeping battalion on the basis of the Kodjori training centre for low intensity conflicts.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 103, 105; May 11, 13; p. 5

Nikolay Radnichenko, the director of the Russian federal frontier service, visited Sukhumi for talks with Vladislav Ardzinba, the Abkhaz leader, and Vladimir Mikamba, the Abkhaz defence minister. The talks were focused on the withdrawal of the Russian frontier troops from Abkhazia which began on May 10 and must be completed by July 10. Sukhumi does not object to the withdrawal but is strictly against the replacement of Russian frontier guards by the Georgians. According to General Alexander Manilov, the head of the international agreements department of the Russian federal frontier service, a part of the Russian frontier troops' property will be withdrawn, another part will be left in Abkhazia, while about one third of it will be re-directed to the RPF.

"Droni" No. 48, May 11-13, p. 8

"7 Dge" No. 55, May 14-16, pp. 1, 2

Russian frontier guards left the Ochamchire check-point (Abkhazia) on May 11 and it was taken over by the Abkhaz frontier troops. According to Astamur Tarba, the Abkhaz security minister, the movable property of the Russian frontier troops will be divided evenly between Russia and Abkhazia.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 105, May 13, p. 2

According to General Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili, the Chief of the General Staff of the Georgian Armed Forces, Georgia has joined one more NATO program -

"Partnership Analysis and Review". In his words, the Georgian army will be gradually reorganised to conform with NATO standards.

"Alia" No. 73, May 11-13, p. 2

According to Major Irakli Batkuashvili, the chief of the PfP Co-ordination Staff of the General Staff, a Georgian peacekeeping platoon may take part in the peacekeeping operation in Bosnia. To this end, it will join the Turkish peacekeeping battalion in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 130, May 18, p. 1

An American delegation led by Stephen Sestanovich, Ambassador-Designate to the CIS, visited Georgia on May 19 for talks with the Georgian leadership on the problems of the Georgian national security. Mr. Sestanovich proposed the idea of a Caucasian co-operation forum to strengthen confidence and integration processes in the region. A member of the delegation, Gary West, advisor of the U.S. defence minister for environmental security, and Givi Lekishvili, the director of the state scientific centre "Delta", discussed the problem of utilisation of radioactive wastes in Georgia. To this end, a special program must be developed in a month. Another member of the delegation, Edward Warner, advisor of the U.S. defence minister, and Grigol Katamadze, deputy defence minister of Georgia, examined prospects of the Georgian-American military co-operation.

"Resonance" No. 134, 135; May 20, 21; pp. 1, 2, 3

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 105-106, May 20, p. 1

A Georgian delegation led by Omar Lekveishvili, deputy defence minister, participated in the summit of the CIS defence ministers in Erevan on May 20. The summit was focused on the prospects of CIS military co-operation, including collective air defence system.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 105-106, May 20, p. 6

In accordance with a recent Georgian-American agreement, the Georgian Air Force will get six American military helicopters (UH-1). The USA allocated \$3 mln to train the helicopter crew in America. According to the HQ of the Georgian Air Force, 50 Georgian aviators are currently learning English language. Afterwards, they will pass one-year training in the USA.

"Droni" No. 57, June 1, p. 7

"7 Dge" No. 58, May 21-23, p. 1

According to Revaz Adamia, the chairman of the parliamentary defence and security committee, Georgia has sent four protest notes to Russia, demanding to negotiate prospects of the Georgian-Russian military relations. However, there has been no response from Moscow so far. It seems, he said, that the current political situation in Russia was not favourable for such negotiations. In his words, there are 120 Russian military objects in Georgia at present, which occupy more than 18,000 hectares of land. These figures do not include Abkhazia-based Russian military objects. Adamia pointed to the fact that some 50 Russian military objects in Georgia were illegally privatised (sold to private owners). Sooner or later Georgia would confiscate them, he said. In his words, Tbilisi's demand to withdraw the Russian bases from Gudauta (Abkhazia) and Vaziani (nearby Tbilisi) is directly connected with the CFE agreement (Conventional Forces in Europe) as Georgia is not going to share its CFE quotas with Russia. For his part Irakli Menagharishvili, the Georgian foreign minister, said Georgia would strictly adhere to the CFE agreement. In his opinion, Georgia and Russia should begin negotiations on the bases as soon as possible.

"Resonance" No. 136, May 22, pp. 1, 2

"Droni" No. 53, May 22-25, p. 3

"Akhali Taoba" No. 138, May 22, p. 6

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 111, 115; May 20, 25, pp. 2, 5

According to "Zakavkazskie Voennye Vedomosti", on May 25 Georgian authorities did not permit a Russian aircraft with 250 recruits, who were going to serve in the Russian Troops in Transcaucasus, to land in Tbilisi, though the flight had been co-ordinated with the Georgian government.

"Zakavkazskie Voennye Vedomosti" No. 58, May 29, p.1

Miscellany

According to Vafa Gulu-Zade, the state advisor of the Azerbaijani president, Armenia has purchased eight MRL systems "Taifun" in China which may carry out a missile attack against the Baku-Supsa oil pipeline since their range amounts to 80 km. In his words, this information was confirmed by the Chinese embassy in Azerbaijan who said the systems were provided not by the government of China but by a private Chinese company which was connected with the Chinese defence ministry. For his part, Vage Gabrieliyan, press-secretary of the Armenian president, denied that these systems might bomb the pipeline. However, in protest against Erevan's decision, the Azerbaijani delegation did not participate in the sitting of CIS defence ministers in Erevan on May 20.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 107-108, May 21, p. 1

"Droni" No. 53, May 22-25, p. 3

Angel Tapalov, one of the managers of the Bulgarian works "Dunarit", and Givi Lekishvili, the director general of the state scientific centre "Delta", visited Batumi for talks with the Adjarian leadership on the problem of the exports of outdated Soviet-made bombs to Bulgaria. Not long ago the first shipping of the bombs was arrested in Batumi by Adjarian authorities who claimed such exports to be dangerous. As a result of the negotiations, from now onward the bombs will be exported through the Poti sea port.

"Resonance" No. 120, May 6, p. 2

Guram Tevzadze, the defence minister's brother and one of the managers of the Army Support Society, publicly announced his decision to resign from the Society. According to his statement, he has been focused on military science since 1993. In 1994-96 he got several Euro-patents in Germany and developed contacts with some western organisations. In 1998 he initiated the Society as a non-governmental and non-commercial organisation aimed to use the Georgian intellectual resources for the progress of the army-building. However, he decided to resign as "certain forces" initiated a campaign against him and his family in order to bring discredit on the reformist course of the MoD.

"Resonance" No. 125, May 11, p. 2

Due to the lack of budgetary finance, the government resolved to abstain from a military parade on May 26 - Independence Day. In 1997 the parade cost 1.5 mln

GEL, in 1998 it was cancelled due to the May 21-26 fighting in the Gali district.

"7 Dge" No. 60, May 26-27, pp. 1, 2

Press Digest

Informational aspect is a most, if not the most, important part of any coup because if a coup succeeds, its organisers will have to justify their action, i.e. to solve the problem of legitimacy, the Kavkasioni (No. 20) argues, claiming that the recently exposed anti-government conspiracy seems to have been well prepared in this respect. Not by chance, in the newspaper's opinion, several actions were held in support of Igor Giorgadze, the alleged leader of the conspiracy and former chief of the state security service, at the end of the last year and the beginning of 1999. For instance, last September some political forces put forward the idea of his presidency. MP Boris Kakubava said he would welcome Giorgadze's candidacy for president since he was the only man capable of defeating Shevardnadze, while placards with Giorgadze's photos and the writing "Future Belongs to Us" appeared in Zugdidi (western Georgia). According to the Kavkasioni, Mamuka Giorgadze, the leader of the Popular Party, and Boris Kakubava might be among political supporters of a coup. It is also noteworthy that Aslan Abashidze, the Adjarian leader, has recently become rather sympathetic to Panteleimon Giorgadze, the chairman of the United Communist Party, and Igor Giorgadze's father.

It is obvious that just Russia is interested to break stability in Georgia, the Meridiani 44 (No. 60) remarks. At the same time, in the newspaper's opinion, Moscow is well aware that there are no grounds for a successful coup in Georgia at present - internal opposition forces that might be "recruited" by Russian secret services against the government are neither united nor unanimous. The main point is, however, that Russia aims to provoke destabilisation, not a real coup, in Georgia since it would damage the country's international image and break investors' confidence in Georgia, the Meridiani 44 concludes.

General Gudjar Qurashvili's arrest may have some implicit assumptions, the Akhali 7 Dge (No. 22) suggests. First of all, he surely knows all the details connected with the military operation in the Gali district of Abkhazia on May 21-26, 1998 (engagement between Abkhaz and Georgian forces), since he coordinated the Georgian forces there. Particularly, after Georgian refugees fled the district, the government allocated \$12 mln (about \$6 mln) to provide them with relief. Spending of this money was supervised by David Gulua, deputy interior minister. The sum was delivered to Zugdidi and its part was paid to Georgian forces which were still fighting in the district. The fate of the rest of the money remains unclear. Each of the refugees got an immediate relief allowance (30 GEL - about \$15) which, according to the newspaper, came from the president's foundation and had nothing to do with the above \$12 mln. However, the Akhali 7 Dge argues, responsible governmental officials - above-mentioned David Gulua; his brother and the minister for foods and agriculture Bakur Gulua; the interior and the finance ministers; and General Qurashvili himself - must know exactly what became of this money.

For its part, the Resonance (No. 142) also emphasises that General Qurashvili is well informed about financial aspects of the Gali operation. According to the newspaper, the government allocated 10 mln GEL (about \$5 mln) to the procurement of weapons and ammunition to the Georgian forces that were fighting in Gali. Officials who allegedly might have used this money for their personal benefit are surely interested to get rid of Qurashvili as an undesirable witness, the Resonance argues.

The USA has recently allocated about \$12 mln to install electronic and radar systems in the Poti sea port, the Kviris Palitra (No. 23) reports. The project has to be completed by the beginning of the next year. It will allow to control

the coastal area and air space in the port and neighbouring territories, including the Supsa oil terminal. According to the newspaper, Moscow is extremely alarmed at this system as Russian generals fear that Georgian radars may reach even the Russian port of Novorosysk. In the newspaper's opinion, the Kremlin seems to have found an adequate response. In particular, Russia is reportedly going to restore former Soviet air defence bases in Abkhazia, first of all in Bitchvinta. This place is strategically rather important: the Cape Bitchvinta provides excellent opportunities for controlling the whole Georgian coast line by radars. In all likelihood, the Kviris Palitra argues, Russia will deploy its modern C-300PM1 or C-300PM2 SAM systems there as the range of their radars (150-200km) is quite enough to achieve the goal. As a result, Moscow may kill two birds with one stone: first, the Russian air defence system will be able to fill the "blank spots" in its southern borders that emerge after disintegration of the USSR air defence system; second, the whole western Georgia, including the Poti sea port, will be under Russian radar control.