

# The Army and Society in Georgia

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## THE GEORGIAN NAVY GAINING STRENGTH

*By Irakli Aladashvili*

Six years have passed since Georgia set out to build a navy. July 7, 1993, is considered the starting-point for the process - the first engagement between the Georgian and Abkhaz naval forces reportedly took place on that day.

The navy-building began with equipping fishing vessels by small calibre anti-aircraft guns and machine guns. The situation has drastically changed by now. At present the Georgian Navy embodies some 10 military craft. Last year Turkey and Greece presented the Navy with one patrol boat each, three similar boats were purchased in Ukraine. The Greek gift - a fast patrol craft "Iveria" (delivered last February) is smaller than the Turkish one and both have quite a solid "age" - almost two decades. Unlike them, the "301" patrol boat (205P project) purchased in Ukraine in 1997 is quite a large craft but she has a serious shortage - she was purchased without regular armaments. On arrival in Georgia she was equipped with two 37mm half-automatic anti-aircraft guns, though without stabilisation system and, therefore, efficiency of the boat falls short of satisfactory.

However, on July 7 the situation significantly improved - on that day Georgia made the "presentation" of a new missile craft (the 206MP project) purchased in Ukraine for more than \$2 mln. Although her size and displacement (about 250 tons) are almost the same as those of the 205P project, the new craft has substantially reinforced the Georgian Navy. Unlike the "301", the "302" patrol boat (this number was assigned to the new craft) is equipped with the complete range of regular armaments. Her main artillery systems - 76.2mm automatic gun AK-176 (152 shells) and 30mm rapid-firing automatic gun AK-630 (with six barrels) - make the 206MP a rather powerful craft since AK-176 has a range of 15.5 km; while AK-630 is nicknamed "cutter" as it can literally chop a craft at a 5 km distance due to its fantastic speed of firing - 5000 shots a minute.

But the main "trump-card" of the 206MP is her missile system which has not only purely military but some political significance. Her two "Termit" missile launchers have a range of 80 km. To date, naval forces of all the Black Sea countries, except Georgia (Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, Bulgaria, and Romania), have had approximately similar sea-launched missiles. However, for the time being the

206MP will remain without these missiles, while the government should do its best to create missile storage and maintenance facilities in Poti.

A new commander of the MoD naval forces has not been appointed yet. The former commander Captain Chkhartishvili is being tried for bribery charges. Captain Haidarov who was temporarily assigned as the acting commander of the Navy has returned to his permanent office - the head of the naval faculty of the Batumi naval academy (according to some informal sources, he was not appointed the Navy commander for his alleged relationship with the Adjarian leadership). However, despite the absence of the commander, the Georgian Navy is gradually gaining strength. In the near future it is expected to get some more craft and transform into a small but quite a strong force in the Black Sea.

The fact that the Georgian naval forces take increasingly active part in the NATO peacekeeping exercises will help acquaint the international community with the Georgian Navy. A large-scale multi-national PFP exercise "Co-operative Partner 99" took place in Varna (Bulgaria) on June 14-28. The "301" boat participated in the exercise along with the US, Turkish, Greek, French and Romanian warships. It was the third such NATO exercise with participation of Georgia's naval forces. Last year Georgia took part in two of them - Co-operative Partner 98" (Romania) and "Sea Breeze - 98" (Ukraine). Frequent foreign visits of the Georgian Navy reflect Georgia's international image.

## **THE MAKING OF REFORM**

*Interview with Revaz Adamia,  
the chairman of the parliamentary defence and security committee*

*By Paata Gurgenidze*

Mr. Adamia, what can you say about the creation of the Georgian defence system? Maybe you will begin with defining whether it is a building process or a reform. Mass media reports suggest that after resignation of then defence minister Vardiko Nadibaidze the defence policy acquired a substantial reformist character. However, let us focus on what steps are being made to make our military closer to western standards.

R.A.: First of all, I'd like to emphasise that the defence policy has both building and reformist characters. The most characteristic directions of this policy may be defined as follows:

1. First, the law on the military service and servicemen created a legal base for volunteer contract military service. Of course, this is not to say that the army will finally transform into all-volunteer force. Conscription will remain but there is still no understanding what proportions of the army will be made up of conscripts and volunteers.

2. Second, there is an ongoing process of dividing competencies between the MoD and the General Staff. The General Staff must be responsible for combat training and military operations, while the MoD must embrace such non-military functions as general management, supplies, personnel breeding, etc. The National Security Council is developing a draft on a committee of chiefs of staff which will serve as a co-ordination body. However, it still unclear what a structure the committee will have and how its existence will be legitimised.

3. The third important direction is the creation of the so-called "centres of crystallisation" in the armed forces. These are specific and distinctively well-trained units. I mean not only combat but all the other kinds of training, including, say, study of the English language. Several such crystallisation

centres have been already created but I won't go into detail here as this information is confidential. Methodologically, creation of these units is a step towards better combat efficiency of the army that implies reduction of personnel and increase of the army's effectiveness. Learning of the English language is one of the central points of our army-building. The NATO program "Partnership for Peace" provides our military with a wide range of opportunities to study and improve their skills in actually all the fields. Our servicemen are given a chance of learning in various training programs: from two- or three-month seminars to a complete academic course in European and American military academies. These possibilities are provided by special training programs, such as International Military Education and Training (IMET), and other co-operation programs with friendly countries. Poor knowledge of English hampers participation in these programs. That is why one of the defence minister's orders (issued this year) introduced basic knowledge of English as a necessary precondition for promotion.

4. The forth significant direction is the transformation of the MoD from a purely military into a civil-military structure. This change is reflected in the fact that at present three deputy defence ministers are civilians. As to the defence minister, I think that today, as long as the system has not been developed yet, he must be a military man. Under present circumstances, the minister needs military knowledge and experience in order to fully control the current military machine and the ongoing army-building process. It is also important that nowadays David Tevzadze is the only general with fundamental western military education. After this system is complete, the MoD leadership - I mean mainly the minister - must become civilian. If so, the minister's office will be a political position. Today, the minister has both political and military functions.

5. The next important aspect of the defence policy is represented by changes in procurement and supply systems. Procurement is supervised by a newly appointed deputy defence minister, while the procurement policy itself aims to establish the so-called Third Party Procurement system, i.e. some well known international companies will be selected as a consultancy for international purchase of armaments. It will also control commercial expediency of budgetary expenditures on purchase of armaments abroad. All these means are expected to lessen the possibility of corruption in these fields.

6. Not less important is the fact that the MoD is going to shift to the system of program financing. It means that the defence budget will allocate funds to concrete programs which aim at particular goals and have criteria to evaluate results. This must result in a more rational defence spending and improved accountability. From this viewpoint, the MoD is now making first steps in this direction.

7. The aspect of international assistance to our army-building is also in evidence. This assistance includes training of qualified personnel, as well as direct material support. For instance, Turkey provides such an important assistance. Helpful partnership has been established with the USA, Ukraine, Great Britain, Greece. One must also note relations developed by the National Guards, which may be exemplified by co-operation between our National Guards and the National Guards of Georgia, USA, who share their experience with each other. Apart from such kind of assistance, foreign advisors help Georgia develop conceptual defence documents. Among such advisors, there is, for instance, the International Security Advisory Board (ISAB) led by General Gary Johnson. Recommendations worked out under his supervision underlie the doctrinal document of the Lithuanian MoD - White Paper. The ISAB also includes David A. Ochmanek, a representative of the well known American analytical think-tank RAND Corporation. Negotiations which are currently under way aim to invite Oskar Kamelion, former defence minister of Argentina, as an associate member of the ISAB. The ISAB has already worked out some recommendations on the creation of Georgia's national security concept, which were approved by the National Security Council. The Georgian president authorised the MoD and the MFA, as well

as other structures responsible for security issues, to develop a national security concept on the basis of these recommendations.

8. At the same time, the MoD is developing "white paper" on its own. This doctrinal document will be most likely completed and published by 2000. Besides, the MoD, the MIA and the parliament are working out a concept of co-operation with NATO.

Mr. Adamia, you favour the course towards Georgia's integration with the NATO. Has it been stated on other political levels?

R.A.: The course towards Georgia's integration with the NATO is my personal position. Other levels abstain from declaring such policy for the time being. Given the past experience, it is quite understandable. We should not forget that because of incautious statements of Gamsakhurdia's government, criticising Russia and labelling the Russian army as occupants, Moscow withdrew from Georgia about \$5 billion worth of military property which otherwise could have remained in Georgia. Quite an important document - Membership Action Plan - was adopted at a NATO summit in Washington. We will take it into account in the course of our army-building.

You have declared the necessity to withdraw Russian military bases from Georgia. Have other political levels made any steps in this direction?

R.A.: Of course, they have. The government is actively pushing forward this issue. The president decreed to create a special commission led by Irakli Menagharishvili, the foreign minister, and David Tevzadze, the defence minister, which is authorised to negotiate the problem with Russia. At the first stage, we demand to withdraw Russian military bases from Gudauta and Vaziani. However, Russia did not respond to our first proposal to begin such negotiations. Despite of this, the negotiations with Russia will begin this summer or autumn since Russia is facing serious problems regarding its commitment to fulfil the CFE agreement.

The deployment of Russian military bases in Georgia has actually no legal base. Our government signed the agreement on bases on certain conditions which Russia has failed to fulfil. Georgia should abstain from denouncing the agreement in the near future, though the parliament has enough grounds to do so, but apply other softer means to bring pressure to bear on Russia.

It is important, that Russia has violated the CFE quotas. This spring in Vienna Georgia declared that it would not share its national quotas with other countries. There are also quotas for temporary deployment which may become a matter of bargain. To use this quota, another country has to inform all 30 signatories to the CFE agreement about location, term, conditions and purposes of deployment of its armed forces. In my point of view, Russia should not get this quota as it fulfilled none of its most important promises (help Georgia build an army, restore its territorial integrity, etc.). A summit on this agreement will take place in Istanbul this October anyway. By that time all terms related to this quota will expire for Russia and the summit will clarify a lot of issues.

Does the CFE agreement provides for any sanctions if Russia will disagree to withdraw its military bases from Georgia, even though they obviously violate the quota?

R.A.: No, such sanctions are not stipulated. But we should not forget that this agreement is a basis for strategic deployment in Europe. So Russia's refusal may result in a new surge of arms race in the region. Moscow must prefer to avoid such a development.

What can you say about the structure of the army? Is the information about military units and their deployment secret or open to the public?

R.A.: Information about deployment of military units is not secret. Moreover, we are obliged to submit this information to Vienna in accordance with the requirements of the CFE agreement. However, publication of this information should not be welcomed and, therefore, we abstain from doing so. You will be denied this information even by the structure that collects it in Vienna.

In previous years about 400 Georgian cadets were sent to Russian military colleges with prospects of getting an officer rank after graduation. Is there any state program to provide them with positions and, on the whole, does the army need so many officers?

R.A.: There are no such programs but I know that this number does not exceed 200. They left for Russia in times of Vardiko Nadibaidze. Russia requires money for their education but the state lacks necessary finances. As a result, many of them have to get back without completing the educational course. As to the required number of officers, we surely need so many officers. Although the government has no formal obligations to provide them with offices, it will take care of them after they get back. I do not want to downplay the officer corps in active duty but I bound to say that most of them have already reached the retirement age and continue apply their old, pro-Soviet experience. I'd like to emphasise that there are a lot of vacancies of low officer ranks in the army.

Do you mean also sergeants?

R.A.: No, sergeants are another theme. The MoD is preparing a reform in this direction. It will introduce the system of NCOs - non-commissioned officers. The planned activities will be carried out by the Joint Military Academy (currently educates junior lieutenants) and the Gori training centre (currently trains sergeants). As to military departments of high schools which teach junior lieutenants, they cause some problems. I think that this kind of military education is a waste of money.

Is it true that the parliament turned down a bill on military departments of high schools worked out by the MoD?

R.A.: It is not true. We work together with the MoD and aim to reform the entire system. What will be the end product? Let's wait and see.

Is a law on military education being drafted?

R.A.: No. At first, one should develop a concept of military education. It will show whether there is a need for a new law or it will be enough to amend the current legislation.

Is it correct that a bill on military drafting offices failed?

R.A.: No such bill has been brought in the parliament. We only abolished the office of the main military commissar and re-assigned its functions to the chief of the General Staff. This was accomplished through amendments to the Law on Military Service and Military Duty this May.

Does this measure imply the struggle against corruption?

R.A.: No. Corruption in drafting offices is no longer an urgent theme, though the problem is still far from being solved completely. This change was conditioned by the Law on Military Service and Military Duty which regulates the number of eligible conscripts so that to make it conform with real requirements of the armed forces. Previously, this number was eight times bigger than the required number of recruits, creating favourable grounds for corruption. Nowadays, this difference has reduced to 1.5.

Although a lot of the projects Mr. Adamia has spoken about, from the withdrawal of Russian bases to the reform of military education, must be welcomed, they are

still only ideas. But unless they are implemented, the efficiency of our defence system may be called into question.

## **Military Chronicle**

*Georgian press reports*

### **Conflict zones**

Two Abkhaz policemen were killed and one wounded near the village of Saberio, Gali district of Abkhazia, on June 1. Sukhumi blamed the incident on Georgian terrorists. Astamur Tarba, the security minister of Abkhazia, said terrorist actions intensified in the district in recent times. Sukhumi deployed additional force - 150 policemen - in the district in order to suppress terrorism there. "Dilis Gazeti" No. 122, June 2, p. 2

A car was exploded by an anti-tank mine in the village of Gudava, Gali district of Abkhazia, killing four and wounding one passenger. "Resonance" No. 161, June 16, p. 1

A passenger bus was exploded by an anti-tank mine near the village of Tzarche, Gali district of Abkhazia (safety zone), on June 22, killing three and wounding a dozen of passengers. Two days later, on June 24, a cargo vehicle exploded right at the same place, wounding two Abkhaz policemen. The Abkhaz foreign ministry blamed the incident on Georgian terrorists. For his part, Zurab Samushia, commander of the Georgian guerrilla unit White Legion, accused Abkhaz security services of having organised the bombing. "Dilis Gazeti" No. 141, 143; June 24, 26; p. 5

The Tbilisi-based Supreme Council of Abkhazia issued a statement, denouncing Russia's decision to celebrate the 5th anniversary of the peacekeeping mission in Abkhazia. Such a celebration was cynical since Russian peacekeepers had actually done nothing to protect civilian population in the safety zone, the statement said. "Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 139, June 24, p. 2

Russian frontier troops were completely withdrawn from Abkhazia by the end of June. According to some informal sources, those Russian frontier guards who agree to contract with the Abkhaz defence ministry for the service in the Abkhaz army are accommodated in houses and provided lands of the Georgian refugees. They are promised that after the term of the contract expires this property will be passed into their possession. "Dilis Gazeti" No. 142, June 25, p. 5  
"Meridiani 44" No. 74, June 28-30, pp. 1, 2

According to the press centre of the Stavropol-based HQ of the North Caucasian department of the Russian federal frontier service, after their withdrawal the Abkhazia-based Russian frontier troops will turn over a part of their property to Abkhazia. Commenting on the statement, Valeri Chkheidze, the SDFD chairman, said the North Caucasian department had no rights to revise the Russian-Georgian agreement which stipulated that Russian military property should not be ceded to the self-proclaimed Abkhazian republic. "Resonance" No. 164, June 19, p. 1

Tqibuli battalion of the Internal Troops was withdrawn from the Khurcha village, Zugdidi district, and replaced with another unit after one of the servicemen of the battalion left his site without permission and was arrested by the Abkhaz police in the neighbouring Nabakevi village, Gali district of Abkhazia. He was released some hours later, thanks to the mediation of the Russian peacekeepers. "Dilis Gazeti" No. 143, June 26, p. 2

According to Colonel Anatoly Lyubochkin, commander of the Russian Peacekeeping Battalion in South Ossetia, the battalion completed regular rotation of personnel and is now manned with servicemen of the 58th Army of Russia deployed in North Caucasus.

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 171, June 29, p. 1

Three people were killed at the border between the Gori and Tskhinvali districts (South Ossetia). The incident is allegedly connected with drug smuggling.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 122, June 2, p. 2

## **Army building**

Maia Tchiabrishvili, inspector of the military inspectorate of the president's office, was appointed head of the MoD budget-treasury department after she won a tender for the office.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 149, June 2, p. 4

The air force faculty of the Joint Military Academy was created jointly by the Georgian Technical University and the JMA in 1997. The faculty teaches five specialities (one more speciality - helicopter - may be introduced this year) and its curriculum includes 130 disciplines. The whole course lasts 4.5 years. At first, cadets (82 at present) learn 1.5-year theoretical course and then pass training in the Marneuli training centre. According to Colonel Badri Dolidze, the head of the faculty, in comparison with similar western colleges, educational process is rather cheap: 100 hours of training flight in western countries cost \$5 mln in average, while in Georgia only \$0.5 mln.

"Meridiani 44" No. 63, June 2-4. p. 6

The Procurator's Office continues investigation of the last year's imports of Czech-made machine guns. The office claims that investigators who visually examined all and tested a good deal of the guns revealed various defects in 78.1% of them. However, the contract between the MoD and the Czech producer gives Georgia no rights to complain or require guarantee repairs. The guns were delivered without any documentation, while the Georgian army has no experience of dealing with such type of guns. The case has triggered a hidden confrontation between the MoD and the Office. The former blames the Office for intentions to prevent western weaponry from entering the Georgian market. In response, the Office made a statement claiming that combat effectiveness of the Georgian army must be of primary concern.

"Droni" No. 58, June 3, p. 7

"Akhali Taoba" No. 151, 152; June 4, 5; pp. 2, 7

"7 Dge" No. 64, June 4-6, p. 2

Colonel Tengiz Kontselidze, deputy minister of state security of Adjara, was assigned by the president as the head of the Adjarian regional bureau of the SDFD. His candidature had been proposed by Aslan Abashidze, the Adjarian leader.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 123, June 3, p. 5

According to Merab Kvekveskiri, deputy defence minister, the ongoing military reform provides for institutional and structural changes which match western standards and aim to improve the financial situation of the MoD. The first stage of the process must be completed by September. In July the MoD plans to introduce the so-called "limitation system": defence spending will have monthly limits, while re-allocation of money will need approval of the finance ministry. Besides, in accordance with a recent presidential decree, an independent audit will assess all the property of the MoD and make a respective inventory.

"Droni" No. 61, June 10, p. 8

The Union of Georgian Traditionalists (UGT) worked out a long-term (25 years) draft army-building program proposing the following structure of the armed forces:

1. Ground troops (about 30 thousand servicemen): infantry, mechanised infantry, alpine infantry, armoured forces, rapid reaction force, fire support troops (artillery, air defence artillery), and engineer troops.

2. Air force (3 thousand).

3. Coast guard (7 thousand).

(the latter will be created by merging the current Coast Guard and the Navy). There will be also logistical support and communication troops, topographical units and military police. According to the draft, about 2/3 of the air force consist of fighters, the other part is made up of ground attack and reconnaissance aircraft. The armed forces are under General Staff, while the MoD pursues civil-political functions. The draft provides also for gendarmerie - a merger of the current National Guards and Internal Troops - and the frontier troops which will be subordinated to the army command in wartime. In peacetime about 40% of the armed forces will be made up of conscripts, while 60% of volunteer contract servicemen. The conscription military service will last 12 months in the army and 18 months in the coast guard. Conscientious objectors will have a possibility to pass an alternative non-military service (24 months). The whole country is divided into four "sadroshe" (a historical term concerning territorial command or military district):

Eastern Sadroshe - Kakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions;

Southern Sadroshe - Meskhet-Djavakheti;

Western Sadroshe - Imereti, Guria, Samegrelo, Abkhazia and Adjara;

Northern Sadroshe - the rest of Georgia

One or two brigades and several detachments will be deployed in each of them under a single command. The draft emphasises the weakness of the southern direction - there is in fact only one automobile road to deploy troops in case of a threat from the south. The defence budget must not exceed 2-2.5% of the GDP. At the first stage, defence spending must be arranged as follows:

- personnel salaries - 35-40% of the defence budget;

- operational and exploitation expenses - 30-35%;

- procurement - 10%;

- R&D - 1-2%;

- building/construction - 15-20%;

- housing/accommodation - 3-4%;

- other - 5%

"7 Dge" No. 73, June 25-27, pp. 2, 3

"Droni" No. 70, July 1, p. 9

A trade union of the Georgian armed forces was created on June 30.

"Droni" No. 70, July 1, p. 3

## **Army life**

According to Badri Bitzadze, Military Procurator, four suicides have been committed in the army since the beginning of the year. In 1994-98 the number of suicides totalled 19. Most of them (11) were committed in Tbilisi-deployed units. Violence and hazing account for most of the suicide cases.

"Alia" No. 87, June 5-6, p. 14

Shakhid Gasanov, a 19-year-old serviceman of the Frontier Troops, was killed by an officer in the Poladauri frontier base (Bolnisi district) on June 3. Commenting on the incident, Levan Mamaladze, the state commissioner of the Kvemo Kartli region, said the base should be inspected. In his words, there had been some reports about poor discipline in the base before. The case is being investigated by the Tbilisi regional procurator's office.

"Resonance" No. 153, June 8, p. 2

## **Visits, co-operation, negotiations**

Georgia has become the first Transcaucasian republic to join the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (Azerbaijan has a guest status). Commenting on the fact, Michael Saakashvili, the leader of the parliamentary group of the Citizens' Union of Georgia, said the NATO would help Georgia to build a strong army. In the chairman of the parliamentary defence and security committee Revaz Adamia's opinion, Georgia has a chance of becoming a NATO member by 2010.

"7 Dge" No. 63, June 2-3, p. 2

"Resonance" No. 148, June 3, pp. 1, 4

An international verification group inspected, together with the verification centre of the Georgian MoD (led by Major Levan Nikoleishvili), the 12th Russian military base in Batumi and some Georgian units in accordance with the CFE agreement. In Nikoleishvili's words, for its one-year history the centre has hosted several foreign verification missions, including those in the framework of the Open Skies Observation Flight and the Vienna 1994 agreement.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 135, June 17, p. 5

"Resonance" No. 147, June 2, p. 4

Due to the Kosovo conflict, the PfP multi-national exercises "Co-operative Key" and "Co-operative Dragon" have been postponed (Georgia was supposed to participate in both). For the same reason the PfP naval exercise "Co-operative Partner - 99" in Bulgaria on June 14-28 was reduced. As a result, only one Georgian patrol boat, instead of two, and a group of cadets of the Joint Military Academy took part in the exercise. The Georgian delegation was commanded by Capt. Besik Shengelia, commander of the Poti naval division.

"Kviris Palitra" No. 25, June 21-27, p. 9

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 119-120, June 3, p. 3

Three Georgian officers took part in the PfP multi-national exercise "Co-operative Determination" in Baku. It was the first such exercise to be held in Azerbaijan.

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 147, June 5, p. 1

According to the MoD, the NATO leadership has resolved to carry out the PfP multi-national exercise "Co-operative Partner 2001" in Georgia. It will involve ground and naval forces of NATO and partner states. The first conference on this exercise will be held in Georgia in March 2000. NATO also approved a program of building Georgian peacekeeping forces. According to the program, Georgia must have a peacekeeping company by 2000 and a battalion by 2002.

"Resonance" No. 163, June 18, p. 3

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 124, June 8, p. 3

Seventeen servicemen of the Kodjori training centre led by Nikoloz Djandjgava, the commander of the centre, took part in the PfP exercise "Co-operative Best Effort" in Canada.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 132-133; June 17, p. 7

General Atilla Kiyat of the Turkish Navy visited Georgia for talks with David Tevzadze and Nugzar Sadjajaia, the NSC secretary. He also visited the Georgian naval base in Poti.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 119-120, June 3, p. 1

Although the last year's Turkish assistance program (\$5.5 mln) for the Georgian army-building have not been completed yet, Turkey has resolved to provide Georgia with a new financial support program and allocated \$1.7 mln to this end - by preliminary information, the SDFD will get \$0.5 mln and the MoD \$1.2 mln of this money. The respective agreement was signed by Grigol Katamadze, deputy defence minister, and General Sherapetin Teijazini, the head of the financial department of the Turkish armed forces, in Tbilisi on June 7. At the same time, Georgian customs officials detained several Turkish cargo vehicles at the Akhaltsikhe border check-point, which were transporting building materials and ammunition to the Kodjori training centre in the framework of the last year's assistance program. The Customs Department of Georgia explained the incident by absence of documentation, though according to some Turkish sources, the drivers were demanded bribes.

"Droni" No. 60, June 8, p. 11

A delegation of the Turkish General Staff led by General Behzat Balta visited Georgia on June 22-24. His talks with deputy defence ministers, Omar Lekveishvili and Grigol Katamadze, were focused on the prospects of the Georgian-Turkish military co-operation. The delegation also attended the

graduation ceremony in one of the Georgian military training centres: the first Georgian cadets have completed a training course under Turkish instructors there, 30 of them will be further trained in Turkey.

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 165, June 23, p. 1

General George Shervashidze, commander of the Internal Troops, visited Turkey for talks with General Rasim Betir, commander of the Turkish gendarmerie, on the prospects of co-operation between the two services.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 176, June 29, p. 2

David Tevzadze visited Greece on June 6-7 for talks on the prospects of the Georgian-Greek military co-operation. In the near future Greece is going to provide the Georgian Navy with a \$10 mln worth of technical assistance (mainly spare parts for craft and patrol boats). In the last three years, Greece presented Georgian armed forces with one patrol boat, and a number of computers and uniforms.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 129, June 10, p. 2

David Tevzadze visited France on June 9-12, for talks with the French military leadership, some high ranking officials and managers of the Thompson company. In recent years France has helped to organise the French language courses in the Kodjori training centre and granted the Georgian armed forces a field military hospital (\$2mln) with all the equipment. In some time to come, a group of French experts will visit Georgia to examine further directions of the two countries' military co-operation. For instance, Georgian cadets, first of all pilots, may be trained in French military colleges soon. Besides, the Kodjori training centre will be granted special ammunition and equipment. According to Grigol Katamadze, deputy defence minister, France also offers to include a Georgian platoon in the French peacekeeping force in Kosovo but due to the lack of resources Georgia seems unlikely to accept the offer. The French defence minister is expected to visit Georgia this autumn.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 129, June 10, p. 5

"Droni" No. 63, June 15, p. 1

"7 Dge" No. 69, June 16-17, pp. 1, 6

The MoD denied information of some Georgian media that a Georgian peacekeeping unit may take part in the peacekeeping operation in Kosovo. At present, the MoD said, Georgia had no adequately trained peacekeepers. The first Georgian peacekeeping platoon will be trained in the Kodjori training centre by the end of the year. At the same time, two Georgian officers may join the Turkish peacekeeping battalion in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 131; June 10, 12; p. 5

An Italian delegation (two officers) visited Tbilisi to sign a 1999 Italian-Georgian military co-operation program. According to the document, the Italian language course will be opened in the Kodjori training centre in 2-3 months. Afterwards, small groups of Georgian cadets (2-3 officers) will be trained in Italy as alpine and submarine commandos.

"Droni" No. 61, June 10, p. 8

The U.S. Coast Guard presented the SDFD with a Mi-8 helicopter which had been purchased in Ukraine by the USA for Georgia. The granting ceremony took place in Poti on June 13. Besides, in the near future the Kutaisi Aircraft Works will produce several patrol aircraft (Mercury type) for the SDFD. The project is also financed by the USA.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 133, June 15, p. 5

A Russian military delegation led by General Vladimir Kurdenkov visited Tbilisi for talks on the problem of former Soviet military objects. Georgia demands about 40 such objects, including a sport complex, the tank repair works and Officer Palace (both in Tbilisi), a military hospital, several depots, the Alekseevka airfield, a kindergarten, some shops, the Manglisi camp, the vehicle repair works in Batumi, the Kobuleti and Makhindjauri health resorts, the Akhalkalaki military farm, etc. At the first stage, Russia is expected to cede

10 of them. However, Georgia suspended negotiations on the issue since a part of these objects (mostly non-military ones - the sport complex, the kindergarten, depots, etc.) appear to have been rented. Besides, according to Grigol Katamadze, Russia did not include the Alekseevka airfield in the list of the first ten. He said the negotiations would soon resume, adding that if Russia deliberately dragged out the process Georgia may take over the objects on its own.

"Droni" No. 65, June 19, p. 3

"Resonance" No. 163, June 18, p. 2

"7 Dge" No. 71, June 21-22, p. 2

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 159, June 17, p. 1

A German company provided the central military hospital of Georgia with new computer medical equipment (200 thousand GEL - about \$108 thousand). The defence minister was the first to be tested there.

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 159, June 17, p. 1

A delegation of the SDFD led by Valeri Chkheidze visited Great Britain on June 21-25 for talks with officials of the British MoD, Royal Navy, and Customs.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 139, June 22, p. 5

According to Revaz Adamia, the chairman of the parliamentary defence and security committee, an air radar control system (for both military and civil aircraft) will be created in Georgia with the help of the USA. The system, in his words, will become the basis of the country's air defence. The USA has already allocated \$18 mln to the program.

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 162-163, June 20-21, pp. 1, 2

In compliance with the Russian-Georgian agreement, Russia began to withdraw its frontier guards from Adjara on June 24. Georgian Frontier Troops took over the Khichauri frontier base (with some equipment and military hardware) located in mountainous zone of Adjara on that very day.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 176, June 29, p. 8

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 142, June 25, p. 2

The parliamentary defence and security committee has organised a three-day seminar for MPs, security experts and the military. Colonel Stephen P. Randolph of the U.S. National Defence University told the participants about the educational process in American military colleges.

"Droni" No. 69, June 29, p. 1

Fifteen Georgian officers have graduated the military academy of Ukraine. One of them, Vice-Colonel Vakhtang Kapanadze, was awarded a gold medal. The fact coincided with David Tevzadze's visit to Kiev. Prospects of the two countries' military co-operation were discussed at his talks with Alexander Kuzmuk, the Ukrainian defence minister. During the visit Georgia got a Ukraine-built patrol craft (PFM type). The craft was purchased by the USA for the Georgian Navy.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 144, June 30, p. 3

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 174, July 2, p. 1

A Georgian delegation - Simon Nozadze, deputy security minister, and George Gomiashvili, a newly appointed advisor of the security minister - took part in a regular summit of the CIS security ministers in Baku on June 3-6. The participants signed three documents: a protocol on co-operation in counter-mercenary operations, a protocol on joint operations against illegal traffic of drugs, and a summary (dictionary) of basic security notions and terminology. At Georgia's proposal, the dictionary includes the notion "state terrorism".

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 128, June 9, p. 3

## **State security**

Akaki Eliava and a group of his supporters laid down arms and surrendered to the police on June 11, after the government fulfilled his demand and released 39 imprisoned participants of the last year's October 19 mutiny. All of them signed

a non-leave pledge. So did Eliava. According to Teimuraz Murghulia, deputy interior minister, the whole process was carried out in compliance with all legal norms. Eliava is currently under the police surveillance.

"Resonance" No. 159, June 14, p. 3

"Akhali Taoba" No. 160, June 13, p. 3

The counter-intelligence department has got secret information about a plan to bomb the Supsa oil terminal. Allegedly, it was worked out in the North Caucasus. As a result, security measures in the terminal were strengthened.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 138, June 21, p. 15

General Gudjar Qurashvili arrested some time ago for conspiracy charges was hospitalised in the central prison hospital because of serious health problems - heart disease and old wounds (he is a veteran of the wars in Afghanistan and Abkhazia). He underwent surgery on June 30: physicians removed some pieces of mine from his body that had remained from the war in Abkhazia.

"Droni" No. 69, June 29, p. 3

"Resonance" No. 176, July 1, p. 2

According to Temur Gokhsadze, General Qurashvili's lawyer, investigators confronted Gudjar Qurashvili with Djemal Kukava, one of the arrested participants of the last year's October 19 mutiny in western Georgia. The latter confirmed that Qurashvili had contacts with the mutineers and they had discussed plans to overthrow the government. Qurashvili refused to comment on this accusation.

"Meridiani 44" No. 71, June 21-23, p. 3

## **Miscellany**

According to Professor Avtandil Dolidze, deputy director of the Institute of Physics and Organic Chemistry, the institute began neutralisation of missile fuel Samin stored in the village of Meria, Ozurgeti district. The government allocated 170 thousand GEL (about \$92 thousand) to this end. The fuel will be transported by special vehicles to the institute and decomposed there. The process must be completed by the end of the year. As to another fuel - Melanzh - due to the lack of finance its neutralisation was postponed till the autumn. On the whole, there are about 1,000 tons of this fuel stored throughout Georgia.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 149, June 2, p. 3

The Senaki airfield which previously belonged to the MoD was ceded to the Air Transport Department and is being repaired at present. According to Djemal Margveladze, the head of the department, the airfield has good prospects as it is located some 30 km from the Supsa oil terminal.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 127, June 8, p. 2

Although the deadline of the inspection of former Soviet air force bases in Georgia expired on June 1 (in accordance with the respective presidential decree), the state scientific centre Delta authorised to carry out the inspection has inspected only two out of the four bases - in Vartsikhe and Dedoplistzqaro. Inspection of the other two - in Kopitnari and Telavi - has been delayed for the lack of funds. Inspection of each base requires about one week and 2,000 GEL (about \$1080). Givi Lekishvili, the director general of the centre, claimed that some state officials were deliberately impeding the process.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 128, June 9, p. 2

The MoD Board made a statement warning political parties against any actions in/around military sites during the coming parliamentary elections. According to the statement, such precedents took place during the last local elections on November 15, 1998. Political actions in military units are banned by the Constitution and, therefore, the military command has a right to use force against every such attempt, the statement says.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 137, June 19, p. 5

While flying from the Milerovo airfield (the Rostov zone) to the Erebuni airfield (Armenia), four Russian MiG-29 fighters violated the Georgian air space on June 18. Pleading the absence of communication, Moscow did not allow the Georgian MoD to communicate with the Russian Air Defence Central Command. According to Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili, the Chief of the General Staff of the Georgian Armed Forces, Russia had informed the General Staff about the flight several days in advance. In his words, although the General Staff refused permission to the Russian military because it was the competence of MFA, the Russian fighters flew anyway. It is not the first such incident. On February 26 five MiG-29 and a transport An-12, and on March 6 a transport An-22 flew to Armenia over Georgia also without Tbilisi's permission. All these incidents were followed by formal protests of the Georgian MoD. According to Grigol Katamadze, Moscow apologised for "confusion" but unauthorised flights continue.

"Meridiani 44" No. 71, June 21-23, pp. 1, 2

"Resonance" No. 165, June 20, pp. 1, 2

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 162-163, June 20-21, pp. 1, 2

Georgian frontier guards arrested a Turkish ship on June 28. According to the SDFD, she entered the Abkhaz coastal area without passing customs control in Poti, as required by a respective Georgian-Turkish agreement and despite the Georgian president's decree banning unauthorised naval traffic in the area. Allegedly the ship was going to export timber from Sukhumi. At present, she is detained in Poti.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 177, June 30, p. 2

"Droni" No. 70, July 1, p. 1

## Press Digest

The Kosovo crisis has clearly vindicated that wars may be won by only air force, the Meridiani 44 (No. 69) argues. To be sure, it would be hardly relevant to generalise the Kosovo experience and apply it to other "hot spots" world-wide but, in the newspaper's opinion, one thing seems obvious - the significance and role of airpower will increase remarkably in future conflicts. This fact has some implications for the South Caucasus. The strategic importance of the region will gain additional weight since air forces deployed there are able to reach the heartland of Eurasia - the goal is hard to achieve from the other directions. Not by chance, Azerbaijan has already proposed to deploy NATO bases on its territory. If so, such bases will require deployment of NATO logistical services in Georgia. Thus, the Meridiani 44 concludes, Georgia should use changing international geo-political tendencies in its own interests.

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The Georgian Air Defence Troops lack capabilities to check such flights but Tbilisi should apply diplomatic means to this end, the Meridiani 44 (No. 71) comments on the June 18 incident (four Russian MiG-29 fighters violated the Georgian air space). In the newspaper's opinion, Georgia may benefit from current tense relations between Russia and the West, and find enough supporters both among western countries and the CIS. For instance, Tbilisi might attempt to invoke a joint GUUAM (Georgia-Ukraine-Uzbekistan-Azerbaijan-Moldova) response. First of all, however, the Georgian government should make its position very clear. Only MoD's protest is not enough. The foreign ministry and the president must also say their word. On the whole, Georgia should defend its interests by itself - hardly anyone else will do it instead, the Meridiani 44 concludes.