

The Army and Society in Georgia

July 1998

Published by the Center for Civil-Military Relations and Security Studies; the Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development

Co-financed by:

- the European Community, TACIS Democracy Programme
- the European-Caucasian Economical Consulting

Editorial board:

David Darchiashvili
Tamara Pataraiia
Guram Dumbadze
Irakli Aladashvili

Marine Borders Need Immediate Defence

By Irakli Aladashvili

Historically, Georgia has had a significant advantage - access to the Black Sea. However, its coastline stretches for more than 300 km and, quite logically, requires control and defence. Unfortunately, due to understandable reasons, Georgia lacks experience of independent frontier defence.

By 1990 the Georgian coastal waters had been controlled by the Poti-based 184th Coast Guard Brigade of the former Soviet Black Sea Navy (which was made up of various 48 combat and support warships and boats). In 1992 the brigade was completely withdrawn from Georgia, having left behind only six vessels - two small landing ships and four boats of various classes. Besides, there were naval bases of the 6th Ochamchire Coast Guard Brigade of the Transcaucasian Frontier District deployed nearby Poti, Batumi, Anaklia, Ochamchire and Sukhumi. Over the last years, Russian frontier guards have pulled out of Georgia almost all their vessels and eliminated coastal check-points.

Actually, Georgia has to start its coast guard defence from scratch, relying on boats granted by foreign countries. A rivalry between various corporate interests has only made things worse: both the State Department of Frontier Defence (SDFD) and the MOD claimed the right to control the country's home waters. It looked like a personal conflict between two leaders - MG Valeri Chkheidze, the SDFD chairman, and LG Vardiko Nadibaidze, then defence minister. Apart from personal rivalry, there was also contradiction between two political orientations - while Mr. Chkheidze developed closer contacts with the West and was viewed as a supporter of western interests, Nadibaidze's "Russia-philia" was common knowledge. It was an essentially important question to the world: which of the two orientations would gain the upper hand in Shevardnadze's balanced-policy country. The West, particularly NATO, had long striven to expand its "domain" over this sector of the Black Sea. Besides, the western investors, who plan to finance oil transits from Azerbaijan via Georgia, are interested in security guarantees. Remarkably, the oil pipeline is expected to reach just the Black Sea coast - in Supsa.

The first contradiction was caused by economic reasons - Georgia cannot afford and does not need two navies. Nadibaidze's resignation seems to have solved this problem: the Coast Guard of the SDFD started to patrol the Georgian home waters

on July 16. Further still, the newly appointed defence minister David Tevzadze passed two Grif-class boats of the Navy into possession of the SDFD.

Nowadays, the Georgian Coast Guard is made up of 13 boats, including one, the largest of all (with a displacement of 245 tons), patrol ship Tarantul (the so-called 205P project), five speedy (32 knots per hour) Grif-class boats, four small Georgia-built Aist-class boats, two Turkey-granted boats and one, equipped with modern navigation systems, US-granted coast guard cutter. The USA are going to grant Georgia one more similar vessel in two or three months, while in October the Coast Guard will get a German gift - a large (displacement of 490 tons) patrol ship. One should not forget also that the Navy is ready to come to frontier guards' help (fortunately, the rivalry between the two is already over) any time. It totals 12 vessels and is surely not a force to be ignored: one patrol ship Tarantul, one Greece-granted boat "Iveria", one large bombardment ship (armed with Grad artillery systems), etc.

The Georgian Coast Guard's plans to patrol the Abkhaz sector of the country's home waters encountered a resolute refusal of Abkhaz separatists who threatened to sink every Georgian vessel in Abkhaz coastal area. The Abkhaz Navy is quite capable of carrying out the threat. Reportedly, the structure of the Abkhaz navy is almost entirely patterned upon the Russian one. It is made up of three divisions - Bitchvinta, Sukhumi and Ochamchire - and totals 29 vessels, including six Grif-class boats. The others are former civil tourist and fishing vessels armed with machine guns and anti-aircraft guns. Captains and instructors of these ships are basically former Russian naval officers who retired from the Russian Navy. The Abkhaz naval forces include also commando units "Night Angels" and "Fighter Submariners", and a battalion of marines - according to various estimates, they total some 500 servicemen altogether - and coastal artillery systems.

Let alone Abkhazia, the Adjarian leadership also ignores the central government and does not allow the Coast Guard into the Adjarian coastal area. Batumi wants to control it by its own naval force: one Grif-class boat, three Aist-class boats and one armed fishing vessel. The current situation seems absurd - Georgian frontier guards in fact control only a small strip of the marine border from Anaklia to Choloki. It seems unlikely that they will be able to expand there operations in the near future.

Not long ago the U.S. Congress approved a program to maintain security and law at the Georgian frontiers. Its 1998 budget amounts to \$18 mln. A part of the money will be spent on coastal defence (for instance, Georgian coast guard boats will be steadily supplied with fuel and lubricants till the end of the year). In the framework of the program, three American experts, including a representative of the U.S. Coast Guard, will constantly work in Georgia.

The West will make every effort to reduce Russian influence in the Black Sea. To this end, it will support Georgia in controlling its home waters independently. This does not mean, however, that Washington will help Tbilisi to restore the Georgian jurisdiction in Abkhazia and bring political pressure to bear on Batumi, which does not seem much excited about possible withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia. First of all, the West is interested in an efficient control system in the Poti sea port and Supsa oil terminals since both are in line for the forthcoming Caspian oil transits.

Military Chronicle

Georgian press reports

Conflict zones

A military vehicle of the Russian Peacekeeping Force (RPF) was mined in the village of Pichori, the Gali district of Abkhazia, on July 12, killing five peacekeepers and wounding five more. The RPF Command pinned the explosion on

Georgian guerrillas. Tbilisi, for its part, blamed the RPF for unwillingness to check activities of Abkhaz gunmen in the district.

"7 Dge" No. 81, July 13-14, p. 1; "Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 176, July 14, p. 3

Ruzgen Gogokhia, the former commander of Ochamchire Battalion, has been released by Abkhaz authorities without any preconditions after four-year imprisonment. When the war in Abkhazia ended, he joined Georgian guerrillas and was captured by Abkhaz forces in 1994 and sentenced to death. Tbilisi has made great efforts to release Gogokhia ever since, including appeals to Chechnya for mediation. Not long ago a Chechen delegation visited Sukhumi and persuaded the Abkhaz leadership to free Gogokhia. "I'm not going to get back to guerrillas", he says now. According to Gogokhia, there are still 10 Georgian POWs in Abkhaz prisons. "Droni" No. 82, July 21-23, p. 2; "Sakartvelos Gazeti" No. 51, July 20, p. 1

Zurab Samushia, the commander of the Georgian guerrilla unit White Legion, denied Tengiz Kitovani's accusations which, in his opinion, must be regarded as "dangerous provocation". In one of his interviews Tengiz Kitovani, the former defence minister of Georgia, had accused Samushia of being a secret agent of the Georgian security services. In Samushia's words, Kitovani, who is now serving his sentence for high treason, might have been offered an ahead-of-time release in exchange for bringing discredit on the guerrilla leader. "Droni" No. 82, July 21-23, p. 2

Abkhaz gunmen took five Georgians hostage in the village of Orsantia, the Zugdidi district of Georgia, on July 21. One of them - Onri Sakhishvili - was shot to death. A few days later, relatives ransomed the hostages and the body of the dead. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Georgia denounced the incident in its special statement, emphasising that Orsantia is situated in the 12-km safety zone controlled by the RPF. The MFA pointed out that although the number of terrorist actions increased remarkably in the safety zone (especially after the next round of the Georgian-Abkhaz talks in Geneva began), Russian peacekeepers turned a blind eye to such facts. The RPF Command makes actually nothing to suppress terrorism in the region, the MFA said. To protect civilian population, a Georgian police force was deployed at the Enguri river near Orsantia. However, Tengiz Sitchinava, deputy chief of the regional police department, says it will help little. There are a lot of ferries over the Enguri river so that Abkhaz gunmen may easily penetrate into the Zugdidi district. About 2,000 policemen are necessary, in Sitchinava's words, to control the whole bank of Enguri. As to the army, Georgia has no rights to deploy its military units there. "Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 186, p. 1; "Akhali 7 Dge" No. 27, July 31-August 5, p. 3

According to George Shervashidze, C-in-C of the Internal Troops, Internal Troops are currently deployed in the Ganmukhuri and Khurcha villages of the Zugdidi district, and the Pakhulani and Kalaghali villages of the Tzalendjikha district. "Our main function is to protect civilians", he said. These villages are situated on the right bank of the Enguri river, while the rest of the Zugdidi and Tzalendjika districts on the left one. Russian peacekeepers, however, are deployed mainly along Enguri as an actual border between Abkhazia and Georgia. As a result, the aforementioned villages appeared unprotected and became the target for Abkhaz forces which seem anxious to take control of the whole right bank of Enguri. The Georgian government, therefore, had to deploy internal troops there. The situation is especially worse in Khurcha - most of its residents have fled the village. Khurcha neighbours the Nabakevi village of the Gali district of Abkhazia controlled by Abkhaz forces and there are only 200 metres between Georgian and Abkhaz positions. Shervashidze denied information about severe fighting in the village. There is, in his words, only occasional gunfire nights between Abkhaz and Georgian troops. Djemal Kutateladze, the newly appointed commander of the Georgian observer mission in Abkhazia is now demanding the RPF to open additional check-points in Khurcha and Ganmukhuri. "Kviris Palitra" No. 27, July 6-12, p. 9; "Droni" No. 85, July 28-30, p. 5

On July 25 Abkhaz gunmen armed with machine guns and grenade launchers assaulted the village of Khurcha. As a result one servicemen of the Internal Troops of Georgia was wounded. The gunfire reportedly lasted the whole day.

"Resonance" No. 201, July 26, p. 2

A military vehicle of RPF was mined in the village of Reno-Etzeri, the Gali district, on July 22, injuring nine Russian peacekeepers. All of them were hospitalised in Sukhumi. Three more Russian peacekeepers were wounded after a RPF armoured personnel carrier was mined in the village of Tagiloni, the Gali district. Abkhaz authorities blamed both incidents on the White Legion, while the latter denied its involvement.

"Sakartvelos Gazeti" No. 58, July 28, p. 1; "7 Dge" No. 85, July 24-26, p. 5

A RPF patrol has wounded and detained a perpetrator when he was mining a road in the Gali district of Abkhazia. The perpetrator was reported to be an Abkhaz gunman.

"Resonance" No. 204, July 29, p. 3

Russian peacekeepers have opened their additional 25-men staff in the village of Otobaia, the Gali district of Abkhazia. In the centre of the village they made a sign which said it was the Otobaia village of the Krasnodarsky Kray (Krasnodar Region) of Russia.

"Meridiani 44" No. 87, July 31-August 3, p. 2

Valeri Chkheidze, the chairman of the State Department of Frontier Defence of Georgia (SDFD), visited Sukhumi for talks on frontier defence problems with the Abkhaz leader Vladislav Ardzinba. Earlier, Abkhaz authorities had said they would not allow the Georgian Coast Guard to patrol Abkhazia's coastal waters. The talks yielded few practical results but they would continue, Chkheidze said.

"Sakartvelos Gazeti" No. 44, July 11, p. 1

Peace in the Tskhinvali region (South Ossetia) is maintained by the Joint Peacekeeping Force (JPC) made up of three battalions - Russian, Georgian and Ossetian. MG Anatoly Makushkin, JPC commander-in-chief, was born in Sverdlovsk (now Ekaterinburg) of Russia in 1952; graduated the Cheliyabinsk tank military college, Frunze Military Academy and the General Staff Academy (both in Moscow). His track record includes various offices in the Soviet Troops in Germany, Leningrad and Moscow military districts, and Mongolia. Col. Ruslan Dzantiyev, commander of the Ossetian Peacekeeping Battalion, was born in Vladikavkaz in 1952; graduated the Vladikavkaz air defence artillery college and the Kiev military engineer college. MG Revaz Gurgenidze, commander of the Georgian Peacekeeping Battalion was born in 1952 in Sukhumi.

The situation in the Tskhinvali region is gradually getting better, Mr. Makushkin claims in his interview with the newspaper. The number of JPC checkpoints has reduced from 60 to 12, while peacekeepers passed some of their functions to the local civil administration and police. On the other hand, some problems remain. Mass media may unwittingly (or deliberately) provoke new tensions. For instance, when the Russian Peacekeeping Battalion rotated its personnel the press reported that its armaments were sold to the Ossetians. Nothing similar has happened in reality.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 174, July 11, pp. 1, 3

The Army Building

The Georgian Coast Guard set out to patrol the Georgian home waters, for the first time in the country's post-Soviet history, on July 16. Revaz Adamia, the chairman of the parliamentary defence and security committee, considered it a historical event. According to Revaz Gabunia, authorised representative of the SDFD chairman in the Samegrelo region, the Coast Guard started with controlling only the Poti coastal area - from Choloki to Anaklia - but will expand its operations over the Adjarian economic zone in some time to come. During their first patrol mission on July 16 Georgian frontier guards detected a Maltese

vessel which entered the Georgian home waters without the state banner. She was halted and demanded to correct the error, Gabunia said. There were, however, some problems. A marine patrol of the Adjarian Rapid Reaction Force checked Georgian coast guard boats after these last attempted to enter coastal areas of Adjaria and forced them back to Poti on July 16. The parties were reportedly right about to fire at each other but fortunately managed to abstain from action.

"Sakartvelos Gazeti" No. 48, July 16, p. 1; No. 50, July 18, p. 1; "Resonance" No. 191, July 16, p. 2; No. 192, July 17, p. 2

According to Revaz Gabunia, the SDFD has come to terms with the Adjarian authorities so that Georgian coast guard boats will be able to patrol the Adjarian coastal zone freely. As to Abkhazia, the Coast Guard is ready to take control of its coastal waters as soon as there is a respective order. Meanwhile, vessels continue to visit Sukhumi sea port as the Coast Guard has no rights to check them in neutral waters.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 206, July 29, p. 6

At its July 17 extraordinary session, the Georgian parliament passed the law on the state frontier. Addressing the parliament, Zurab Zhvania said special thanks should be given to America, Germany, Greece, Turkey and Ukraine for their help to arm the Georgian Coast Guard. Valeri Chkheidze said the law would enable the SDFD to take control of the country's whole frontier by 2000. According to the law, the SDFD is the only organisation to exercise frontier control [the old law stated that another country's frontier guards may participate, under extraordinary circumstances, in Georgia's frontier defence]. Revaz Adamia, the chairman of the parliamentary defence and security committee, said at a press-conference the same day that Georgia needed \$100 mln to build its frontier infrastructure.

"Droni" No. 81, July 18-21, p. 5; "Resonance" No. 193, July 18, p. 2

In his July 13 interview with the Georgian Radio Eduard Shevardnadze thanked Russian frontier guards for defending the country's borders for years. However, he said, the Georgian Frontier Troops had grown capable of fulfilling their mission and it was time for them to take over the frontier control. The Georgian president pledged that Russia would have no problems at its borders with Georgia after Russian frontier guards were withdrawn and Georgia started to control its frontiers independently. Neither would Georgia's other neighbours - Azerbaijan, Armenia and Turkey. As to Abkhazia's objections to the withdrawal of Russian frontier troops, Sukhumi must perceive that Tbilisi acts in accordance with the international frontier convention. Of course, Shevardnadze said, Abkhazia's interests must be taken into account in the frontier defence system of Georgia.

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 176, July 14, p. 2

The Georgian president has approved regulations of the State Department of Frontier Defence of Georgia. According to the document, the SDFD has to develop frontier policy, co-operate with international organisations, work out and conduct research and development programs. In his July 20 interview with the Georgian Radio the president said Georgia should develop its own, unique frontier defence system.

"Sakartvelos Gazeti" No. 52, July 21, p. 2

Aslan Abashidze, the Adjarian leader, said he would not allow the SDFD to deploy its troops in Adjaria, at the Georgian-Turkish border: "It will cause a lot of problems". Since 1991, in his words, Adjaria has trained its own frontier troops manned with those locals who have served in the Russian frontier service. They were even better disciplined than Russian frontier guards, he claimed. Commenting on July 16 incident between the Adjarian Rapid Reaction Force and the Coast Guard [see above], he blamed the latter for manoeuvring in Adjarian coastal waters without signal lights and not responding to radio calls of Batumi. They behaved like pirates, he said. Such actions, in his words, can hardly add to confidence between the centre and the region. At a press-conference some time later, Abashidze claimed Chkheidze himself to be aboard one of the coast guard boats during that incident.

"Resonance" No. 196, July 21, p. 2

At a recent press-conference in Batumi, Aslan Abashidze, the Adjarian leader, reiterated his earlier claim that frontier defence should be based on regional principles. The SDFD had already established such a practice in mountainous regions and should apply it in Adjaria as well, he said emphasising that Adjaria-based units of other power ministries - the MOD and the Ministry of State Security (MSS) - are manned predominantly with locals. Although there had been a preliminary agreement with the SDFD on such a principle, the latter then changed its mind and decided to control the Batumi airport by forces sent from Tbilisi. On the whole, in Abashidze's words, Tbilisi is anxious to control only the Batumi customs, airport and seaport - most lucrative objects - but seems little interested in mountainous regions of Adjaria. He said the Georgian Coast Guard employed Russian and Ukrainian mercenaries at its patrol boats.

"Resonance" No. 204, July 30, p. 7; "Alia" No. 131, July 30-31, p. 15

"It is an absurd idea", Valeri Chkheidze commented on Abashidze's statement about Adjaria's plans to have its own frontier troops. At the same time, he considers it quite possible to man frontier troops in Adjaria with locals, provided they will be under the SDFD command. Such a practice has been already established in mountainous regions - locals are contracted, armed, equipped with communication devices, etc. "We'll try to restore a historical tradition of defending the frontier by local residents. To this end we may create special frontier settlements", Chkheidze said.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 183, July 22, p. 1

Whatever results of the Georgian-Abkhaz talks, Georgian frontier guards will have to take control of the state frontier anyway, Valeri Chkheidze, the SDFD chairman, says in his interview with newspaper. Tbilisi hopes for Russian assistance in this respect. "We must avoid any kind of provocation in advance". Relations between Georgian and Russian frontier services have been rather good in recent times, Mr. Chkheidze claims. Despite the forthcoming withdrawal of Russian frontier troops from Georgia, Russian and Georgian frontier guards, in his words, will continue to co-operate. The more so, just the Georgian-Russian border pose most of the problems. The SDFD makes great efforts to check drugs and weapons smuggling, and illegal migration across the border with Russia. To this end, the SDFD plans to increase the number of its frontier troops next year. Western aid is also rather useful. For instance, the USA is going to help develop electronic systems on the Georgian frontiers. One of the American companies is negotiating joint production of speedy cutters with the Batumi Shipyards. Ukrainian and Turkish consultants will train Georgian frontier guards. Corruption is another problem the SDFD has to deal with. Over some last years about 200 frontier guards have been dismissed for corruption. Mr. Chkheidze suggests that people should anonymously inform the SDFD about corruption in frontier troops.

"Resonance" No. 183, July 8, p. 7

The Navy would stand by the Coast Guard in case Abkhaz forces endeavoured to block its operations, David Tevzadze said at his recent press-conference. Speaking about ongoing structural reforms in the MOD, he said they aimed to improve the management of the armed forces and defeat corruption. The minister suggests that the Georgian army must be half professional and half conscript. In his opinion, the country's defence cannot be maintained only by professionals. "Resonance" No. 186, July 11, p. 2; "Sakartvelos Gazeti" No. 44, July 11, p. 1

The SDFD and the MOD have worked out a scheme of joint control in the country's home waters. Each of the structures is assigned clearly defined missions: while the Coast Guard has to patrol the 12-mile coastal zone, the Navy will be on stand-by and carry out, if necessary, mine cleaning operations in Georgian sea ports. To this end, the MOD plans to purchase special vessels. According to the scheme, both structures will exchange information (for instance, about the movement of vessels in the Batumi and Poti) and jointly train their personnel in the Batumi naval department of the Joint Military Academy of Georgia. Both will employ also common repair bases. All the naval forces of Georgia are divided

into three categories (classes). The first one includes the largest boats of the Navy and the Coast Guard which will be responsible for distant operations. Smaller - Grif-class - boats will be in charge of controlling coastal waters, while the smallest, rapid cutters, are to patrol within the 5-mile zone and in the ports. The SDFD and the MOD plan also to set up a joint radar system to control seashore. Georgia has already appealed to Turkey for help in getting such radar equipment.

"Droni" No. 77, July 9-11, p. 6

The Batumi-based naval department of the Joint Military Academy of Georgia is often referred to as the naval academy. There are now 115 cadets, 30 of them going to graduate next year. At present, the department teaches only two specialities - navigators and mechanics. Meanwhile, Georgian naval forces suffer from a sharp deficit of professionals - some 70 percent of the officers corps are vacant. At the same time, the number of warships seems likely to increase. Georgia, therefore, has to rely on other means such as foreign aid. For instance, two naval officers are now being trained in Greece, two in Germany, and 25 in Russia.

"Droni" No. 76, July 7-9, pp. 5, 8

The Audit Chamber of Georgia has completed examination of military enlistment offices, the MOD engineer, logistical and procurement services, as well as the Akhaltsikhe, Senaki and Poti brigades of the MOD. Results of the examination (which began in April 1997) were discussed at a recent sitting of the MOD Board. According to a 30-page final report of the Chamber, lots of violations caused by "lucrative alliances of some MOD officials and managers of various organisations" were revealed in enlistment offices and the examined services. Particularly, enlistment offices appear to have regularly abused conscription regulations. As a result, Military Procurator's Office (MPO) had instituted legal proceedings against General Nodar Tatarashvili, the former main military commissar of Georgia. The examination found out also that 17,000 detonators, 612 kg of explosives, 3,283 mines and 943 metres of fuse were stolen from the depots of engineer troops. All the responsible officials would be called to account, David Tevzadze, Defence Minister, said.

"Sakartvelos Gazeti" No. 36, 37; July 2, 3; pp. 1, 2

According to Badri Bitzadze, Main Military Procurator of Georgia, there are officially about 2,500 deserters in the Georgian army. Mr. Bitzadze thinks, however, that their real number is much bigger. The current Georgian army, in his words, is manned predominantly with the poor - most of the recruits come from low strata of the society. Mr. Bitzadze complains that the MPO cannot operate efficiently since a lot of its functions have been passed to the Audit Chamber and State Tax Service (STS). The MPO is still investigating the April 26 incident with presidential escort aircraft: they failed to take off and escort the president during his visit to Turkey due to some small stones in their engines. Mr. Bitzadze feels suspicious, however, whether it was the real reason. "Sakartvelos Gazeti" No. 36, July 2, p. 3; "Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 164, July 2, pp. 1, 8

The ongoing military reform aims to make the army more efficient, Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili, the Chief of the General Staff of the Georgian Armed Forces, says in his interview with the newspaper. Special attention is given to defence spending. The defence minister has ordered a special commission to supervise financial affairs of the MOD. At present, foods, medicines, salaries and pensions, in his words, top the list of defence spending priorities, while repairs of barracks, procurement of ammunition and arms come the second. As to structural re-organisation, the Air Force and the Air Defence Troops will be merged into a singly body under one commander. This measure is expected to reduce personnel but improve combat efficiency, Mr. Pirtskhalaishvili argues. On the other hand, the Coast Guard (SDFD) and the Navy (MOD) will remain separate. The former may rely on the Navy's support in case Abkhaz forces attack coast guard patrols. The MOD has reduced the planned number of draftees by 1,000 conscripts. More reduction will depend on the defence budget. If there is enough

finance, the army will keep up its size: "We must not forget two still unsettled conflicts - Georgia needs adequate military strength".

"Resonance" No. 181, July 6, pp. 1, 2

The Air Force and the Air Defence Troops have been merged into a single unit, the MOD Press Centre said. As a result, about 1,200 servicemen were relieved. Meanwhile, Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili has reported ongoing reforms in the armed forces at a recent sitting of the MOD Board. Among the main achievements he ranged structural re-organisation of the MOD, improved planning and management, and strengthened control over defence spending. However, desertion, social and logistical problems are still to be solved. Although the MOD personnel has been replaced almost entirely, combat efficiency of the army is still low due to incompetence of some commanders. Since the beginning of the year 16 murders and 16 injuries have happened in the army for the lack of discipline. Food supply of the army remains poor and meals are often without quality certificates. Deputy defence ministers for logistics and breeding, Omar Lekveishvili and Robert Tavadze respectively, were reprimanded for such state of affairs.

"7 Dge" No. 87, July 29-30, p. 2

Col. Alexander (Akia) Barbakadze has been appointed head of the MOD Logistics Department, while MG Teimuraz Loria, his predecessor, was assigned as the head of staff of the same department. Mr. Barbakadze is known as once "the right hand" of Tengiz Kitovani, the former defence minister. He was born on January 7, 1966, and graduated Tbilisi Technical University. In 1991-92 he served in security and intelligence services, while in 1992-94 in the National Guards. In 1994-96 he served in the Internal Troops but returned to the National Guards in 1996. He also passed training in a German military college. Teimuraz Loria was born on January 2, 1951. In 1974 he graduated the Tbilisi Artillery College and served in the Soviet Army for 26 years. Since 1991 he has been in the Georgian army.

"Resonance" No. 205, July 31, p. 2; "Akhali Taoba" No. 208, July 31, p. 3

Temur Djavakhia has been appointed head of the newly created MOD department for co-operation with European countries. He was born in 1955 and graduated Tbilisi State University in Philology. He worked for some time as a school teacher and then as the director of a secondary school (in 1985-88). Later, he served as an assistant captain at a civil ship. During the war in Abkhazia, he commanded the ship "Batumi" which was evacuating civilians. After the war he headed the MOD Department of International Agreements. Not long ago he graduated the Academy of the Bundeswehr General Staff. He is married and has two children.

"Kavkasioni" No. 67, July 20-26, p. 15

Gela Ugrelidze, 37, has been appointed main military commissar of Georgia. He has graduated Leselidze military school and Tbilisi Artillery College. His track record includes positions of a platoon commander in the Kutaisi 21st Airborne Brigade, and military commissar of Marneuli and Isani districts.

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 186, p. 4

The Army Life

After examining several military units, the Young National Democrats (YND) have launched a press-conference on the problems of the Georgian army. Despite ongoing military reforms, Djaba Samushia, the YND leader, said, the army still suffered from its old ills: suicides, murders, desertion, corruption, etc. The Georgian president, in his opinion, must take his share of the blame for such a situation. As early as in January 1997 the Audit Chamber submitted to the president's apparatus and the parliament its report about numerous violations in the armed forces. To improve the situation, the YND proposes to dismiss corrupted officers, complete military reforms and revise the law on the universal military service.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 179, July 2, p. 5; "Meridiani 44" No. 75, July 3-6, p. 2

According to Georgian physicians, because of low-quality foods quite a few Georgian soldiers have developed stomach diseases. Soldiers complain that they seldom eat meat, fruits and white bread.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 179, July 2, p. 6

Levan Khmaladze, a 22-year-old recruit of the Akhaltsikhe unit of the MOD, broke his neck when jumping to the swimming pool in the unit. Despite a surgery, he died a few days later in the 1st Hospital of Tbilisi. The MOD refused to pay for the surgery, one of the physicians told journalists on condition of anonymity.

"Resonance" No. 183, July 8, p. 5

A grenade exploded in the barracks of the Joint Military Academy of Georgia on July 7, injuring five cadets. It is still unclear whether the grenade was thrown from outside or kept in the barracks. Military Procurator's Office is investigating the incident.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 171, July 8, p. 3; "Sakartvelos Gazeti" No. 41, July 8, p. 1

Visits. Negotiations. Co-operation

Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili has met Kornel Paraniyak, Commander of the 1st Army of Romania. The talks were focused on the prospects of the Georgian-Romanian military co-operation. Particularly, Georgian officers may be trained in the General Staff of the Romanian Armed Forces.

"Resonance" No. 178, July 3, p. 7

At their recent talks Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili and BG Ilias Iliapulos, the head of the organisational department of the Greek ground forces, discussed prospects of the two countries military co-operation. According to earlier agreements, Greek military delegations are to visit some Georgian military units, as well as Algeti and Khulevi firing grounds, in the near future.

"Sakartvelos Gazeti" No. 41, July 8, p. 2

According to Ali Ozturk, the Turkish military attaché to Georgia, Ankara is ready to assist the SDFD after Russian frontier troops are withdrawn from Georgia. The SDFD and the Turkish Coast Guard should actively co-operate in frontier defence, he said. At the end of July, Valeri Chkheidze is visiting Turkey to discuss joint measures to maintain security on the Georgian-Turkish frontier. Besides, Turkish experts have just recently examined Batumi and Poti naval bases. On the basis of their report the Turkish government will decide on concrete assistance programs. According to informal sources, Turkey may grant Georgia one more coast guard boat (it has already granted three ones). Besides, several Georgian mariners may be sent to the naval college of Istanbul.

"Sakartvelos Gazeti" No. 41, July 8, p. 2; "Droni" No. 78, July 11-14, p. 6

Georgia celebrated Navy Day on July 7. To take part in the celebration, the French frigate "Monkalm" visited Batumi on July 6. She left on July 11 with 15 Georgian cadets aboard who took brief training on the "Monkalm". On the whole, the French-Georgian military co-operation seems progressing quite well. For instance, Thomson, one of the largest French companies, is going to provide the Georgian Navy with electronic systems.

"7 Dge" No. 78, July 6-7, pp. 3, 9; "Droni" No. 78, July 11-14, p. 6

25 Georgian cadets - would-be frontier officers - are being trained by Russian instructors in Akhaltsikhe. According to Viktor Seredkin, C-in-C of the Russian Frontier Troops in Georgia, the Russian Federal Frontier Service will continue to co-operate with the SDFD after Russian frontier guards are withdrawn from Georgia since efficient control on the Georgian-Turkish border is in both countries' interest.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 179, July 17, p. 3

According to Temur Djavakhia, the head of the MOD department for co-operation with European countries, Georgia and Germany have signed a five-year military

co-operation program which is mainly focused on personnel training. At present, six cadets of the Joint Military Academy of Georgia are learning in a Bundeswehr language college. Afterwards they will pass three-year practical training in Germany. Seven more Georgian cadets have already completed a 18-month training program in Bundeswehr military units and are now learning in the Hannover military college. Besides, two communication specialists and one military engineer of Georgia are being trained in Germany. Two Georgian officers are also learning in the Academy of the Bundeswehr General Staff.

"Kavkasioni" No. 67, July 20-26, p. 15

Evgeny Zimbalkin of the U.S. Coast Guard has been appointed advisor to Valeri Chkheidze, the SDFD chairman.

"Resonance" No. 199, July 24, p. 2

David Tevzadze met Joseph Ralston, deputy chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, USA, on July 23. According to Koba Liklikadze, the head of the MOD Press Centre, their closed-door meeting was focused on the problems of regional security. Mr. Ralston said the USA would assist the army-building in Georgia. The same day, General Gary Johnson, the chairman of the ISAB (International Security Advisory Board) and General Henning von Ondarze, one of the ISAB members, discussed ongoing reforms in the Georgian army with Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili.

"Resonance" No. 199, July 24, p. 2

David Tevzadze met Gen. Gary Johnson and Gen. Henning von Ondarze on July 25. According to the MOD Press Centre, the meeting was focused on conscription problems, future army-building plans, training programs for Georgian officers and the necessity to strengthen civil control over power ministries. Informal sources say Tevzadze is going to reduce the size of the army and shorten the terms of military service (from 24 to 18 months). In September ISAB will submit its recommendations to Mr. Tevzadze.

"Sakartvelos Gazeti" No. 56, July 25, p. 2

According to the Prime News Agency, Chechen cadets may be permitted to matriculate the Joint Military Academy of Georgia. The first 5-7 of them are expected to enter the Academy this August to take a course in artillery. Later on, however, the MOD Press Centre denied this information. Georgia has never negotiated such issues with Chechnya, the MOD said.

"Resonance" No. 205, July 30, p. 7; "Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 191, July 31, p. 2

The U.S. Congress has approved a program to aid the Georgian frontier defence. Its 1998 budget totals \$18 mln. In the framework of the program the SDFD will get radiation detectors, signal missiles, water-proof radio communication devices, bullet-proof jackets, rescue jackets, night-vision devices, handcuffs, etc. The program provides also for training of frontier guards and fuel/lubricants supply of the Georgian Coast Guard till the end of the year. The program will be supervised by the U.S. Customs. Three American experts will constantly work in Georgia to help improve infrastructure and organisation of frontier defence.

"Kviris Palitra" No. 30, July 27-August 2, p. 9

A Georgian delegation - Valeri Chkheidze, Malkhaz Kakabadze, deputy foreign minister, and Avtandil Tskitishvili, the head of the Frontier Troops Staff - visited Turkey on July 27 - 29. According to Mr. Kakabadze, the talks were quite constructive. The two countries have negotiated a draft Georgian-Turkish border agreement which must regulate all border issues and signed a protocol on Georgian-Turkish frontier co-operation on July 27. According to the document, Turkish vessels will no longer be able to visit Abkhazian sea ports freely. More exactly, Georgian frontier guards will be informed in advance about every Turkish ship bound for Abkhazia. This September Georgian and Turkish frontier guards will carry out a joint exercise. Turkey will also provide the SDFD with communication equipment and train 15 Georgian frontier officers. A group of Turkish experts will visit Georgia to share their experience.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 209, August 1, p. 5; "Droni" No. 88, August 4-6, p. 2

Miscellany

The seven-year history of the Georgian Navy has seen two commanders. In February 1990 the Cabinet of Ministers of Georgia decreed an ad hoc commission for the army-building problems. One of its groups led by Capt. Alexander Djavakhishvili, the former commander of a Soviet nuclear submarine, was commissioned to build up a navy. In November 1991 (in times of Zviad Gamsakhurdia) Djavakhishvili was appointed commander of the MOD naval force and retained the office after the overthrow of Gamsakhurdia's government. However, when the war in Abkhazia broke out Georgia was in fact without a navy. That is why Georgian forces carried out only two naval operations during the war: in August 1992 a Georgian boat under Djavakhishvili himself evacuated 173 women and children from Bitchvinta, while in April 1993 Georgian bombardment boats destroyed a Chechen commander Shamil Basayev's camp in Gudauta. In February 1997 Djavakhishvili resigned for health problems. The Georgian Navy was made up of only two patrol boats at that time. On March 10, 1997, Capt. Otar Chkhartishvili was appointed new commander of the Navy. He was born in the village of Khosta, Stavropol region of Russia, graduated a USSR naval military college and had served for 22 years in the Murmansk naval base of the USSR North Fleet. He started with purchasing new, mainly Ukraine-built, boats since the domestic shipbuilding industry was not able to satisfy the needs of the Navy. The Poti Shipyards had gone out of business by then (at present it belongs to a Korean company), while the Batumi Shipyards manufactured small (with displacement of up to 50 tons) but expensive cutters. Analogous Ukrainian boats cost 4-5 times less. On July 4 the Isani district court sanctioned to arrest Chkhartishvili for embezzlement. According to Gia Djikia, deputy military procurator, Chkhartishvili is charged with having embezzled 50 thousand GEL.

"Alia" No. 117, July 6, p. 1; "7 Dge" No. 82, July 15-16, pp. 1, 2

More than 600 cadets are currently learning in the Joint Military Academy of Georgia, Iago Goksadze, deputy rector of the Academy, says in his interview with the newspaper. The Academy is teaching several specialities: general arms, artillery, armoured vehicles and frontier defence. As graduates get two diplomas, of an officer and historian, they will be able to apply for a civil job - a teacher of history - after retirement. The Academy plans to introduce one more civil speciality - engineer - in the future. The whole educational program takes four years. The Academy is well supplied with foods and medicines (the latter mainly at the expense of international humanitarian aid) but lacks educational literature in Georgian, Goksadze says. Although its library is rather huge - almost 40 thousand volumes - there are mainly Russian text-books. From this viewpoint, the Academy hopes to get help of Georgian high schools. "Akhali Taoba" No. 189, 190, 191; July 12, 13, 14; pp. 7, 8, 9

Russian troops were ready to leave Georgia as soon as Moscow issued a respective order, Panteleimon Giorgadze, the leader of the United Communist Party of Georgia, said after his meeting with some high-ranking officers of the Russian Troops in Transcaucasus. Russian military, in his words, consider it impossible to serve in a country which regards them as occupants. At the same time, he censured the forthcoming withdrawal of Russian frontier guards from Georgia as it may cause discontent in Adjara, let alone Abkhazia. Georgian-Russian relations may also worsen. Except Byelorussia, Mr. Giorgadze argues, all the former Soviet republics are doomed to fail due to their current policy since NATO is plotting a large-scale war against them. In his opinion, there is the only way-out - to create a new union, "not a renewed USSR but something like European Union".

"Sakartvelos Gazeti" No. 47, July 15, p. 1; "Droni" No. 79, July 14-16, p. 2

According to the results of a sociological survey carried out by the Society for Soldiers' Rights this April and May (2,000 Georgian officers and soldiers in almost all large cities of the country were interrogated), 55-60 percent of the respondents favoured peaceful solutions to the problems of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, while 35-40 percent of them said these problems must be solved only by military force. Most of the respondents believe that the army-building in

Georgia will benefit from regional co-operation and, above all, the NATO Partnership for Peace program. On the whole, 55-65 percent of them were for Georgia's joining to NATO, 25-30 percent considered such a decision irrelevant, while 5-10 percent were against.

"Resonance" No. 190, July 15, p. 7

After 11 Georgian frontier guards of the Lilo training centre developed a skin disease linked to radiation last year, Eduard Shevardnadze decreed an ad hoc state commission to examine the problem of radioactive contamination in Georgia. The commission has already inspected 30 military units and revealed radioactive wastes almost in all of them. However, according to Soso Kakushadze, deputy head of the centre for radioactive security, most of these wastes pose no danger to human health but some of them are quite serious. For instance, a large contamination area - almost a 400-metres radius - was revealed in Vaziani, the former 555th missile base of the Soviet Army. Two more such areas were revealed in the training centre of the Joint Military Academy of Georgia in Vaziani. Both Georgian and Russian military leadership, in his opinion, must take their share of the blame. Moscow should have informed Tbilisi about the radioactive wastes, while the Georgian MOD should have thoroughly inspected these units before taking them over. To dispose of the wastes, Georgia plans to use special Soviet-built storage containers in Vaziani which were inspected by the international nuclear agency and found suited for the purpose.

"Droni" No. 80, July 16-18, p. 6

The Tbilisi Aircraft Works (TAW) was created in 1941 on the basis of a former Soviet works evacuated from Taganrog. It manufactures Su-25 combat aircraft and has a long history of relations with Iraq which was eager to start the same production under a TAW licence, Vazha Tordia, its newly re-appointed director general (he had to resign on 1991 after Gamsakhurdia's government took power), says in his interview with the newspaper. These relations were broken in 90s but may renew, in his words, if the embargo against Iraq is lifted. If so, Georgia will make a good profit. Although the TAW is now in dire straits - workers have not been paid for 7 months - it plans to improve production and manufacture new modifications of Su-25.

"Akhali 7 Dge" No. 25, July 17-23, p. 10

According to General Novykh, deputy commander of the Caucasian Extraordinary Frontier District of Russia, Russian frontier guards are going to lay minefields at some sectors of the Georgian-Russian frontier. Valeri Chkheidze said this measure was not co-ordinated with Tbilisi. The SDFD and MFA have protested against such plans.

"Akhali 7 Dge" No. 26, July 24-30, p. 3

According to informal sources, the Azeri security services have tipped off the MSS about Azeri residents of Georgia, as well as about some Georgians, who are collaborating with the Russian GRU (Main Intelligence Department). They are said to dwell in Bolnisi, Marneuli, Gardabani districts and Tbilisi. There has been, however, no reaction on the part of the MSS so far and these people continue their activities.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 204, July 27, p. 3

The Mtatzminda district court of Tbilisi has sentenced Stanislav Ubiria, the former commander of Tcholoqashvili Battalion, to 5 years' imprisonment on probation for illegal keeping of weapons. Firstly, he had been also charged with high treason but the court found him not guilty. Ubiria was released in the court-room after almost 14 months' before-trial imprisonment. Ubiria was called up for the military service in 1992. At the beginning of 1993 he was wounded and lost his leg. After the war in Abkhazia ended he participated for some time in guerrilla warfare. On May 3, 1997 - on the very day he got back to Tbilisi from western Georgia - officials of the MSS searched his flat and revealed two Kalashnikov submachine guns.

"7 Dge" No. 81, July 13-14, pp. 1, 3

The Kutaisi aircraft works is going to produce the four-seat "Mercury" plane (the range 2,500 km, speed 220-300 km/hour, price \$360,000) in co-operation with the Russian works "Aviaton" (producer of Mig-29 fighter). Oleg Volk, one of the founders of the Aviaton, has negotiated the issue with Eduard Shevardnadze. The new aircraft may be reportedly employed by the Georgian frontier troops.

"Sakartvelos Gazeti" No. 43, July 10, p. 4

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 172, July 9, p. 3

Press Digest

Astamur Tarba, the Abkhaz security minister, has launched a sensational press-conference, the Meridiani 44 (No. 84) reports. According to Tarba, about 500 people have been killed by the Georgian guerrilla units, White Legion and Forest Brothers, in Abkhazia over the last four years. It is a rather noteworthy figure, the newspaper claims. Excluding 61 Russian peacekeepers and some accidentally killed civilians, one may assume that Abkhaz forces lost about 400 servicemen. So Georgian guerrillas, in the author's opinion, deserve to be praised for eliminating dozens of Abkhaz "fascists". It is also praiseworthy that for all this time they have never raided civilian population, though they surely could. Abkhaz authorities usually try to conceal their casualties. This time, however, they seem candid, the newspaper argues, as Tarba obviously made this data public on purpose. He presented maps with location of Georgian guerrilla bases in western Georgia and said guerrillas were being trained by American and Israeli instructors there. Given the fact that the mandate of the RPF is approaching its deadline, the newspaper points out, Abkhaz authorities have in fact warned that if Russian peacekeepers are withdrawn Abkhaz forces will have to attack guerrilla bases in western Georgia. These are not mere words. The May fighting in Gali proved that Georgia still lacks military strength, while the Abkhaz army, according to the newspaper, is well capable of reaching even Kutaisi. Remarkably, Ardzinba has already claimed Kutaisi to be once ancient capital of Abkhazia, the Meridiani 44 concluded.

Georgian politicians and mass media should give up day-dreaming about how to apply a Bosnian model in Abkhazia, the Akhali 7 Dge (No. 25) remarks. It is an Utopian idea. The situation in Abkhazia profoundly differs from that in Bosnia and the NATO, in the newspaper's opinion, will never deploy its forces there. For instance, such feature of the Bosnian model as creation of ethnic enclaves requires the both parties' consent. Sukhumi will hardly agree to create such enclaves in Abkhazia. Further still, the author argues, it would be stupid to believe, as some Georgian officials do, that the situation will improve if the Russian peacekeeping force is replaced by any other. In fact, Georgian politicians mix up two principles - peacekeeping and implementation. The first of them provides for deployment of peacekeeping forces right between the conflicting parties in order to prevent new hostilities, while the second allows to station peacekeepers throughout the conflict zone to back implementation of a peace agreement. But Georgia has failed to sign any such with Abkhazia so far.

Georgia must on no account enforce a sea blockade on Abkhazia, the Meridiani 44 (No. 79) argues. Firstly, Georgia lacks enough resources. But the main point is that no sooner the Georgian Coast Guard grows able to check movement of vessels between Turkey and Abkhazia than Sukhumi, in the newspaper's opinion, will appeal to Russia for help. As a result, Moscow may suspend withdrawal of Russian frontier troops from Abkhazia and thus retain its control over Abkhaz coastal areas. From this viewpoint, the author claims, the Georgian leadership's policy seems wise - they abstain from ordering the Coast Guard into Abkhaz coastal waters believing, quite reasonably, that it would be better if the Abkhaz coastal zone is controlled by Abkhaz frontier guards rather than Russians. This may arguably give birth to a strong Abkhaz-North Caucasian alliance which will surely attempt to find common language with Georgia. In other words, Georgia's and Abkhazia's interests in the Black Sea may coincide, while Moscow will be driven out for good, the Meridiani 44 concludes.