

# The Army and Society in Georgia

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## THE NATIONAL GUARDS UNDERGO REFORMS BUT DO NOT TURN SWORDS INTO PLOUGHSHARES

*By Koba Liklikadze  
Head of the MoD Press Centre*

The army building in Georgia began with the creation of the National Guards. By their 9th anniversary, which will be celebrated this year, the Guards may become entirely renewed - the MoD has worked out a draft regulations that aim to make the National Guards compatible with western standards.

*General Djemal Tchumburidze, the commander of the National Guards, elaborates on the reform in his following interview.*

K.L.: Mr. Djemal, the National Guards are undergoing serious changes. I mean the structure of the National Guards Department which has been drafted with your active participation. But before we look into its essence, let's recall the history of the National Guards as just you are its contemporary chronicler.  
D.T.: The 9th anniversary of the National Guards will be officially celebrated in December. I say "officially" because in reality the National Guards originated a bit earlier, during the upsurge of the national movement. Particularly, the National Guards emerged in 1989. At that time there was a need for national armed forces capable of preventing destabilisation and ethnic conflicts in the country. The conflict in Samachablo (South Ossetia) especially stimulated to create first national military units. A lot of armed groups spontaneously headed to Samachablo to defend this region. They needed accommodation, armaments, training and elementary maintenance. A certain organisational structure had to be created in order to solve all these problems. Several military units - such as the Georgian Shevardeni Legion, Tbiliseli, Chito-Gvrito - were formed just at that time. The first unit of the National Guards originated at the end of 1989 - its HQ was situated in the Gldani district police station. Tamaz Dumbadze, Gela Lanchava and Nodar Museridze were in charge of organisational problems of the unit. In 1990 parliament the first national government set up a defence committee chaired by Tengiz Kitovani which passed a resolution on the creation of National Guards - Internal Troops. The resolution was enforced in December the same year.

K.L.: The etymology of this title is interesting. Besides, as far as I remember, it became a matter of political profiteering.

D.T.: A unit of the Soviet internal troops, the so-called "8th Regiment", was stationed in Georgia, particularly in Tbilisi, at that time. It was a striking illustration of the punitive apparatus of the totalitarian regime and people used to tell horrible legends about it. The main missions of the regiment were to prevent public disorder and guard prisons/colonies. Then Supreme Council of Georgia resolved to deprive the unit of its missions and, therefore, the resultant vacuum should have been filled by national forces. Preference was given to the National Guards and the above two missions were included into its regulations

K.L.: Under such circumstances, what were the initial structure and recruitment principles of the National Guards?

D.T.: Basically, they were the same as today. We began with creating a main department under Colonel Gogi Papadze and recruiting officers. At that time most of the Georgian officers were serving in various units across the whole Soviet union. We addressed an extraordinary order to them offering to get back to Georgia. Many of them responded to our appeal and, as a result, we were able to recruit enough officers. However, most of the commanders of the units were civilian enthusiasts. The recruitment of privates was put on the agenda afterwards. The draft into the National Guards began in February 1991. In April the process was over and all the units were fully manned (just this date is regarded as the birthday of the Georgian Armed Forces). I well remember the drafting office of Choloqashvili Battalion. It was located in a building which currently belongs to the Cadets Corps. The drafting medical commission worked in the sport hall. Immediately after passing medical examination, recruits were enlisted, dressed in uniforms and assigned to their units. There was a remarkable unanimity and enthusiasm.

K.L.: When were the National Guards subordinated to the MoD?

D.T.: The National Guards became a part of the MoD structure with the status of a MoD main department in 1994. Before that time, it had been an independent body.

K.L.: Today, one can only dream about such organisation. Many soldiers have no boots in military units. The food situation is gradually getting worse.

D.T.: There were merely more opportunities at that time. After the break-up of the USSR, lots of military units were withdrawn from South Caucasus, particularly from Georgia. A good deal of their commanders sold military property and equipment almost for nothing. So we got uniforms, foods and military equipment aplenty. We lacked only military sites. Then Georgian government decreed to pass the premises of the former Soviet DOSAAF (Volunteer Society to Support Army, Air Force and Navy) with all the equipment into our possession. The HQ of the National Guards has been located there ever since.

K.L.: You said lots of people were willing to join the Guards. How did you manage to satisfy them if the number of personnel was limited?

D.T.: You know, even though the number was limited, we managed to enlist 15 thousand Guards throughout the whole Georgia as there was a great enthusiasm. By August 19, when the Guards made a protest re-deployment to Rkoni, the National Guards totalled 8 thousand recruits, let alone officers. Later on, as the situation more and more aggravated, we demobilised recruits. Only the core of the Guards remained and continued to fight for democracy against the president Zviad Gamsakhurdia's authoritarian regime.

K.L.: It is known that the National Guards suffered great losses, fighting for territorial integrity of the country. Symbolically, our interview coincided with the 6th anniversary of the fall of Sukhumi...

D.T.: Conflicts in Abkhazia and Samachablo (South Ossetia) were inspired by external forces. We became involved in these conflicts. The National Guards were against bloodshed in Abkhazia. Georgian governmental troops entered Abkhazia on the basis of a resolution of the State Council in order to protect railways and automobile roads there. By that time the railway robbery in Abkhazia had reached

an unprecedented scale, inflicting millions dollars of damage on the state budget. Moreover, it were separatists who fired first.

K.L.: Which combat was the most hard in military terms?

D.T.: Every combat was hard. However, I would highlight the March 1993 massive assault at Sukhumi. The Shavnabada Battalion under Colonel Koba Kobaladze displayed great valour there. Another example - a vigorous counter-offensive operation led by Ghia Qarqarashvili which swept away the separatist armed forces from the whole eastern direction till the town of Tqvarcheli. By the way, the National Guards were the last to retreat from Abkhazia on September 30. They did so at the request of the leadership of the Gali and Ochamchire administrations who believed that the separatists would not carry out punitive operations in their districts. We preferred not to aggravate the situation and carried out an unprecedented withdrawal through Swaneti (mountainous region of Georgia) with all the military hardware and tanks.

K.L.: Why did we cede the territories taken at the expense of great losses so easily, without combat?

D.T.: You know that the National Guards had not enough strength to control the whole front line. They acted as a rapid reaction force, while the defence of liberated territories was assigned to two brigades created in Abkhazia. For some reasons, they did not (or could not) carry out this mission. It is noteworthy that the National Guards have lost more than 1,200 officers and privates, including two generals, in combat; 400 servicemen became invalid; and 200 are missing. Forty servicemen of the National Guards have been awarded (most of them posthumously) Vakhtang Gorgasali Order.

K.L.: Are there any social adaptation programs for invalids and families of the lost?

D.T.: We have always aided them financially, and helped find jobs. Although the state provides them with a few privileges, some governmental agencies obviously ignore the servicemen's rights concerning payments for communal facilities. Besides, the National Guards Command began to construct a nine-floor block of flats for families of the lost. The construction has not been completed yet due to the lack of finance but several families, however, have got apartments there anyway. We will attempt to expand the aid programs in the future. I want everyone to know that the National Guards are a common family. We forget nobody.

K.L.: Let's speak about the reform of the National Guards. As far as I know, it has been a theme of the backstage talks in the MoD since 1994.

D.T.: You know that the National Guards of western countries, particularly of the USA, have entirely other, mainly non-combat and humanitarian missions. We have been always interested in learning their experience. When visiting Georgia in 1994, General John Shalikashvili, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, USA, proposed an exchange of delegations. Some time later, a 15-strong group of our National Guards visited USA. The group returned with strong commitment to apply the American experience which completely matches our country's interests. However, Vardiko Nadibaidze, the defence minister of Georgia at the time, came to stand in our way as he would not hear of our proposal. Despite these obstacles, we began theoretical work on a new structure anyway.

After David Tevzadze, who belonged to the first generation of the National Guards and shared our ideas, was appointed defence minister, the situation changed favourably. Afterwards, the reform of the National Guards attracted serious interest of the ISAB (International Security Advisory Board) which was created in 1998. In brief, all our ideas finally transformed into the regulations which were examined and approved by the MoD Board. At present, we are drafting a structure of the National Guards Department. I'd like to emphasise that we do not follow others countries' example blindfold. We aim to create such a structure which will be able to fulfil both humanitarian and military missions. So the National Guards undergo reforms but do not turn swords into ploughshares.

K.L.: Reserve training on the basis of the National Guards and participation in disaster relief operations are most interesting parts of the proposed reform. Don't you think that the last mission may cause a certain confrontation as there is a similar structure in the Ministry of Internal Affairs?

D.T.: Reserve training is the heel of Achilles of our army building. While looking into this problem, we learned experience of many countries and finally chose the American model which provides for perfect reserve training. American reserve is made up of volunteers and in all likelihood the core of our reserve, too, will be manned on the contract basis. The number and categories of reservists will be determined by state requirements. Service in the reserve of the National Guards must be prestigious for all social groups. When in the USA, I met a congressman who passes training courses of the National Guards every year. I think similar practices should be introduced in our country as well. It is a matter of manly honour.

As to the likely confrontation, prospects of such a structure of the National Guards were examined by the MoD as early as in 1997. At that time one of the deputy defence ministers was responsible for emergency situations. At the next stage the MoD was going to create a respective service but all of a sudden Nadibaidze changed his mind. That is why this department is now functioning in the MIA. By the way, it performs rather successfully. Of course, we are not going to interfere in the competence of other structures. Besides, the National Guards Department will have to carry out other important missions as well.

K.L.: Just recently you have hosted some high ranking officers of the National Guards of Georgia, USA, who promised you their assistance.

D.T.: Of course, prospects of such assistance are real. We can develop joint personnel training and technical assistance programs in the future which may be financed by the USA. To improve their skills, our servicemen will be also able to take part in NATO Pfp exercises.

K.L.: Some people say you may be appointed commander of the reformed National Guards.

D.T.: To tell the truth, I have never pretended to any high position. Moreover, I am going to retire from the army by the 10th anniversary of the armed forces. Until then, I have the only goal - to complete the regulations of the new department. There are a lot of honest officers in the National Guards capable of commanding this mission.

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*General Djemal Tchumburidze*

*Birthdate - August 5, 1938 (in Tbilisi)*

*Speciality (by education) - Bridge Engineering*

*He is one of the founders of the National Guards.*

*Awards: I and III degrees of Vakhtang Gorgasali Order, and the medal for Valour in War.*

*Track record: 1991-92 - deputy chairman of the NG Department, some time later - commander of the NG; twice - in 1993 and 1998 - deputy defence minister.*

## **AIR FORCE OF GEORGIA**

*By Teimuraz Chachanidze*

*MoD*

Local conflicts of the 90s indicate a great role of air force in modern war. Airpower remains one of the most efficient tools to undermine an enemy's military potential. Despite unfavourable geographic conditions, quite large air forces of the Red Army - 34th Air Force Army and the 19th Air Defence Army - used to be deployed in South Caucasus in Soviet times with the main mission to check and counter-attack the NATO southern flank. Only the 19th Army had about 150 combat fighters.

Most of the military airfields - and respectively the biggest number of aircraft and helicopters - were stationed in Georgia. Particularly, a regiment of Su-24 bombers was deployed in Shiraki, two air force regiments (MiG-23 and Su-17) in Vaziani, a regiment of MiG-29 fighters in Senaki, another regiment of Su-24 bombers in Kopitnari, a regiment of Su-27 fighters in Bombora, a regiment of Su-15 fighters in Marneuli. Altogether, there were 230 aircraft in total. In addition, more than 200 helicopters - Mi-8, Mi-24 and Mi-26 - were deployed in Meria, Khoni, Telavi and Tskhinvali air force bases. In 1991-92 Russia withdrew actually all its air forces from Georgia, leaving behind only relatively outdated Su-15 (Marneuli) and some out-of-order planes. Besides, the Russian military destroyed all non-transportable equipment and burnt off technical documentation. It is noteworthy that just at the same time Azerbaijan did not allow Russia to pull out more than 50 various combat aircraft, more than 35 helicopters and several transport aircraft, including Il-76 and An-12.

Development of the Georgian Air Force began from scratch and, worse still, during the war in Abkhazia. Two Su-25 fighters produced by Tbilisi Aircraft Works were tested on September 19, 1992, and supplied to the Air Force. Air Force Day has been celebrated on September 19 ever since. First Georgian pilots joined the Air Force voluntarily. They learned aircraft and mastered their skills in combat. They had to fulfil a lot of missions - air strikes at the enemy's positions, defence of Georgian units, transportation of civilian population, etc. - under severe fire of hostile forces (in this case Russian air defence units). Slava Djabua was the first Georgian pilot to be shot down near Gagra. His fate is still unknown. Captured Georgian pilots were treated especially cruelly by Abkhaz separatists. For instance, Zurab Yaradjuli was killed after being captured. Izani Tsertsvadze and Djimmi Maisuradze, famous Georgian aviators, died in combat.

All Georgian aircraft and helicopters were shot down by Russian air defence units. Although Abkhaz separatists claim that just their air defence units downed Georgian aircraft, there is enough evidence to the contrary. The 643rd Air Defence Regiment of Russia armed with SAM systems "Kub" (SA-6) was deployed in Gudauta (Abkhazia) and acted against the Georgian Air Force. Besides, with the help of the Russian military Abkhaz separatists got mobile anti-aircraft weapons "Igla" and "Strela". Using these weapons, Abkhaz forces shot down seven Su-25 fighters, four Mi-24 helicopters and three passenger planes, including one Tu-154.

At present, despite some obstacles, the Georgian aviation is gradually developing and gaining strength, and Georgian pilots are improving their professionalism. The Air Force showed its capabilities at a recent exercise at the Qulevi firing ground with participation of four Su-25 fighters.

Foreign countries greatly assist the Georgian Air Force. The USA plays an extraordinary role in this respect. Particularly, the U.S. government has recently resolved to grant 10 multi-functional helicopters UH-1H to Georgia, which will be most likely used for transportation. To learn the helicopters and their technical maintenance, 40 Georgian pilots and technicians have visited America. The program is entirely financed by the USA. However, there is the other side of the coin. To date, the Georgian Air Force have exploited only ex-Soviet equipment. Technical, standard and maintenance differences will undoubtedly cause problems. To cope with the problem, the Georgian army will have to develop clear-cut orientations in its armament policy.

Training of pilots is a long process which requires four- or five-year study in aviation colleges. Afterwards, pilots will have to master their profession for years due to increased sophistication of modern aircraft. One group of the Georgian pilots is learning abroad. In 1997 the Joint Military Academy introduced an air force faculty which teaches two specialities - pilot and engineer-technician. The faculty employs Czech-made L-29 (Dolphin-type) combat-training planes. It has its own laboratories and various equipment. First pilots will graduate the faculty in 2001.

Quotas of the CFE (Conventional Forces in Europe) agreement limit the Georgian Air Force to 100 aircraft and 50 helicopters. At present, Georgia has much less airpower. Even if it had filled the CFE quotas, the maintenance of such an air force would be very difficult. This does not mean, however, that Russia had a right to withdraw all its aircraft from Georgia without consultations with Tbilisi. Experts estimate that Russia withdrew \$2,5-3 bln worth of equipment. It would have quite satisfied Georgia's requirement for aircraft and helicopters.

Control and defence of the country's air space is the main mission of the Air Force in peacetime. In wartime it will have to defend Georgian ground troops, the Navy and essential state objects, and to carry out air strikes and bombardment of enemy forces, as well as some other missions.

In 1998 the Air Force and Air Defence Troops of Georgia merged under a 57-year-old General Valeri Naqopia. He is a professional pilot and has graduated Kachi air force college of Russia. His last position - deputy commander of a fighter regiment in Kubinka (near Moscow). In 1992 he joined the Georgian armed forces. The ongoing military reform provides for development and improvement of the new structure. Organisationally, the Air Force is made up of ground-attack fighter (Kopitnari) and helicopter (Telavi) regiments.

## **Military Chronicle**

*Georgian press reports*

### **Conflict zones**

An Abkhaz military court sentenced Otar Kulaia to death penalty, and Beslan Pachulia and Astamur Djindjolia to 15 and 12 years' imprisonment respectively. All the three were found guilty of several terrorist actions in Tqvarcheli (Abkhazia) in January 1998. According to Abkhaz authorities, they had maintained contacts with the Georgian security services.

"7 Dge" No. 102, September 1-2, p. 1

According to Shota Kviriaia, former security minister of Georgia, a member of the NSC and the chairman of the CIS board of the heads of security services (he recently visited Moscow for talks with the leadership of the Russian security service on the situation in the Caucasus), several companies currently functioning in Abkhazia provide "coverage" for Vahhabist terrorist organisations. Besides, in his words, secret terrorist training bases have began to operate in Abkhazia this year, and the present Abkhaz regime is obviously unable to check their activities. In Kviriaia's words, Russian security services agree that the problem may be solved only after the Georgian jurisdiction is restored in Abkhazia.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 203, September 7, p. 2

Viktor Seregin, the commander of the Georgia-deployed Russian frontier troops, and Gela Khutsishvili, deputy chairman of the SDFD, signed a protocol on September 6 which stipulates that the Russian frontier federal service cedes control of the Abkhaz coastal waters to the SDFD. Actually, the Georgian Coast Guard has been controlling the area since summer but without legal basis.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 204, September 8, p. 5

The Abkhaz authorities released nine mariners of the Georgian ship "Alioni" detained this April for "illegal fishing in Abkhaz home waters" and two Georgian guerrillas in exchange for three Abkhaz hostages.

"Resonance" No. 246, September 9, p. 2

General Sergey Korobko, the RPF commander, refuted recent statement of Roman Popkovich, the chairman of the defence committee of the Russian Duma. The latter had claimed that Chechen gunmen were being trained in special secret bases across Abkhazia. In Korobko's words, no such bases are deployed in the safety

zone controlled by RPF. However, he noted that the RPF was not responsible for the whole territory of Abkhazia.

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 247, September 15, p. 1

An Abkhaz delegation - Sergey Baghapsh, the prime-minister; Almasbei Kchach, the interior minister; Astamur Tarba, the security minister; Anri Djergenia, the procurator general; and Givi Akrba, deputy defence minister - visited Tbilisi on September 21 for talks on security problems with their Georgian counterparts - Vazha Lortkipanidze, the state minister; Kakha Targamadze, the interior minister; Vakhtang Kutateladze, the security minister; and Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili, the chief of the General Staff of the Georgian Armed Forces. The talks were reportedly focused on joint measures to prevent destabilisation in the Gali district before and on the day of the presidential elections in Abkhazia (October 3).

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 216, September 22, pp. 2, 4

## **Army building**

The Georgian parliament passed a resolution reducing the term of the military service from 24 to 18 months. The document will be enforced at the autumn 1999 call-up. All hitherto drafted recruits will have to serve 24 months. According to Revaz Adamia, the chairman of the parliamentary defence and security committee, the term may reduce to 12 months in the future.

"Resonance" No. 247, September 10, p. 2

"Meomris Gza" No. 3, September 15, p. 10

At a September auction the joint venture "Terminal-2000" (founders - the Georgian Railway Department and Argomar Oil Ltd., Cyprus) purchased 150 hectares of land near the village of Qulevi (western Georgia) in order to build a new oil terminal there, though 40 hectares of them belong to the MoD and constitute a part of the Qulevi firing ground. It seems, however, that the news took the MoD by surprise - MoD officials claim that nobody informed them about the deal in advance. According to the MoD, this firing ground is vitally important for the army for its unique characteristic - it allows to launch ground, air and naval exercises simultaneously. Another such firing ground is situated in Gonio (Adjara) and belongs to the Russian troops. At present, the MoD leadership and the company continue negotiations on the problem. Both parties seem willing to compromise - the MoD may cede a part of the firing ground, provided the company allocates finances to improve its infrastructure. For its part, the company requires safety guarantees for the terminal during military exercises.

"Alia" No. 150, September 23-24, p. 13

About 1,500 Georgian servicemen, including air defence units and naval forces, took part in the September 6-8 exercise "Napiri-99" (Coast-99) of the Georgian army at the Qulevi firing ground. The exercise was commanded by General Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili, the chief of the General Staff of the Georgian Armed Forces. It was the second such exercise there. The first one - "Abdjari 97" (Armour 97) - took place in the autumn 1997 and involved about 10,000 servicemen and lasted two weeks. The "Napiri-99" aimed to improve operational management of the army during defensive operations, and to perfect co-ordination between staffs of various arms (reportedly, it cost about 250,000 GEL). According to the legend of the exercise, the "eastern" party had to resist aggression of the "western" one, which launched a landing operation against the Poti oil terminal. It is noteworthy that the RPF command protested against the exercise, claiming that the Qulevi firing ground was situated in the restricted armaments zone and deployment of heavy armaments there violated the May 14, 1994, agreement signed in Moscow. For his part, Revaz Adamia pointed to the fact that although some time earlier the Abkhaz army also carried out an exercise in the same zone, the RPF did not protest. In his words, the UNOMIG (UN Observer Mission in Georgia) was informed about the exercise in advance and did not object. At the same time, Valeri Gelbakhiani, the Adjarian leader Aslan Abashidze's advisor for law, said the exercise was an attempt to trigger tensions between the centre and Adjara.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 201, September 4, p. 5

"Meomris Gza" No. 1, September 6, 1999, p. 12

"Resonance" No. 245, September 8, pp. 1, 3

"Kavkasioni" No. 13, September 8, p. 7

The MoD carried out one-day naval exercise in the Qulevi firing ground on September 23 with participation of the marine battalion, several patrol craft and specialists of the U.S. Coast Guard. These last had trained Georgian marines in the framework of the American-Georgian military co-operation agreement. David Tevzadze said he would welcome participation of the Russian military in such exercises.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 229-230, September 24, p. 1

At present, there are almost four thousand officers in the Georgian army. Their average age is 34.5. Only 933 of them have high military education (former Soviet military colleges); 1,333 officers graduated military departments of civil high schools; 676 officers passed three-month courses of the MoD for junior lieutenants; and 781 officers were awarded ranks without any military education and diplomas. Several dozens of officers graduate the Joint Military Academy (JMA) every year but their number is obviously not enough to satisfy the need of the army. Since 1995 about 500 Georgian servicemen have learned in foreign countries. Russia is the leader in this respect. At present, 340 Georgian servicemen are learning there - 79 officers, 15 NCOs and 246 cadets. This number, however, seems going to decrease for the simple reason that the MoD lacks money to pay for their education. Russia charges about \$1,500 for the education of each Georgian serviceman, let alone their monthly salary and travel tickets (Moscow-Tbilisi flight costs about \$150). Georgia's debt to Russia for education of Georgian servicemen has already reached \$22 mln. That is why, the MoD is looking for other opportunities. For instance, Ukraine may be viewed as an acceptable replacement for Russia. Last year 34 Georgian servicemen learned there. They have been added by 70 this year. The cost of military education in Ukraine is lower - \$900-1,200 for each cadet. However, Georgia's current debt to Ukraine totals \$340,000. The MoD claims that Georgian servicemen study in Ukraine more efficiently. For instance, not long ago Colonel Vakhtang Kapanadze graduated the Kiev military academy of general arms with gold medal (he has been appointed commander of the 11th MRB of the MoD). As to other countries, Turkey is the most active partner - more than 30 Georgian servicemen are studying various military specialities there at present - military medicine, naval force, commando, etc. Besides, ten servicemen are learning in Germany, two in Great Britain, ten in Greece, one in Italy, one in Romania, five in the USA. Next year several Georgian servicemen may enter French military colleges. Military education in these countries is free for Georgian servicemen but their number there is still rather small mainly because of poor knowledge of foreign languages. That is why the MoD is now anxious to improve the teaching of foreign languages in the army.

"Droni" No. 99, September 7, p. 7

The Academy of Military-Industrial Engineering of Georgia was inaugurated on September 8. The list of the founders of the academy includes: the state scientific centre "Delta", Tbilisi Aircraft Works (TAW), Kutaisi Aircraft Works, Kutaisi Automobile Works, Stable Isotopes Institute, Institute of Cosmic Engineering, the Georgian-Russian joint venture "Tetrabor", Kutaisi Technical University, Batumi Shipyard, the company "Georgian Polytechnic Intellect", and some others. Karlo (Givi) Lekishvili, director general of the "Delta", was elected president of the academy, while Vazha Tordia, the director general of the TAW, its vice-president. According to the founders, its creation is conditioned by the need to accumulate and employ the Georgian intellectual potential in the field of military production. In Soviet times Georgia participated in a lot of military industrial projects and there is still quite a large number of professionals of this field in the country.

"Kviris Palitra" No. 37, September 13-19, p. 9

Merab Kvekveskiri, deputy defence minister, resigned from office explaining his decision by a desire to run the coming parliamentary elections as a majoritarian candidate. However, according to informal sources, his resignation might be caused by "conflict of interests". In Kvekveskiri's words, the financial

situation in the MoD may be described as "guided chaos". Besides, he pointed to numerous problems that arose after Georgia decided to take part in the peacekeeping operation in Kosovo. It seemed, he said, that some forces of the MoD put Georgian peacekeepers under boycott. On the whole, in his words, there are two opposing teams in the MoD - reformers and conservatives - which struggle with each other for power. According to latest information, Ghia Buadze, the head of the MoD financial-treasury department, may also resign soon. Both took offices in the MoD almost simultaneously about four months ago.

"Kavkasioni" No. 36, September 22, p. 10

The MoD Board examined draft regulations of the National Guards Department of the MoD. According to the document, the Guards will have the following missions and functions:

- in peacetime:
  - reserve training (officers, NCOs and privates);
  - training of "additional special forces" for the army;
  - ceremonial functions (currently these functions are carried out by a special company of the MoD);
  - training and material-technical maintenance of peacekeeping troops;
  - participation in disaster relief operations;
- in wartime:
  - local defensive operations and defence of vital state objects.

It must be mentioned that the civil defence department of the MIA is also in charge of disaster relief operations. So there is an obvious overlap of functions. The proposed draft has yet to be approved by the parliament. General Tamaz Dumbadze and General Djemal Tchumburidze are expected to take the offices of the head of the department and commander of the Guards respectively.

"Kavkasioni" No. 36, September 22, p. 11

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

Having returned to Tbilisi after his visits to Moscow and China, David Tevzadze said the Georgian government had already defined the date of the withdrawal of the Russian military bases from the country but it would be kept secret for the time being. As to the RPF, Tbilisi, in his words, has prolonged their mandate for the last time.

"Droni" No. 97, September 2, p. 1

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 199, September 2, p. 3

According to Revaz Adamia, the future of the Russian military bases in Georgia may become clear by November, at the Russian-Georgian consultations on the issue. At present, in his words, the Russian military presence in Georgia has no legal grounds. There are two agreements - one on the status of the Russian troops in Georgia and the other on Russian military bases. The terms of the former have already expired, while the latter have not been ratified by the Georgian parliament so far. Russian bases, in his opinion, must be withdrawn from Georgia "painlessly and without any problems". At first stage, Russia should withdraw its bases from Vaziani (near Tbilisi) and Gudauta (Abkhazia), while the Batumi (Adjara) and Akhalkalaki (southern Georgia) bases would be pulled out some time later. Adamia admits that between these two stages Georgia may allow Russia temporary deployment of its troops in accordance with the CFE agreement. However, Russia has currently too many armaments in Georgia and it will have to reduce them, even if granted temporary deployment.

"Resonance" No. 246, 267; September 9, 30; pp. 1, 3

Valeri Chkheidze, the SDFD chairman, refused to participate in the September 9-11 sitting of the CIS board of the heads of frontier services in Bishkek (Kirgizstan) in protest against the director of the Russian federal frontier service Konstantin Totsky's recent statement. The latter had suggested that Russia might lift economic embargo from Abkhazia. Besides, in Chkheidze's words, CIS frontier co-operation is rather inefficient: "Tasks specified by the heads of frontier services are not implemented". The Georgian delegation at the sitting was led by Gela Khutsishvili, deputy chairman of the SDFD.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 203, September 7, p. 5

International conference "NATO-Georgia: Prospects of Co-operation" took place in Gudauri on September 14-15. It was sponsored by NATO, USIA and TACIS, and organised by the Atlantic Council of Georgia, the Georgian parliament, MFA, NDI and Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development. The main themes of the conference:

- a new concept of national security of Georgia (prepared under the guidance of ISAB);
- NATO after the Washington summit;
- peacekeeping operations under NATO aegis;
- Georgia's integration policy in the Euroatlantic structures.

Besides, the conference examined the problem of Russian military bases in Georgia. Particularly, Revaz Adamia said the problem was naturally connected with the CFE (Conventional Forces in Europe) agreement. Today, in his words, these bases pose a real threat to Georgia. The Gudauta base actually backs the Abkhaz separatist regime, while the Vaziani base was involved in assassination attempts against the president. He also admitted that armaments may be smuggled into Chechnya from the Georgia-stationed Russian bases. As to the national concept of Georgia, the participants approved the proposed draft. Its official discussion and maybe governmental approval is expected in January 2000.

A Georgian peacekeeping platoon (34 servicemen) led by Senior Lieutenant George Kuparashvili and manned with servicemen of the Kodori training centre of the MoD passed a special training course in Turkey in September 1-28. The platoon will participate in the peacekeeping operation in Kosovo together with a Turkish battalion in the German zone. All its armaments and ammunition are provided by Turkey. On September 28 the platoon left for Kosovo through Macedonia.

"Resonance" No. 239, September 2, p. 1

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 199, September 2, p. 3

According to Vazha Tordia, the director general of the TAW, Uzbekistan may contract the TAW to purchase one and repair several Su-25 fighters. Details of the deal were discussed during his recent visit to Uzbekistan. In Tordia's words, the TAW maintains constant contacts with representatives of the Czech republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Peru, Angola, North Korea, Iraq, and Iran, all of which have Su-25 fighters. He admits that some of them may also contract the TAW to repair or purchase the fighters.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 217-218, September 15, p. 7

The USA has decided to increase the financial aid to the MoD till \$3.2 mln. The money will be spent on social problems of the armed forces. For instance, American companies will provide uniforms for the army.

"Kviris Palitra" No. 36, September 6-12, p. 9

Valeri Chkheidze met a delegation of the U.S. Customs on September 10 to discuss implementation of a new American assistance program to the SDFD. Particularly, the program includes creation of a new border check-point with all the necessary equipment at the Red Bridge (the Georgian-Azerbaijani border).

"Resonance" No. 248, September 11, p. 3

The Turkish General Staff officially thanked the MoD for help during the last earthquake in Turkey. The MoD had provided tents and medicines to Turkey.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 212, September 17, p. 2

Grigol Katamadze, deputy defence minister, visited Romania for talks on the aspects of the 1999 Georgian-Romanian military co-operation. As a result of his visit, Georgia was admitted to participate in the international armament exhibition "Expomil-99" in Bucharest on October 27-30. Georgia will present production of the Tbilisi Aircraft Works, Institute of Cosmic Engineering, the state scientific centre "Delta" and some others. Considering the Georgian economic problems, Romania allows Georgia to participate free of charge, while transportation costs will be covered by Turkey. In the future, Romania may grant

the Georgian Navy a small craft and provide more training opportunities for Georgian servicemen.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 215, September 21, p. 5

"Kavkasioni" No. 37, September 29-October 4, p. 8

A delegation of the National Guards of Georgia (USA) visited Tbilisi on September 21-24 for talks with David Tevzadze, the defence minister, Vazha Lortkipanidze, the state minister, and Nugzar Sadjaia, the NSC secretary. The national guards of the two countries have been co-operating since 1995.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 215, 216; September 21, 22; p. 5

Greece granted a patrol craft (about \$10 mln worth, some 100 tons of displacement) to Georgia. The granting ceremony took place in Greece on September 1. The craft is now named "Mestia". It is the second Greek gift to the Georgian Navy - the first one ("Iveria") was granted in February 1998. On the whole, the Navy has got three patrol craft from foreign countries: two were granted by Greece - "Iveria" and "Mestia" - and one by Turkey - "Kutaisi" (in November 1998).

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 200, September 3, p. 2

"Kviris Palitra" No. 36, September 6-12, p. 9

The Georgian patrol craft "Mestia" participated in the naval exercise "Black Sea Partnership-99" in Turkey instead of the patrol craft "Batumi". The latter's engine broke down on the way to Turkey and she had to get back.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 222, September 29, p. 15

## **War in Chechnya and state security**

Valeri Chkheidze denounced the chairman of the Russian Duma Gennady Seleznev's statement who had claimed that weapons were smuggled into the North Caucasus through Georgia. According to Chkheidze, the SDFD fully controls the Chechen and Dagestani sectors (80 and 150 km respectively) of the Russian-Georgian border. Revaz Adamia considered Seleznev's information entirely groundless, while in its official statement the MFA qualified it as a clear slander. However, MP Mamuka Areshidze, the chairman of the parliamentary group for relations with North Caucasian nations, admitted that an "insignificant number" of light weapons had been indeed smuggled to Chechnya from Georgia but it happened, in his words, "not this year".

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 204, September 8, p. 2

"Akhali Taoba" No. 250, September 11, p. 5

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 219-220, September 16, p. 1

On September 16 some Russian media reported that Chechen authorities had freed six Georgian hostages for a ransom of 1,000 guns. Vakhtang Abashidze, the president's press-secretary, claimed this information to be an obvious slander aimed to spoil relations between Russia and Georgia. Vakhtang Kutateladze, the security minister, also refuted the information. At the same time, he accused Russian military bases in Georgia of illegal trading with weapons which afterwards may be smuggled into Chechnya.

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 249, September 17, p. 2

Due to the escalation of conflict in Chechnya, about 60-70 Chechen refugees - mostly women and children - cross the Russian-Georgian border through the Zemo Lars check-point every day. At first, they are accommodated in a special camp in the vicinity of the Zhinvali storage lake. Afterwards, they are transported either to Turkey, Azerbaijan or the Akhmeta district of Georgia (the so-called Pankisi Gorge populated by Kisti - a Veinakh ethnic group). According to informal sources, Russia demands Tbilisi to allow Russian frontier guards to take control of the Chechen sector of the Russian-Georgian border (on the Georgian territory) but Georgia objects. Russian security services claim that Chechen gunmen are able to trespass the border and hide in Georgia. The issue was discussed at the closed-door meeting of the Azeri, Georgian and Russian security officials in St. Petersburg on September 30.

"Droni" No. 111, September 30, p. 1

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 223, September 30, p. 2

"Resonance" No. 269, October 2, p. 3

The MIA, MSS and the Adjarian security ministry carried out a joint operation in Batumi to arrest four Georgian citizens for illegal transportation of 1 kg of uranium (U-235). According to informal sources, they were going to transport uranium to Turkey. Experts say uranium could have been delivered to Batumi from Armenia (there is a nuclear power plant) or from Russia (through North Caucasus, Abkhazia or Vaziani). Investigation of the incident is under way.

"Alia" No. 149, September 21-22, p. 13

## **Miscellany**

On September 4 Georgian frontier guards detained a Turkish serviceman after he trespassed the Georgian-Turkish border in the Khichauri district (Adjaria). According to the Turkish embassy in Tbilisi, the serviceman trespassed the border by accident, due to bad weather. Reportedly, the trespasser was dressed in civil clothes and had a pistol. The embassy hopes that the incident will be soon over and the servicemen will be freed.

"Resonance" No. 244, September 7, p. 3

On September 5 Turkish frontier guards detained a Georgian citizen Imeda Maisuradze for having trespassed the Georgian-Turkish border. The next day he was conveyed back to Georgia.

"Resonance" No. 244, September 7, p. 3

About 200 Russian cargo vehicles with fuel, foods and some other goods for the Georgia-stationed Russian troops have been detained at the Qazbegi border check-point (the Russian-Georgian border) by the Georgian Customs for non-payment of customs duties. Besides, according to the Georgian Customs, the Russian military failed to submit documentation to verify that the amount of fuel conforms with the respective quota. The vehicles also carried some household items (stockings, etc.) which must be taxed as usual imports.

"7 Dge" No. 106, September 10-12, p. 10

Two officers of the MoD - Nugzar Kaishauri of the procurement department and Sandro Kavsadze, assistant of the Georgian military attach, in Russia - were arrested in Batumi by the Adjarian police for small amounts of heroin in their pockets. However, both deny the use of drugs and claim that the heroin was put stealthily by the police. Revaz Adamia claimed the incident to be a provocation organised by the Adjarian leadership. The officers were released some days later. According to Aleko Mtchedlishvili, senior assistant of the defence minister, the MoD will carry out its own investigation of the incident.

"Kavkasioni" No. 37, September 29-October 4, p. 8

"Resonance" No. 252, September 15, p. 1

## **Press Digest**

Given the recent escalation of conflict in Chechnya, Moscow's decision to lift restrictions on cross-border traffic at the Russian-Georgian border seems illogical (these restrictions were imposed due to the 1994-96 war in Chechnya), the Meridiani 44 (No. 109) remarks. However, careful examination may help reveal Russian implicit intentions. The Kremlin, in the newspaper's opinion, obviously cannot put up with steadily increasing interest of the West, first of all the USA, in the Caucasus, and particularly in Georgia. The abolishment of restrictions suggests, the Meridiani 44 argues, that Russia is going to "export" instability from the North Caucasus to pro-Western Georgia and Azerbaijan. If so, one should consider that Georgia is still too weak to cope with the problem on its own. Under such circumstances, the newspaper concludes, western countries and international organisations (OSCE, UN) are merely obliged to check these Russian aggressive plans. For the Dilis Gazeti (No. 220), Moscow's decision

(which actually means lifting of an economic embargo on Abkhazia) is quite understandable: going to wage a new war against Chechnya, the Kremlin must be anxious to secure neutrality of the Abkhaz, Adigey and other North Caucasian nations. At the same time, Moscow must be aware that Georgia may respond adequately and open its border with Chechnya. To this end, Tbilisi has simply to complete the Georgian part of the Tbilisi-Grozny automobile road (on the Chechen territory it has been already completed). Of course, the newspaper argues, there is a danger that Russia will bomb the road claiming the need to check terrorism but there is no politics without risk. According to the Droni (No. 97), the main reason of the Russian decision must be found in the ongoing Russian-Georgian consultations on the CFE quotas. In the newspaper's opinion, the Kremlin has actually delivered ultimatum to Tbilisi - either Georgia cedes a part of its national CFE quotas to Russia or the economic embargo on Abkhazia will be lifted. Georgia must not give way to Russia's demands - quotas may be ceded only if Moscow makes real and practical steps to settle the conflict in Abkhazia, the Droni recommends. But Russia, the newspaper argues, will never do it (it has done nothing so far) and, therefore, there is no point in continuing the Russian military presence in Georgia. The Russian military bases in the country have actually two main functions: provide coverage for secret agents and politically impede Georgia's co-operation with NATO - obviously, NATO will hardly expand its co-operation with Georgia as long as at least one Russian base is deployed in the country. The 7 Dge (No. 105) continues the theme in the same vein. In the newspaper's opinion, deployment of the Russian military bases in Georgia seems to have only political reasons. In military terms, the total strength of the bases equals one Turkish brigade. So Moscow's argument that Russian military presence aims to help Georgia resist an external (meaning Turkish) aggression cannot be taken seriously. Another reason, assistance to the Georgian army-building, also falls short of reality - so far, the Russian military have made little to assist the Georgian army. So, the 7 Dge argues, one must conclude that the main reason of the deployment is to constantly remind the Georgian government about the "Russian bear".

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According to the Droni (No. 100), the current educational process in the JMA is rather inefficient for several reasons, such as the lack of professional teachers and finance. On the whole, the newspaper argues, the JMA educational system is obviously outdated - Georgian officers do not need four years to learn their speciality as the Georgian army has no modern and sophisticated weaponry, which requires thorough and long study, and seems unlikely to acquire them for years to come. One should also consider that Georgian cadets, who will graduate the JMA in four years, will have to serve in a principally another army. The Georgian military leadership is going to carry out fundamental reforms in the armed forces in order to make them conform with western standards. If so, in the newspaper's opinion, the role of officers in the army will change, while that of NCOs increase. That is why, the change of officer military education must be preceded by changes in training of NCOs. Consequently, there will be no longer a need for four-year officer education. Colonel Dimitri Lezhava, the head of the MoD personnel department, has proposed his own scheme of officer education - graduates of military departments of civil high schools will pass one-year course of the MoD and get military ranks. In his opinion, this will save the MoD money and increase intellectual level of the Georgian officer corps.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CIPDD - Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development  
MFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
MIA - Ministry of Internal Affairs  
MoD - Ministry of Defence  
MRB - Motorrifle Brigade  
MSS - Ministry of State Security  
NDI - National Democratic Institute (USA)  
NSC - National Security Council

PfP - Partnership for Peace  
RPF - Russian Peacekeeping Force  
SAM - Surface-to-Air Missile  
SDFD - State Department of Frontier Defence  
TAW - Tbilisi Aircraft Works  
USIA - United States Information Agency