

The Army and Society in Georgia

November 1999

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JOINT STATEMENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND GEORGIA

Istanbul, 17 November 1999

The Russian Federation and Georgia, guided by paragraphs 14.2.3 and 14.2.7 of the Decision of the Joint Consultative Group of 30 March 1999 concerning adaptation of the CFE Treaty, confirming their intention to properly implement the adapted CFE Treaty as adopted, wishing to promote the development and strengthening of co-operative relations between the Russian Federation and Georgia, have agreed as follows.

1. The Russian Side undertakes to reduce, by no later than 31 December 2000, the levels of its TLE located within the territory of Georgia in such a way that they will not exceed 153 tanks, 241 ACVs and 140 artillery systems.
2. No later than 31 December 2000, the Russian Side will withdraw (dispose of) the TLE located at the Russian military bases at Vaziani and Gudauta and at the repair facilities in Tbilisi.
The Russian military bases at Gudauta and Vaziani will be disbanded and withdrawn by 1 July 2001.
The issue of the utilization, including the joint utilization, of the military facilities and infrastructure of the disbanded Russian military bases remaining at those locations will be resolved within the same time-frame.
3. The Georgian Side undertakes to grant to the Russian Side the right to basic temporary deployment of its TLE at facilities of the Russian military bases at Batumi and Akhalkalaki.
4. The Georgian Side will facilitate the creation of the conditions necessary for reducing and withdrawing the Russian forces. In this connection, the two Sides note the readiness of OSCE participating States to provide financial support for this process.
5. During the year 2000 the two Sides will complete negotiations regarding the duration and modalities of the functioning of the Russian military bases at Batumi and Akhalkalaki and the Russian military facilities within the territory of Georgia.

Interview With David Tevzadze,

The Defence Minister Of Georgia

By Koba Liklikadze
MoD Press Centre

K.L.: Mr Tevzadze, you are regarded as a reformist minister. The MoD has underwent serious changes for the last 18 months. It is obvious, however, that many projects have yet to be implemented. Let us try to summarise the achievements and prospects of the Georgian army.

D.T.: Let's try.

K.L.: You have told one of the newspapers that the military reform either will be successfully completed by 2004 or will finally fail. What did you mean? Would you elaborate on the impeding factors?

D.T.: There are a lot of impeding factors. I cannot specify all of them now.

K.L.: Apart from political will, military reforms require money. From this viewpoint, the defence budget gives enough grounds for misunderstanding: in 1998 it totalled 62 mln GEL, in 1999 - 53.6 mln GEL, while next year the MoD expects 42 mln GEL. What are the reasons of such regressive financing? Are there any internal reserves to fill the army's treasury?

D.T.: We have already found such internal reserves and the way to solve the problem. At present, only political will is required to make it work.

K.L.: Another question is whether the MoD is aware of proper financial management and spending. These problems are often highlighted at sittings of the MoD Board. How do you evaluate the activities of the financial-economic sector of the MoD? And how can one explain scandalous dismissals of two heads of the sector for the last eight months?

D.T.: Unfortunately, the financial-economic sector failed to comprehend the developments in the country, and in the army in particular.

K.L.: Mr. Tevzadze, your nomination as defence minister was approved by the previous parliament with sensational unanimity - the overwhelming majority of the MPs voted in favour of your candidacy. It seemed, however, that the MoD had no serious lobby in the parliament. Have there been any changes in this respect since the October 31 parliamentary elections and what does the MoD expect of the new parliament?

D.T.: I don't think that there have been any changes. I expect the parliament to support, without lobbying.

K.L.: "Cadres are decisive", one well-known politician used to say. The ISAB (International Security Advisory Board) shares this opinion with regard to the military reform in Georgia. According to the ISAB experts, just a conservative part of the officer corps is one of the main subjective impediments to the reform. What kind of internal obstacles do they place and is their opposition serious?

D.T.: First of all, they lack awareness of new requirements. It's difficult to carry out tasks one is not well aware of. To some extent, this can pose serious problems.

K.L.: Officer training takes a large part in foreign military assistance programs. Are there any statistics on flow of the cadre and what are officer age groups?

D.T.: Such statistics are available in the MoD personnel department.

K.L.: You were going to make some changes in the educational process of the Joint Military Academy. Does the level of knowledge provided by the academy match modern requirements?

D.T.: I keep on planning changes and I know how to make them. As to the current level of knowledge, it's more or less satisfactory.

K.L.: What are your plans to educate military lawyers, financiers, physicians and other vacant specialities?

D.T.: In all likelihood, we'll apply for foreign assistance to teach vacant specialities.

K.L.: You have introduced a serious civil sector into the army. Is there any reflection of this change in the society's attitude towards the military?

D.T.: If there's no such reflection at present, it will emerge in due course.

K.L.: Mass media is one of the main segments of civil-military relations. Is the information policy of the MoD efficient enough to create the image of a motivated serviceman?

D.T.: It's inefficient.

K.L.: How strong is the "Abkhaz syndrome" (caused by Georgia's defeat in the Abkhaz war) in the Georgian society? How do you think, what a main factor determines motivation of the military service?

D.T.: The prestige of a military career is the most, or a most, important element of the motivation of the military service. As to the "Abkhaz syndrome", it looks more like a decease.

K.L.: What are results of co-operation with western countries? You have always spoken about the foreign aid only generally but the society is very anxious to get such kind of information from the first source.

D.T.: I agree with you but top officials bear certain responsibilities and, therefore, they cannot be considered information sources.

K.L.: What will be the priorities of military co-operation with foreign countries next year?

D.T.: There are several co-operation programs with western partners and we're working on them very hard.

K.L.: Let's talk about the OSCE summit in Istanbul. How much success did the Georgian delegation make at negotiations on the Russian military bases?

D.T.: At least we've achieved what we'd hoped to do.

K.L.: In accordance with the Russian-Georgian joint statement at the Istanbul summit, Russia should reduce its military equipment in Georgia by the end of 2000. Particularly, Russia can deploy 153 tanks, 241 armoured personnel carriers and 140 artillery systems in Georgia. How can be this arithmetic explained? Russia has less tanks in Georgia now. Does it mean that it can increase its equipment in Georgia?.

D.T.: "Can deploy" not necessarily means that it will be able to deploy this equipment in Georgia. This arithmetic is based on upper limits imposed by the CFE treaty on temporary deployment of foreign troops in another country.

K.L.: In 1992-93 Russia withdrew a lot of equipment from Georgia. Is Georgia likely to receive at least partial compensation, for instance at the expense of the Georgia-deployed Russian armaments subject to the CFE limitation?

D.T.: This issue has not been settled yet.

K.L.: At your initiative, three defence ministers - of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia - met each other last year. Are you going to continue this dialogue in the future?

D.T.: The situation has somewhat changed. A part of the work should be redone.

K.L.: How would you describe yourself?

D.T.: It's not an easy question. I think I look like an old bent tree with long and strong roots, shed leaves, and with a half-ruined church in the background.

OSCE Summit In Istanbul And Georgia

*By Vakhtang Maisaia
International expert for SIAC, USA*

The OSCE summit in Istanbul played a key role in strengthening the European security. It must be mentioned that three out of five basic documents adopted by the summit - particularly, an adapted version of the CFE treaty (Revision of Conventional Forces in Europe), a resolution on the situation in Chechnya, and a statement on the conflict in Nagorny Karabakh - directly relate to the Caucasian region. Besides, the Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and Georgia signed on November 17 is the most important document for Georgia. It requires Russia to disband and withdraw its Vaziani (near Tbilisi) and Gudauta (Abkhazia) military bases by July 2001 and reduce equipment in the remaining two ones - Akhalkalaki (southern Georgia) and Batumi (Adjara). The document has several important aspects.

1) Georgia made first real steps towards its historical objective, which used to be a cornerstone of the national-liberation movement in 80s - withdrawal of foreign military bases from the country. Top foreign policy priorities of Georgia were manifested just at the Istanbul summit. Its historical significance for Georgia may be compared with the December 1917 withdrawal of Tsarist Russia's troops from Georgia, which created favourable grounds for the declaration of independence on May 26, 1918.

2) The document has also outstanding geo-strategic importance as it requires to withdraw just those bases - Vaziani and Gudauta - which used to bring instability in the country's political life. Suffice it to say that the Gudauta base played a great role in the 1992-93 war in Abkhazia, while the Vaziani base was allegedly involved in the 1998 assassination attempt against Shevardnadze.

3) One should also consider the factor of economic security with regard to these bases. First of all, it is noteworthy that the Russian Rouble is the only currency to circulate there and its uncontrolled flow negatively affects the national finance system and prospects of local economic development.

4) Given the escalation of conflict in the North Caucasus, there is a danger that the Georgia-deployed Russian military bases may cause expansion of the conflict into a large-scale Caucasian war, which may spread over the South Caucasus. In 1991-92, when the situation aggravated in Chechnya, the HQ of the Russian Troops in Transcaucasus (GVRZ) was going to order a tank brigade (about 200 tanks) from Georgia to suppress Chechen rebels. During the last war in Chechnya, Chechen leaders were also concerned with the danger of air strikes posed by the Russian fighters and helicopters deployed in Russia's military bases in Georgia. Although this danger did not become a reality, there is no guarantee that it will not happen in the future. Remarkably, Russia has recently insisted that its Georgia-stationed bases should be able to act against Chechnya.

It is noteworthy that this document has international guarantees, particularly the CFE treaty - a really decisive factor for Georgia. There is a question, however, of whether this factor is enough to restrict Russia. One should not forget historical experience of Georgia: on May 7, 1920, Russia recognised independence of Georgia, while an year later - in 1921 - an internal turmoil was instigated in the country and soon afterwards Georgia was invaded by the Red Army.

CIS And Georgia

*By Koba Liklikadze
MoD press centre*

The 1999 political life of Georgia was marked with several important events. Among them, Georgia's decision to withdraw, together with Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, from the CIS collective security treaty is a most noteworthy one.

The treaty was signed by nine CIS countries on April 20, 1994, for the term of five years. Article 12 of the document deserves special attention. It states that in case of a threat to international peace and security or to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of any CIS member-state, the mechanism of consultations and peacekeeping operations, including deployment of military forces in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter, may be enforced.

Georgia preferred not to prolong its participation in the treaty mainly for two reasons. First of all, as Shevardnadze put it, the treaty actually did nothing to resolve inter-ethnic conflicts in the CIS. In his opinion, Georgia should join the document only if it is revised as "this treaty with its present form and essence will not benefit Georgia, as it does not work and will not work".

By the way, commenting on Shevardnadze's statement, Berezovsky acknowledged: "It is first of all the problem of the CIS that Georgia has such an opinion". Indeed, the only conclusion drawn from the five-year history of the collective security treaty is that the CIS failed to stop disintegration processes, and solve ethnic problems in the post-Soviet space due to Russia's dual-standard policy. Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan refused to prolong their participation in the treaty just for this reason.

Besides, Moscow has been obviously eager to transform the CIS into a new bloc focused mainly on military-political rather than economic issues. Such prospects make the CIS less and less attractive for Georgia. However, the Georgian MoD keeps contacts with the following CIS organisations at present:

- CIS Defence Ministers Board;
- Co-ordination Council for Air Defence Issues (under the Defence Ministers Board);
- Committee of Chiefs of Staffs of Armed Forces;
- CIS Air Defence Commanders Committee;
- Co-ordination Staff of CIS Military Co-operation.

It must be mentioned that except the Defence Ministers Board, which acts mainly as a consultative body (some experts say it has also revealed the above specified "supra-national" tendency), due to the lack of finance Georgia has taken part in activities or military exercises (such as the August 1999 exercise "Boevoe Sodruzhestvo" - Combat Partnership) of none of them for the last 18 months. As to the Board, its December 21 sitting began with hymning restoration of the Soviet Union and abolishment of national passports. Small wonder, the Georgian delegation signed no documents there.

The Issue Of A Chechen Information Centre In Georgia

*By Paata Gurgenedze
CCMRSS
October 1999*

It seems that Chechen officials have made no complete official appeals to create any information centre independent of the current representation office of Chechnya in Georgia. It is also obvious that Chechnya has difficulty controlling its representation offices. These difficulty can be explained by a hard war situation in Chechnya and the information blockade. Another reason for the vagueness is a reluctance of Georgian officials to make any decisive steps concerning the Georgian-Chechen relations. These conclusions may be vindicated by the following information.

According to Gocha Guniava of the parliamentary group for relations with Caucasian nations (Parliament of Georgia), the idea of creating an information centre of Chechnya was suggested by various people: 1. by Ruslan Aldamov, the founder of the Georgian office of the International Human Rights Committee of Chechnya (the office has been registered by the Ministry of Justice); 2. by a Chechen delegation to Georgia which was authorised by Ali Khadjiyev, the chairman of the parliament of Chechnya, and visited Georgia some 10 days ago; 3. by Vakha Arsanov, vice-president of Chechnya, who also recently visited Georgia and who is regarded as one of the key figures in the process of the release of Georgian hostages in Chechnya.

No Georgian official has expressed an official position on the idea of the information centre so far. It must be mentioned that even Hizri Aldamov's representation office has no official status in Georgia, Guniava points out. According to Guniava, Vakha Arsanov's meeting with Shevardnadze has not resulted in any practical steps.

According to Hizri Aldamov, the authorised representative of the Republic of Chechnya-Ichkeria in Georgia, his representation office has not been accredited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "We did not appeal to it, since we do not want the Georgian party to appear in an awkward situation. We try to respect the international law. Nevertheless, the Chechen representation in Georgia is recognised just as the similar representation was in Russia not long ago", Hizri Aldamov says.

In Hizri Aldamov's words, talks about the creation of any centre other than his representation office are clearly provocative. As to the above mentioned Georgian office of the International Human Rights Committee of Chechnya, he says that it was founded by his nephew, Ruslan Aldamov, who used his uncle's reputation without permission, when registering his organisation in the Ministry of Justice. Interestingly, according to Israil Ibragimov (expert in the international law) of the International Human Rights Committee (registered in the Hague and Chechnya), although Ruslan Aldamov was authorised to register a branch office of their organisation in Georgia, he may be dismissed for bad work.

Among other things, Hizri Aldamov's office itself carries out functions of a Chechen information centre. Although the office lacks equipment and qualified personnel, it tries to improve its activities - the office has already acquired some computers. "As to Vakha Arsanov's talks with Shevardnadze, we did not consider the information centre as the main theme at that time. It was only a wish. I still have no idea what this centre must be like", Hizri Aldamov says. "If Chechen parliamentary spoke about an information centre, they must have meant me. Anyhow, all organisations that will distribute information on behalf of Chechnya will be under my control", he says. He claims that in reality he has to make all the work on his own.

Hizri Aldamov arranges all meetings of Chechen officials in Georgia. He was appointed Chechnya's authorised representative in Georgia at the beginning of 1997, after the president Maskhadov appealed to Shevardnadze. Shevardnadze granted the Georgian citizenship to H.Aldamov. "My activities in Georgia are based on the president Shevardnadze's personal will", he says.

In Hizri Aldamov's opinion, an increased debate on the status of the Chechen representation office in Georgia is conditioned by a recent arrest of Mairbek Kachagayev, Chechnya's general authorised representative in Russia. Earlier, Chechnya had its authorised representatives in almost every Russian city. The general representation office in Moscow used to co-ordinate their activities. Kachagayev worked rather efficiently. This irritated Russia and he was arrested.

According to Hasan Atayev, a member of the Chechen parliament, Hizri Aldamov is in fact Chechnya's ambassador to Georgia, and his office should accumulate all the information. "The idea of the Chechen information centre does not provide for any additional work. Hizri Aldamov will get all the information anyway.

Things will not go beyond his control. However, distribution of information is inefficient at present. Russia has imposed an information blockade on Chechnya. These days information can be distributed only hand to hand", Atayev says.

Military Chronicle

Press reports

Conflict zones

An armoured personnel carrier and a cargo vehicle of the RPF were ambushed by guerrillas in the Nabakevi village of the Gali district of Abkhazia on November 24. According to preliminary information, three servicemen were killed and eight wounded. The same day unidentified gunmen fired at a car of the UNHCR mission in Georgia, wounding one of the passengers.

"Resonance" No. 324, November 25, p. 2

"Akhali Taoba" No. 326, 327; November 26, 27; pp. 2, 3, 4

The Abkhaz authorities are reportedly accommodating refugees from Chechnya in the Gali district of Abkhazia. According to informal sources, about 20 families of the refugees have already settled there in houses that earlier belonged to Georgian residents. However, the MSS claims their number to be somewhat exaggerated. Some experts suspect that this process is covertly instigated by Russia, which aims to create a zone of potential instability in Georgia. Arguably, in such a way the Kremlin hopes to gain leverage in the region.

"Resonance" No. 321, November 22, p. 2

Conflict in Chechnya and Georgia

Mamukia Areshidze, the chairman of the parliamentary group for relations with Caucasian nations, fears that Chechen and Georgian armed units may clash at the Chechen sector of the Russian-Georgian border. Surrounded by Russian federal troops, the Chechen army, in his opinion, will have nothing for it but to retreat through mountainous passes to Georgia.

"7 Dge" No. 129, November 3-4, p. 1

According to Levan Kentchadze, the head of the MSS anti-terrorism department, so far the Russian security services have provided no documentary evidence for alleged transportation of weapons and mercenaries to Chechnya through the Georgian territory. Although the MSS has many times expressed its willingness to co-operate with Russian respective structures in this issue, Moscow has not responded yet. In his words, although the Chechen refugees in Georgia include quite a large number of young men, there are no grounds to consider them as terrorists.

"7 Dge" No. 129, November 3-4, p. 6

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 306, November 11, p. 1

Revaz Adamia, the chairman of the parliamentary defence and security committee, refuted Russian media reports, which claimed, referring to high-ranking officials of the Russian MoD, that Chechen leaders were going to create a "Chechen government-in-exile" led by Aslan Maskhadov in Georgia and deploy several Chechen armed units on the Georgian territory. The MFA also made an official protest statement, claiming this information to be entirely groundless.

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 306, November 11, p. 1

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 282, November 11, pp. 1, 3

The press centre of the State Intelligence Department denied Russian media reports, which claimed that families of Aslan Maskhadov and Vakha Arsanov, the president and vice-president of Chechnya respectively, were granted asylum in Georgia.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 295-296, November 25, p. 1

The Russian media reported that a Chechen satellite communication station was under construction in Georgia (at the Russian-Georgian border). The MoD claimed the news to be absurd. According to Nugzar Kaishauri, the head of the MoD communications department, Georgia will not allow Chechnya to construct such a station on the Georgian territory.

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 320, November 26, p. 1

According to Valeri Chkheidze, the SDFD chairman, 3,192 Chechen refugees - mostly women, children and elderly - found asylum in Georgia from September 15 to November 10; 943 of them moved to other countries, while the others - 1,353 citizens of Russia and 896 Georgian citizens - Kisti (a Veinakh ethnic group) residents of the Pankisi Gorge - stayed in Georgia. Chkheidze refuted Russian media reports about a visit of Movladi Udugov and Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, former foreign minister and president of Chechnya respectively, to Georgia.

"Kavkasioni" No. 44, November 24-30, p. 7

Reportedly, about 40 well-armed commandos of the Russian special task unit "Alfa" were deployed in the Vaziani military base at the end of October. Some time later, after intense training, they left the base without trace. In Revaz Adamia's opinion, they may carry out subversive missions in southern parts of Chechnya or maybe even in Georgia. He said Russia also enlarged fuel storage in the Vaziani military base and additionally deployed five combat helicopters there, while the personnel of the base began intense daily training. It seemed, he suggested, that the Russian military were going to use the Vaziani base in the military operation against Chechnya. In response, the press-centre of the HQ of the Russian Troops in Transcaucasus (GRVZ) emphasised that Georgian customs and frontier officers were quite able to control Russian planes landing in Vaziani and, therefore, they would have revealed the Russian commandos, had these last been really deployed there.

"Resonance" No. 312, 318; November 13, 19; pp. 1, 2

"Kviris Palitra" No. 46, November 15-21, p. 9

Igor Sergeev, the Russian defence minister, reportedly appealed to the Georgian government for permission to use the Vaziani military airfield and other Russian bases in the military operation against Chechnya but his proposal was turned down as unacceptable for Georgia. It was the only right decision, Eduard Shevardnadze commented. Georgia, in his words, must do its best to avoid being involved in "domestic affairs of the neighbouring country" as even "a small unwary step may turn the Chechen conflict into a Caucasian war". The president assured that the Georgian frontier control was reliable enough to check weapon-smuggling into Chechnya and prevent Chechen militants from penetrating into Georgia. As to another Russian proposal - to establish a visa regime between the two countries - although it contradicts CIS agreements, Georgia, in Shevardnadze's words, is ready to negotiate a possibility to impose such a regime on the whole length of the Russian-Georgian border, not only on its Chechen sector.

"Kavkasioni" No. 43, November 10-16, p. 5

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 304, November 9, p. 2

One Mi-8 and two Mi-24 Russian combat helicopters entered the Georgian air space on November 17 and bombed the vicinities of the Shatili, Mutso and Giorgitzminda villages, using machine guns and unguided air-to-surface missiles. No casualties were reported. According to one of the versions, the helicopters bombed the Georgian territory by mistake, having taken it for Chechnya. The other version suggests that Russia "punished" Georgia for its pro-western foreign policy. Besides, there is some evidence that the incident may be somehow connected with alleged secret missions of the "Alfa" commandos (see previous information) in the area. For instance, according to Irakli Kopadze, the head of the intelligence division of the SDFD, Georgian frontier guards detected a group of unidentified gunmen near Shatili on November 16 and fired at them. Right afterwards, in his words, the SDFD intercepted a radio message in Russian: "They detected us! Get us away!". In Kopadze's opinion, the above three helicopters merely diverted attention, while others were evacuating the group. The MSS instituted legal proceedings on the fact. A joint group of the Russian military

experts and Georgian specialists visited Shatili on November 20 for on-the-spot investigation.

"Resonance" No. 317, 319, 320; November 18, 20, 21; pp. 1, 2

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 313, 314; November 18, 19; pp. 1, 2

"Zakavkazskie Voennye Vedomosti" No. 141, December 18, p. 7

For the last two months, Russian forces have been mining the southern part of Chechnya along the Chechen sector of the Russian-Georgian border. The Russian military apply the so-called "distant mining", i.e. PFM-1C and PFM-1 anti-personnel mines are dropped by Su-25 fighters and Mi-8 helicopters.

"Kviris Palitra" No. 47, November 22-28, p. 9

The Chechnya-based Internet information centre "Kavkaz" led by Movladi Udugov, the former foreign minister of Chechnya, released news about a coming military coup in Georgia. According to the "Kavkaz", the Kremlin is anxious to bring pro-Russian forces into power in Georgia. To this end, it will attempt to assassinate Shevardnadze, provoke mass disorder in Tbilisi, while the Georgian army and security forces will be bombed by "unidentified" aircraft. The MSS claimed this information to be entirely groundless.

"Meridiani 44" No. 135, November 22-24, p. 1

At the end of November Russian frontier guards confiscated Motorola cellular phones at the Zemo Lars border check-point (North Ossetia). Russian officials claim that such phones are illegally transited to Chechnya through Georgia and then used by Chechen forces.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 275, November 30, p. 5

The 4th international regional forum on export control and non-proliferation took place in Tbilisi on November 15-17. In his speech Valeri Chkheidze emphasised that Russia actually waged a full-scale information war against Georgia, accusing the country of supporting illegal transits of arms and mercenaries to Chechnya. This campaign, in his opinion, aims to make Georgia involved in the Chechen war.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 286, November 16, p. 2

The Russian customs detained 15 tons of camouflage uniforms and boots, granted by the USA to the Georgian National Guards, in Moscow on November 11. The cargo was transited via Germany and Moscow to Georgia. Russia claimed that the uniforms and boots could be delivered to Chechnya.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 261, November 13, p. 3

"Akhali Taoba" No. 313, November 13, p. 4

Army building

Maia Tchiabrishvili, deputy defence minister for finance, denied the Georgian media reports which accused the MoD of spending its salary funds improperly. In her words, the MoD received the last instalment of the Ministry of Finance - 600,000 GEL (about \$310,000) - on October 26 and this money was used to pay the May 1999 salary. However, the sum was not enough to meet the need of the whole army and, therefore, the preference was given to the Joint Military Academy, Peacekeeping Battalion (now in Kosovo), units deployed in the Kodori Gorge, and Georgian cadets learning in Russia and Ukraine.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 282, November 11, p. 3

According to Badri Bitzadze, the main military procurator of Georgia, the MoD fails to spend its budget properly. Although the Ministry of Finance is able to provide the MoD with only some 75% of the approved defence budget, this sum, in his opinion, is quite enough to meet at least elementary requirements. However, Bitzadze argues, the current situation is much worse than even in times of Vardiko Nadibaidze, former defence minister. That is why, 3-4 thousand servicemen have deserted the army. In reality, in Bitzadze's opinion, only a few of them are real deserters, while all the others merely cannot stand the lack of foods, uniforms, poor sanitary conditions, etc. In addition, some of them are ill and need medical treatment, while some are subject to deferment by law.

Bitzadze feels sure that the defence minister must be well informed about these facts but, nevertheless, the MoD makes no practical decisions to improve the situation. Just recently the State Audit Chamber revealed serious financial violations in connection with activities of the non-governmental organisation "Support", which had been contracted by the MoD for the supply of foods to the army. The organisation allegedly embezzled about 5 mln GEL (about \$2.6 mln) of the budgetary funds. On the whole, the Military Procurator's Office is currently investigating operations of about 50 similar private suppliers to the army. It is noteworthy that Bitzadze's spouse, Nino Burdjanadze, is quite an influential member of the parliament. This suggests that Bitzadze may enjoy support of Zurab Zhvania, the chairman of the parliament, and his team. Commenting on Bitzadze's accusations, David Tevzadze, the defence minister, emphasised that although the military procurator attended all sittings of the MoD Board on financial problems of the army, he preferred to criticise the MoD through mass media rather than to express his opinion at these sittings.

"Alia" No. 187, November 29, p. 3

"Resonance" No. 329, November 30, pp. 1, 2

"Kavkasioni" No. 45, December 1-7, pp. 7, 8

"Alia" No. 189, December 2-3, p. 2

According to Colonel Tariel Vardanashvili, the head of the SDFD inspectorate, the present Georgian frontier defence system largely relies on foreign aid which amounts to dozens of millions of dollars every year. The USA, Ukraine, Turkey and Germany grant equipment to the SDFD and help train professional cadre. The SDFD currently employs about 6,000 servicemen but this number is obviously not enough for efficient frontier control. In Soviet times, he recalls, only the Turkish-Georgian border was patrolled by some 12,000 frontier guards. Among main problems, Vardanashvili points to the actual absence of frontier control in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which have transformed into active smuggling routes. The situation is also difficult at the Georgian-Armenian and Georgian-Azerbaijani borders since there are a lot of uncontrolled cross-border routes allowing to bypass border check-points. As to the marine border, it is under the SDFD control save the Abkhaz coastal waters. However, unlike former times, Turkish vessels bound for Abkhazia have now to pass customs and frontier control in Poti and only then they are permitted to visit the Sukhumi sea port. In Vardanashvili's words, these vessels are freighted entirely with humanitarian aid. On the other hand, the SDFD fails to control vessels that enter Abkhazia from Russia. The lack of professionals remains another serious problem of the SDFD. At present, about 400 cadets are learning the speciality of frontier defence in the JMA and the academy of the MSS. After graduation they will be awarded the rank of lieutenant but it will take a lot of time until they get enough experience. That is why the SDFD has to employ former officers of law-enforcement agencies at present.

"Droni" No. 138, November 16, p. 7

According to Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili, the Chief of the General Staff of the Georgian Armed Forces, the command of the Kutaisi-deployed 21st MRB of the MoD decided to symbolically enlist Teimuraz Shashiashvili, the state commissioner of the Imereti region, in the brigade as a private. For his part, Shashiashvili pledged assistance to the brigade.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 264, November 17, p. 22

Visits, negotiations, co-operation

Ten-day Russian-Georgian consultations (October 27- November 5) on the problem of the Georgia-stationed Russian military bases ended in deadlock. The Georgian delegation made an official statement on November 6, blaming Moscow for unwillingness to take into account Georgia's interests. Particularly, Moscow was eager to gain 25-year stay of its military bases in the country, while Tbilisi insisted that the bases should be gradually withdrawn (the failure of the consultations reportedly made David Tevzadze cancel his visit to Moscow). Former Soviet military property was another theme of the consultations. Moscow rejected Tbilisi's demand for its share of the property, referring to one of the

resolutions of the former Supreme Council of Russia, which banned ceding of military property to Georgia until the conflict in Abkhazia was solved.

"Resonance" No. 307, November 9, p. 4

"Kavkasioni" No. 43, November 10-16, p. 5

"Alia" No. 178, November 11-12, p. 6

During the OSCE summit in Istanbul, the Russian and Georgian delegations made a joint statement on the Russian military bases in Georgia. Particularly, Russia must reduce its equipment in Georgia to the level of 153 tanks, 241 armoured personnel carriers, and 140 artillery systems by the end of 2000, and disband and withdraw two its bases - Vaziani and Gudauta - by July 1, 2001. The other two bases - Batumi and Akhalkalaki - are granted temporary deployment. As to the further utilisation of the infrastructure of the disbanded bases (including joint utilisation as stated by the document), it is subject to negotiations between the two countries. Interestingly, Russia has 141 tanks in Georgia at present. This means that it may not reduce but even deploy additional 12 tanks in the country. Tamaz Nadareishvili, the chairman of the Tbilisi-based Supreme Council of Abkhazia, said Georgia could not control the territory of Abkhazia and, therefore, just Russia and the OSCE should take responsibility for complete withdrawal of the Russian armaments from Abkhazia.

"Resonance" No. 319, 324; November 20, 25; pp. 1, 2, 4

"Akhali Taoba" No. 320, November 20, p. 4

"Kviris Palitra" No. 47, November 22-28, p. 9

According to Revaz Adamia, at the Istanbul summit of the OSCE Georgia took into account all the problems Russia may encounter, when withdrawing its bases from the country. That is why, in his words, Tbilisi agreed to carry out the process gradually: two bases - Vaziani and Gudauta - will be pulled out first, while the other two - Batumi and Akhalkalaki - some time later. However, in his opinion, this does not mean that Georgia yielded its positions. In fact, Moscow's demand for 25-year stay of the Batumi and Akhalkalaki bases was rejected and their deployment in Georgia would not exceed three years, he said.

"Alia" No. 185, November 25-26, p. 3

According to one of the high-ranking officials of the MSS, Russia is going to cede some equipment of the Gudauta-stationed Russian military base to the Abkhaz army. Besides, the Georgian embassy in Moscow reported that Moscow and Sukhumi agreed to restore the Babushera airport (Sukhumi) destroyed during the 1992-93 war in Abkhazia. However, Russian officials denied this information.

"Resonance" No. 324, November 25, p. 4

Valeri Chkheidze and Konstantin Totsky, the director of the Russian federal frontier service, discussed the situation at the Chechen sector of the Russian-Georgian border at their November 1-2 talks in Moscow. Commenting on the results of the talks at his November 10 press-conference, Chkheidze said Georgia turned away Russia's proposal to establish a joint frontier control in the area. The parties only compromised that a 10- or 15-strong group of the Russian frontier officers would be allowed to visit this sector of the border for one-week on-the-spot inspection. At the same time, the countries agreed to exchange information and establish the office of frontier attaches. Besides, in Chkheidze's words, due to the war in Chechnya, Georgia promised to suspend entry and transit visas for the citizens of 21 countries which are "allegedly involved in the weapon-smuggling to Chechnya and provide mercenaries to the region", including Afghanistan, Algeria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Yemen, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Sudan, Palestine, Ethiopia and some others.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 270, 282; November 2, 11; pp. 1, 4, 7

Georgian-Russian talks on border problems in Vladikavkaz (North Ossetia) ended with no positive results. Moscow again proposed joint frontier control at the Chechen sector of the Russian-Georgian border but Tbilisi disagreed, claiming that the Georgian Frontier Troops fully control the border there. According to informal sources, at first Tbilisi was willing to accept the Russian proposal,

provided similar joint frontier control was imposed at the Abkhaz sector of the border, but Moscow objected to this suggestion.

"Resonance" No. 328, November 29, pp. 1, 3

Six Turkmen Su-25 fighters have been successfully refurbished by the TAW. They constitute a part of the Turkmenistan-Georgia contract which was signed at the beginning of the year and provides for repair of more than 40 Su-25 fighters. Besides, not long ago one of the African countries purchased 4 TAW-built Su-25. Both deals greatly improved the financial situation of the TAW (Su-25 fighter costs \$5-7 mln, while repair of one some \$1 mln) so that the administration was able to pay off the TAW's debts and arrears of salary.

"7 Dge" No. 129, November 3-4, pp. 4, 7

An American-Georgian conference on the initial planning of the PFP multi-national exercise "Combined Endeavour 2000" took place in Tbilisi on November 8-12 with participation of 220 delegates from 32 countries. The exercise will be carried out in Germany in 2000. It aims to improve compatibility of C4 (command, control, communications and computers) of NATO partner states with NATO standards. Addressing the audience, General Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili said the conference indicated the beginning of a principally new stage in the NATO-Georgia co-operation.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 309, November 9, p. 8

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 278-279, November 9, p. 6

General Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili took part in the November 10 sitting of the chiefs of staffs of NATO member and partner states in Brussels. His speech was focused on prospects of the NATO-Georgia co-operation.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 260, November 12, p. 2

When getting back to Georgia from the October 26-30 international arms exhibition "EXPOMIL 99" (Romania), the Georgian exhibits were arrested by the Russian customs service of the Sheremetevo airport (Moscow). Russian officials explained that the Russian customs legislation banned transits of weapons and ammunition via the country and, therefore, the Georgian exhibits must be confiscated. Officials of the Georgian MoD say they have no idea why the exposition was transited via Russia. To transport the Georgian exposition from Romania, the MoD had signed a contract with a Romanian transport company, which, for its part, sub-contracted the British Airways. The incident was discussed at the November 24 sitting of the Georgian government which resolved to dismiss General Guram Nikolaishvili, Georgia's military attaché in Russia, from office for "neglect of duty". MoD officials fear that Russian experts may get access to all the "know-how" of the Georgian exhibits.

"Kviris Palitra" No. 44, 48; November 1-7, November 29-December 5; p. 9

"Kavkasioni" No. 44, November 24-30, p. 6

"Droni" No. 143, 144; November 25, 27; pp. 1, 2, 5

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 295-296, November 25, p. 1

The chief of the logistical service of the Turkish armed forces visited Georgia on November 16-17 for talks with the Georgian military leadership. The two countries signed a co-operation protocol. In accordance with the document, Turkey will grant \$2.1 mln to the MoD and the SDFD (the latter will get \$700,000 of the sum). The money will be spent on eight programs, including modernisation of the Marneuli military airfield and Kodjori training centre, acquisition of modern communication devices, and repair of several military facilities.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 286, November 16, p. 2

General Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili and Givi Yunoridze, the head of the president's main military inspectorate visited the USA, Great Britain and Belgium on November 22-December 17 for consultations on security problems.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 269, November 23, p. 5

Six Georgian officers took part in the November 26-December 6 PFP exercise "Co-operative Determination" in Bucharest.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 272, November 26, p. 5

Karlo Skoniamillio-Pazini, the Italian defence minister, visited Georgia on November 28 for talks on the prospects of the Georgian-Italian military co-operation. The two countries signed a 2000 military co-operation program which provides for Italy's assistance in training of Georgian alpine units and the military police. Besides, two Georgian servicemen will pass a three-month training for diving commandos (seals), while the other two a 5-month scuba-diving training course in Italy in the framework of the program. Two joint Georgian-Italian exercises - naval and alpine - will be held in Georgia in 2000. "Droni" No. 145, November 29, p. 2

Press Digest

The Russian-Georgian joint statement on the withdrawal of the Russian military bases from Vaziani and Gudauta by July 2001 (signed at the OSCE last summit in Istanbul) does not seem easy to implement, the Droni (No. 142) argues, commenting on the results of the summit. First of all, in the newspaper's opinion, the coming parliamentary and presidential elections in Russia may lead to changes in both the executive and legislative powers and it is hard to say whether new rulers of the Kremlin will adhere to the provisions of the document. Besides, Russia may deliberately drag out the process, pleading financial problems, i.e. the lack of money on the withdrawal. At the same time, the two remaining bases - in Akhalkalaki and Batumi - are gaining substantial weight as both are situated in rather sensitive ethnic enclaves of Georgia and the Russian military intelligence (GRU) will hardly miss a chance of triggering tensions there, the Droni deems. For its part the 7 Dge (No. 140) points to the fact that the joint statement actually demands Russia to withdraw only its military equipment but not personnel from the Vaziani and Gudauta bases. According to the statement, the newspaper underlines, Russia is obliged to disband and withdraw the Gudauta and Vaziani bases by July 1, 2001. However, the document says nothing about the Gudauta and Vaziani military airfields. It only stipulates that Russia and Georgia should negotiate future utilisation, "including joint utilisation", of "the military facilities and infrastructure of the disbanded Russian military bases remaining at those locations [Vaziani and Gudauta]...". This infrastructure includes just the Vaziani and Gudauta military airfields - two strategically important military objects in the region. Their joint utilisation means that Russian personnel will remain in Georgia for quite a long time. At least Russia will make every effort to prolong the term of "joint utilisation" as long as possible, the 7 Dge suggests.

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Let alone the problem of poor air defence, the November 17 incident (bombing of the Shatili, Mutso and Giorgitzminda villages by Russian helicopters) revealed a low level of officer training in Georgia, the Droni (No. 140) claims. Although Georgia has enlarged its forces in the area to 100 frontier guards, none of the commanders dared to order fire at the Russian helicopters, which were bombing the Georgian territory for almost 20 minutes. Although the Frontier Troops are equipped with no anti-aircraft weapons, the newspaper argues, machine and submachine guns may be used against helicopters quite effectively. Understandably, the Akhali Taoba (No. 323) comments, the Georgian Air Defence Troops are unable to check MiG-29 or Su-25 fighters, but helicopters are different and there are enough equipment to shot them down, when it comes to defend the Georgian territory. However, according to the 7 Dge, the Shatili-based unit of the Frontier Troops has never been trained to check air targets. Besides, a plan of joint frontier defence operations of the Frontier Troops, MoD and Internal Troops, which was worked out long ago, actually remains on paper. Lessons of the incident, the Droni (142) summarises, are extremely harsh to Georgia: local military units appeared to have been unable either to communicate with central staffs or co-operate with each other, while their commanders failed to take responsibility and make independent decisions. It must be also mentioned that the SDFD budget provides no funds to deploy more frontier guards in Shatili. The SDFD proposed that the money may be requested from Moscow as just

Russia is extremely concerned with reliability of the frontier control at the Chechen sector of the Russian-Georgian border. So far, however, Russia has not responded to the SDFD's proposal, the Droni reports. For the Kviris Palitra (No. 47), the November 17 incident revealed not only the lack of equipment and resources but the lack of political will as well. It is hard to perceive, the newspaper remarks, why the army command abstains from deploying small mobile units equipped with anti-aircraft weapons, such as the DShK machine gun or the ZU-23-2 gun to say nothing of the hand-held "Strela" missile launcher, in mountainous frontier regions. These weapons proved rather efficient during the war in Afghanistan and inflicted substantial losses on the Soviet airpower. At the same time, in the newspaper's opinion, the MoD should install radar equipment in frontier areas, which will allow to register every violation of the Georgian air space and provide respective documentary evidence for investigation. It must be mentioned also that Georgian governmental agencies seem little aware of military issues. For instance, in its protest note the Georgian MFA accused the Russian Air Force of having carried out the November 17 air strike, though, according to the Kviris Palitra, quite another structure - an aviation wing of the Russian ground troops - was to blame for the incident.

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According to the 7 Dge (No. 133), the Russian general staff is planning an invasion of Georgia. Indeed, the newspaper speculates, the existence of independent Georgia at the southern border of Russia will always act as a stimulus to encourage North Caucasian nations, which no longer feel themselves "surrounded" by Russia, to fight for independence. Other Russian ethnic enclaves, such as Tatarstan or Bashkiriya that are situated in the heartland of Russia, have less chances of becoming independent. The situation is quite different in the North Caucasus as this region is now able to communicate with the outer world through Georgia. That is why, the newspaper argues, Moscow will never put up with Georgia's independence, no matter how loyal the Georgian government is to Russia. Besides (7 Dge, No. 139), increasing western, first of all American, interest in the Caucasus and particularly in Georgia makes the Kremlin extremely uneasy. Russian strategists well perceive that the loss of control over the Caucasus may be disastrous for Russia. From this viewpoint, it is important that the role of Georgia in the region is gradually increasing. It was demonstrated at the OSCE summit in Istanbul which approved the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil transit and Turkmenistan-Georgia-Turkey gas transit projects. Actually, the newspaper argues, Russia has only two alternatives to neutralise the "Georgian factor": either to constantly provoke destabilisation in Georgia in order to turn the country into the land of turmoil and chaos or launch a direct aggression. The last option involves several scenarios. According to the first of them, the Russian air force bombs settlements of the Chechen refugees in Georgia under the pretext of fighting against terrorism. Another scenario provides for a landing operation of the Russian troops in the Georgian frontier areas along the Chechen or Dagestani sectors of the Russian-Georgian border (it is noteworthy that Russia has abstained from demarcating and delimiting the Russian-Georgian border so far). If the Georgian army renders resistance, the third, and the "hardest", plan will come into force: Russia accuses Georgia of "supporting terrorism" and carries out air strikes against Georgian transport, communication, industrial and military objects. Although these plans may result in a sharp confrontation with the West, they seem quite real as the Russian political elite is well aware that independence of the North Caucasus heralds the end of the Russian empire, the 7 Dge concludes.

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Georgian press reports about deployment of the "Alfa" commandos in the Vaziani-stationed Russian military base seem rather doubtful, the Droni (No. 137) remarks. First of all, it must be noted that the "Alfa" commando unit belongs to the Russian federal security service, while the Vaziani base to the MoD. Given "not quite warm" relations between the two, one may assume that it was a special task unit of the Russian military intelligence (GRU), not "Alfa", that showed up in Vaziani. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the base was allegedly

involved in assassination attempts against Shevardnadze. After the last of them - in February 1998 - Tbilisi insisted that Georgian frontier and customs check-points should operate in the Vaziani military airfield. The two countries even reached a respective agreement which, however, remains on paper for some reasons, the Droni emphasises.

ABBREVIATIONS

MFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MIA - Ministry of Internal Affairs
MoD - Ministry of Defence
MRB - Motorifle brigade
MSS - Ministry of State Security
PfP - Partnership for Peace
RPF - Russian Peacekeeping Force in Abkhazia
SDFD - State Department of Frontier Defence
TAW - Tbilisi Aircraft Works
UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees