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Paata Zakareishvili: Russia is compelled to demarcate its territory so that Georgian policy does not penetrate South Ossetia

The restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity is vital for the country's future development. Every time a new government comes to power it engenders a wave of optimism that Georgia will regain control of all the territory within its internationally recognised borders, yet we have endured two decades of continually lost hope.



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Georgia Arrests Terrorist Suspects

By LISA TONAKANYAN, GT

Georgian police have detained two suspects accused of plotting a terrorist attack. Mikhail Kadiev and Rizvan Omarov, citizens of the Russian Federation, were arrested in Tbilisi on June 13. A large quantity of explosive materials, detonators, firearms and fake identity papers was seized from their apartment.

"We want to assure you that the Interior Ministry will do everything it can to protect Georgian citizens from the danger of terrorism," Nino Giorgobiani, Ministry of Internal Affairs Spokesperson, said.

Kadiev, who is wanted by Interpol, had been hiding in Georgia since 2011, though periodically leaving and re-entering the country. He was often seen training at the Palavani Georgian wrestling club.

The MIA says that Kadiev has been living in the home of the Georgian President's private pi-

lot, Director of the Tusheti air company Zaur Kortoshidze. The pilot denies this allegation, saying that one of his friends from Dagestan had asked him to accommodate his acquaintance's son, a wrestler, and help him with money. Kortoshidze says he has met Kadiev only three times since their first meeting in 2011 but admits that for three weeks Kadiev had lived in his son's apartment while his son was abroad. "Then my driver found a flat for Kadiev and he moved... he was detained in that rented flat and all the explosive materials were found there, not in my house," he says.

This attempt to link terrorist plotting with President Saakashvili is regarded as "pure provocation" by Head of the President's Administration Andro Barnov. "Can anyone explain what the phrase 'President's private pilot' means? Tusheti is an independent company, hired by the State Guard Special Service. The President may not know this person at all".

Barnov adds that the State Guard Special Service reports to the Prime Minister, Bidzina Ivanishvili.

Barnov believes that a campaign of rumours began after the uploading of a video purporting to come from the Taliban on June 6. It was suggested then that this video had been made in Georgia by members of Saakashvili's team. "This happened at the same time Mr. Putin gave Georgia the chance to cooperate closely with the Russian special services. I suspect that this "close cooperation" is already underway", Andro Barnov says. Increased security measures were taken after the release of the video on YouTube, as it contained threats to the country's population and to its soldiers in Afghanistan. The same day seven Georgian servicemen were killed in Helmand province.

It is assumed that the arrest of the two men was linked to the video threats but some analysts doubt this. Gia Khukhashvili, the Prime Minister's Adviser, suggests that there are too many coincidences to dismiss the

connection but he can't be firm in the belief that these developments are linked. "I am sure that the video broadcast on the Taliban's behalf is related to Saakashvili's statements in Afghanistan on May 26 but I cannot say that this footage was made on his demand," he says. Archil Kbilashvili, the Chief Prosecutor, has also declared that a link between the video and two Russian citizens preparing an act of terrorism has not been established yet.

Another analyst, Head of the Caucasus Centre for Strategic Research Mamuka Areshidze, surmises that Kadiev and Omarov could be connected to the special operation in Lapankuri in 2012. He says that Kadiev is a member of the group led by Ruslan Papaskiri which brought a number of Chechens into Georgia and sent them to Lapankuri. "It is not surprising that a weapon was found in Kadiev's apartment, as in 2010-2011 the Georgian Special Service distributed those same weapons to the Chechen groups arriving in Georgia," Areshidze maintains. How-



ever Georgia's former Minister of the Interior Giorgi Lortkipanidze states that Kadiev and Omarov didn't participate in the Lapankuri operation and that the previous government never gave arms to anyone.

The possible accomplices of the detainees, both within the country and elsewhere, are now being sought within the framework of international anti-ter-

rorist cooperation. It is known that in 2012 one of Kadiev's accomplices was detained in Europe.

A few days after the Taliban video was broadcast on YouTube panic-stricken Georgians rang police to inform them about a suspicious bag on Shevchenko Street in Tbilisi. However this turned out to be full of books and clothes.

Saakashvili requests a second National Security Council meeting

By LIKA MOSHIASHVILI, GT

A second National Security Council meeting was held, on the initiative of President Saakashvili, on June 11. The attack on the Georgian military units serving the ISAF international mission in Afghanistan, the videos threatening Georgia's troops and population and general security matters were discussed.

"It is a positive development that Security Council sessions have resumed. The Council is made up of representatives of different political parties, the government and the President's administration. We can differ in our evaluations of the past, perceptions of the present and visions of the future, but we may not differ on the key issues of the independence, safety and security of our country," the President commented before the meeting.

Saakashvili said that many issues are more easily regulated behind closed doors. He said this practice was usual in all democratic countries.

"I hope we are building democracy in Georgia. Therefore, I welcome this meeting. It is important for us to exchange

views about the attack on our soldiers in Afghanistan" the President stated.

Seven Georgian servicemen were killed and nine wounded on June 6 as a result of an attack at the Georgian military base in Afghanistan's Helmand province. The attack had been preceded earlier that day by a video message on YouTube containing threats to Georgian soldiers, their families and the President of Georgia.

Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, who had not attended the previous Security Council session on June 5th, did not participate in the June 11th meeting either. He maintained that the issues the President intended to raise "were not of interest to him."

"I have seen the agenda, and the ISAF mission and "jihad threat" video will be discussed—I think that none of these issues are interesting enough right now for me to go to the session," Ivanishvili declared.

The PM criticized the Security Council, stressing that it had not met for 8 months until the new administration started raising serious questions. He emphasized that he would only take part in sessions when they were held to achieve real goals, not

for the sake of having a meeting.

Giga Bokeria, the National Security Council Secretary, was in turn critical of the Prime Minister's position. "I want to express particular grief over the fact that the Prime Minister has repeatedly refused to participate in Security Council meetings. The motive for the Prime Minister's absences is especially concerning. He missed the first session because of his busy schedule, and this time he said that the attack on Georgian soldiers and the investigation into the origin of the video released on behalf of the Taliban were not important. It is unclear to me what could be more important issues. Nevertheless, I hope the Prime Minister will attend the next meetings of the Security Council," he continued.

Defence Minister Irakli Alasania, Interior Minister Irakli Gharibashvili and Foreign Minister Maia Panjikidze attended the NSC session from the government side. Giga Bokeria told journalists after the meeting that the NSC session had been extremely useful and the participants had discussed all the issues on the agenda. However Gharibashvili had a different view. "In my opinion these are inefficient, very formal and very

artificial meetings. This is currently an absolutely inefficient and incapable security council." He added that the so-called Taliban videos had been uploaded from an IP address in Georgia. "I can confirm that those videos had nothing to do with the Taliban. According to the available information they were uploaded in Georgia, and the IP address has been identified and the location established. An investigation is underway, the FBI is involved in it and Israel is also providing assistance" he explained.

Members of the government, commenting on the session, shared Gharibashvili's viewpoint that council sessions are not productive. However opposition MPs believe that the Prime Minister should have participated and that the council's work would be more efficient if all members of Cabinet were present. Parliamentary minority leader Nugzar Tsiklauri said that the public was questioning whether the government was able to acknowledge the real threats facing the country and develop foreign and domestic policy which would serve the national interest. Kakha Kukava, leader of the non-parliamentary Independent Georgia Party, noted that it was the Prime Min-

ister's choice whether to attend the sitting or not but slammed Ivanishvili's statement that the issues on the agenda were not interesting to him. Pikria Chikhradze of the New Rights Party also said that she disapproved of the Prime Minister's indifferent attitude towards the

NSC.

The National Security Council of Georgia (NSC) advises the President of Georgia on National Security and Foreign and Domestic Policy. It is chaired by the President of Georgia. The President's National Security Adviser, who is the Secretary of the National Security Council, directs its activities. The members are as follows: the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Defence Minister, Minister of Internal Affairs, Finance Minister and the National Security Advisor to the President. Members of Parliament, also regularly participate in NSC working meetings.

A LETTER TO GT

FROM THE FATHER OF AMERICAN SOLDIER

Peter Kobs, the father of American soldier from Michigan State responses on the death of 7 Georgian soldiers in Afghanistan. We have received the letter of condolence by e-mail from Peter Kobs.

Geotimes.ge publishes the letter without change:

"To the Editor The Georgian Times, As the American father of a U.S. soldier, I was deeply saddened to hear this news about the deaths of Georgian soldiers in Afghanistan. We know the taste of tragedy in the United States and we share your grief. Our family and church will be praying for the departed soldiers and their families.

THANK YOU for standing with us in the war against terrorism. We are deeply grateful for your many sacrifices and proud to call Georgia our friends. - With sincerest sympathies, - Peter Kobs, Battle Creek, Michigan, USA".

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Paata Zakareishvili: Russia is compelled to demarcate its territory so that Georgian policy does not penetrate South Ossetia

By EMMA BAIRAMOVA, MAKHA DEKANOSIDZE, GT

The restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity is vital for the country's future development. Every time a new government comes to power it engenders a wave of optimism that Georgia will regain control of all the territory within its internationally recognised borders, yet we have endured two decades of continually lost hope.

Last month the situation in the conflict regions became even more strained as the line of occupation was moved again. Here The Georgian Times talks to State Minister on Reintegration Issues Paata Zakareishvili about the events of the last few weeks.

Mr. Zakareishvili, the already unpleasant situation in the conflict regions has deteriorated further. What steps will your ministry take to restore dialogue now that the occupier has moved the border?

Firstly I should note that the term "moved the border" is categorically unacceptable. I am always saying this, but still people use this term. There is no border there, and therefore it cannot be moved. There is an occupation, there are occupied territories and this Russian occupation is continuing. To be more accurate, the formalisation of this occupation is continuing. Ever since 2008 international organisations have supported us and opposed this occupation. They have strongly warned Russia that its behaviour is unacceptable and does not correspond with any of the international agreements signed by Russia itself. But Russia does not take any of this into account and continues to behave as an aggressor. Moving non-existent borders and demarcating the occupied territories is Russia's reaction to Georgia's new policy.

If you are asking what measures we will take, our answer is – we are going to continue conducting the policy which has made Russia demarcate the occupied territory. Russia is compelled to demarcate its territory so that Georgian policy does not penetrate South Ossetia. Its action demonstrates that the Ossetian population wants to draw near to the rest of Georgia: the demarcation, and the behaviour of the occupiers, are not directed against Georgians, the idea is to restrict the Ossetian people's access to Georgia. The Abkhaz cannot see the rest of Georgia, but Ossetians can see Georgian territory. Abkhazia is a long way from the rest of Georgia, but the villages, cities, meadows and fields of Georgia proper are just beyond the Ossetian demarcation line. By moving the demarcation line Russia wants to separate South Ossetia from the rest of Georgia. It is very important for me, as the minister responsible for this issue, to analyse this action and develop a counter

strategy. Russia's behaviour shows that it is afraid of a Georgian-Ossetian truce, and therefore our reaction must be to do our best to reconcile our two peoples.

You have said that signs of such a reconciliation have appeared because Ossetian people have begun visiting Georgia proper in greater numbers. But the occupiers still operate 'border' checkpoints near Gori. Is it easy for Ossetians to enter Georgia proper?

The number of people entering Tbilisi and Gori from South Ossetia has doubled. Many people have relatives in Georgia proper but all this time they have been afraid to come to Georgia because Saakashvili's police would meet them and ask them all kinds of questions about collaborating with them. If they refused to do so the Police would insult them. This was some sort of "recruitment" policy. There were also arrests. These manipulations were undertaken by the former Interior Ministry, which claimed to be trying to control the situation but in reality drove the Ossetian population away. This policy has changed. There are no more threats of blackmail. Ossetian people know that they can come and see their relatives, bring tomatoes to sell and so on, without fear of harassment. We have sent them a message: you are our citizens, we are not going to control you. There are still checkpoints in several places, but you can bypass them.

I used the term "moving the border" unconsciously, but politicians also use this term. Does this mean that those who use it are admitting to the Russians that there is a border?

Good question. I use the term "separating lines", and of course this term was not invented by me. This is the term used in government strategic documents. The Russians are just trying to make us to determine where this "border" is. The public has unfortunately swallowed this term thrown out by the Nationals. The Russians are saying, in effect: "ah, so the border has been moved? Sorry, but you have to show us where the correct border line is! Has it moved by 300 metres? We will move it back 500 metres if you like, all you have to do is legally recognise that there is a border!" The Russian army has not moved the border 300 metres, it violated the actual state border when it entered South Ossetia. This has great importance. We must not succumb to provocations. We must not conduct negotiations with Russia about this issue. The reason they have moved their non-existent border is firstly to show us where the correct border line is!

When the original Georgian-Abkhazian armed conflict ended we were not yet in the CIS, and President Shevardnadze said that if we joined we would resolve our territorial problems. We joined, but lost even more territory. So this Eurasian Union idea is a fairy tale. This issue should not be on the agenda at all. We do not want to discuss being in the same geopolitical area as Russia. We exclude this. When we were in the CIS we endured the occupation and recognition of Abkhazia and Ossetia. Therefore we have no

this issue pragmatically and protect the interests of our population.

You are very careful with terminology. You also want the Ministry of Reintegration Issues to revert to its old name, The Ministry of Conflict Resolution. Why did Saakashvili change the name in the first place and why has he not restored its previous name?

This is a question for Saakashvili, because he invented the absurd name of this ministry. Its previous name was the State Ministry of Conflict Resolution, but he changed it even though the conflicts are unresolved. Nobody knows why this ministry is called 'Reintegration'... reintegration means that you were once integrated, then disintegrated and now want to be reintegrated. The ministry has two real functions, conflict resolution and civil integration, but where are either of these two concepts in the word 'Reintegration'? Does this mean that the Armenians and Azerbaijanis also need reintegration? Are they as far from us as the Ossetians and Abkhazs? The Azerbaijanis and Armenians are a different phenomenon. Of course we have to change the name: it would be better for us not to have a name at all, or be called Ministry Number 5 or something, than have the name we have now.

You have said that the conflict regions themselves have objected to this name and this has hindered the restoration of relations. Was this the only factor affecting these relations?

Here we see Saakashvili's attitude. A new government has come to power with a new vision, but the President is not giving us the opportunity to put our plans into effect. His behaviour is not cohabitational. I am not waiting for him to sign the document changing our name. We are doing our job, it would be better if he cooperated with us. Yes, the Abkhaz declared that will not negotiate with a ministry with such a name. They have even told me that they can speak with me as a person, but not as a minister.

Do you agree that the occupied territories can be returned by means of a Eurasian Union and we therefore do not need to keep a contingent in Afghanistan, because NATO will not be able to return our occupied territories?

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basis for changing our European orientation. We have to move towards NATO and the European Union. If we change our political course, no one will protect us. It is unacceptable to talk about getting back 300 metres when 20% of our territory is occupied.

Did the meeting of Security Council bring any important results? We are not asking about the details, but what were the results of this meeting?

I am not a member of the Security Council, but it is a pity that meetings in such a format have not been conducted before. This meeting was more constructive than I had expected. All the members tried to listen and understand each other's arguments. There were issues on which we could not agree, so we decided to postpone discussion of these. As members of the Government we are responsible for all that is going on in the country and have no right to refuse to meet or cooperate in any format. The Security Council is one of the most important levers for ruling the country. During this meeting we discussed international challenges, national security and our foreign affairs direction.

Do you have any contacts with representatives of the occupied territories? Can you say that any favourable changes are occurring?

The dynamic is better than I thought it would be, despite the fact that we have not yet changed the name of the ministry. The conflicts have lasted for years, it is impossible to achieve visible results in a few months. The institution we most desire to join is the European Union. The Cyprus conflict, which has been going on for 40 years, is taking place within a European Union country. I am sure we will not need 40 years to resolve our problems, there is much greater alienation between Turks and Greeks. The European Union itself cannot resolve serious conflicts in short timeframes. It knows that these need a reasonable policy. I am deeply convinced that we are on the right path and that we can already see signs of this. I cannot speak about these signs today because I must first report to the Prime Minister. I want the Prime Minister be aware of what is going on, and obtain his agreement before taking further steps.

How proper and effective would be the intervention of the Church in conflict resolution and the restoration of territorial integrity?

The church is as independent as non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations are, we do not control it. It offers an additional mechanism which will not replace or overlap with state policy but can possibly facilitate it. If the Church has the necessary resources to do this it must use them, but it should not be ruled by the government and does not have to wait for the legitimisation of its steps by the government.



But when the de facto leader of Abkhazia asks the Patriarch of Russia to receive the Abkhazian Church into its structure, should not the government react?

No, I think it should not. If the Patriarchate of Russia makes a statement such as, "we can think about uniting the Abkhazian Church with us", then we should react. We have to look at the subject and not the object. It is not correct to respond to ev-

erything. It is better to keep watch of how things are developing. Let the other side make its policy in reaction to you, do not make your policy in reaction to them.

Is this the tactic of the Prime Minister, as it appears to be?

Yes, and this is a very good thing. The Prime Minister is a very clever man. I like working with him, because he is well aware of all the conflict resolution processes.

NEWS

U.S. Congress releases statement on cooperation with Georgia in defence area

The U.S. Congress has released a statement on cooperation with Georgia in defence area. According to the statement, the Republic of Georgia is a highly valued ally of the United States and has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to advancing the mutual interests of both countries, including the deployment of Georgian forces as part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and the Multi-National Force in Iraq.

(2) The peaceful transfer of power as the result of the free and fair parliamentary elections in Georgia in October 2012 represents a major accomplishment toward the Georgian people's creation of a free society and full democracy.

(3) However, since the October 2012 parliamentary elections the new Georgian Government has taken a series of measures against former officials and members of the current political opposition that appear to be motivated by political considerations.

(4) Over 100 former Georgian Government officials have been charged with criminal violations since the October 2012 parliamentary elections.

(5) Similar charges have been filed against members of the political opposition, including Vano Merabishvili, the Secretary General of the United National Movement.

(6) The arrest of the leader of an opposition party is especially troubling, particularly its chilling effect on political freedom prior to the presidential election scheduled for October 2013.

(7) The Georgian Government has taken insufficient action to prevent further violence against members of the United National Movement and to punish offenders.

(8) These actions call into question the Georgian Government's continued progress toward the creation of a free and democratic society in which basic freedoms, including freedom for political opposition, are guaranteed.

(b) Statement of Congress - Congress declares that—

(1) the United States remains committed to assisting the people of Georgia in establishing a free and democratic society in their country;

(2) the measures taken by the Georgian Government against former officials and political opponents, apparently in part motivated by political considerations, may have a significant negative impact on cooperation between the United States and Georgia, including efforts to build a stronger relationship in political, economic, and security matters, as well as progress on integrating Georgia into international organizations;

(3) the United States must be unambiguous when democratic backsliding occurs in a key ally after a peaceful and democratic transfer of power between political parties; and

(4) the people of the United States and the Members of Congress express their deepest condolences to the Georgian people on the tragic loss of seven soldiers of Georgia in a suicide bombing on June 6, 2013, and the deaths of three soldiers killed in another suicide bombing on May 13, 2013, while they were supporting United States and NATO forces in Afghanistan.

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INTERVIEW

MAHATMA programme will develop leaders of educational management aware of all the new standards and trends in the international education system

By EMMA BAIRAMOVA, GT

The faculty of Education at IBSU (the International Black Sea University) is participating in the TEMPUS project MAHATMA (Master of Higher Education Management: Developing leaders for managing educational transformation). (TEMPUS is the Trans-European Mobility Programme for University Studies, which involves higher education institutions in EU Member States and partner countries). Universities and other educational organisations from 7 countries: Armenia, Georgia, the UK, Germany, Italy, France and the Czech Republic, are participating in this programme. MAHATMA's objective is to promote the transformation of higher education management in Armenia and Georgia through the introduction of a new Masters programme and professional development courses in higher education management. Vice Rector of IBSU Prof. Dr. Natela Dogonadze tells The Georgian Times about the MAHATMA project.

Professor, what is the MAHATMA project?

MAHATMA is one of the Tempus projects and is financed by the European Union. The grant holder is the State Pedagogical University of Armenia and we are one of the participating universities. The title MAHATMA means Master of High Education Management, but I suppose it is somehow connected to the democratic values of Mahatma Gandhi (laughing). The goal of this project is to create a Masters of Education Management Programme. We already have such a programme at our University, so to an extent we can say that we are not creating a new programme but develop-

ing the existing one, although we have changed it a lot.

The project will run for three academic years. It was launched in October 2012. Four universities from Georgia, four from Armenia, two from England, one from Germany and one from Czech Republic are taking part, as are educational centres in France and Italy, which are our partners. Our European partners are helping us develop this project. In fact, we began work on this project in January. Our first meeting was in Yerevan, where the participants got acquainted with each other and introduced themselves.

Which universities from Georgia are participating in this



project?

Ilia State University, Qutaisi State University, Batumi State University and our Black Sea University. We all demonstrated our capacity to undertake this project and then had a meeting in Paris.

Why was your University chosen?

The Armenian university which initiated this project was looking for a partner in Georgia which was already working in the sphere of Education Management. In Georgia only these four universities do that. Some years ago only state universities could take part in Tempus programmes, but last year private universities also gained the right to participate. So maybe we are pioneers.

What does this programme involve?

This programme is about the management of education, its theory and practice. Educational management is a specialised skill which requires its own training. At the Paris meeting we discussed various methods of education. At this point, what we can guarantee is that we are well aware of the international education system and have very good lecturers. We are also taking into consideration all our European partners' recommendations about education methodology and assessment methodology.

This programme will be oriented on the student. It lasts four semesters, the last of which is dedicated to diploma work. Why should students join this programme? From a group of 15 students 5 can take part in an exchange programme during the

third semester, two at European Universities and three at the University of Armenia. Armenian students will come here in the same way. Those who do not go on these exchanges will receive special development programmes, formulated according to international standards of education. The exchange programmes will last two months, but participants will gain credits for a whole semester. During the first two semesters the students will study English intensively, so they will have no difficulties on the exchange programme.

The MAHATMA programme develops leaders of educational management aware of all the new standards and trends in the international education system. The programme also has some political goals. As you know, Georgia's education laws and education system change every year, and therefore the country must have experienced well educated leaders who can take part in such a changing educational system. This project is very good for the country's future.

The programme consists of both theoretical knowledge and practical tasks. Every Masters student will conduct undergraduate research work, developing the skills of a research leader, an independent view about the education system, decision making skills and the other skills neces-

sary for a leader working in the education sphere.

Have you invited overseas specialists to deliver this programme?

Yes, but not for whole semesters. They will deliver specific courses. However participants of this programme will have intensive contact with our international partners.

Which is the usual language of study at the Black Sea University?

Our students can choose as a foreign language Turkish, German, Spanish, French and other languages, but in almost all our faculties the language of study is English. In the law faculty study is partly in English and partly in Georgian.

Which subjects will be taught?

Management of Higher Education, Adult Education, Assessment in Higher Education, Culture and Academic Achievement in Education, Curriculum and Syllabus Development in Higher Education, Financial Management of Education, General and Higher Education Psychology, Global Education, Higher Education Administration, Higher Education Law, Higher Education, History of Higher Education Internship, Leadership in Higher Education, Leader Improvement and Higher Education Management, Research and Study Skills. The three year course costs 3,000 GEL a year.

David Sergeenko: The Government of Georgia will address the health protection needs of the entire Georgian population

By EMMA BAIRAMOVA, GT

One of the most important problems in Georgia is unaffordable health care. In this interview with The Georgian Times Minister of Labour, Health and Social Affairs Davit Sergeenko declares that the government will try to resolve all problems in health care and social protection within a year.

Mr. Sergeenko, you have encountered many problems in the Georgian healthcare system since being appointed, can you highlight some of the most important?

There are a lot of problems in healthcare system and it is hard to single out individual ones. But I think the most important was that we had no quality control system. Such a system is not very easy to construct and I cannot brag that it works properly now either. So this is one of the main problems.

Are any of the projects launched by the previous government still being implemented?

These were mainly infrastructure projects, and every one of them is still being implemented. No projects have been suspended because we do not think any of them are superfluous. On the contrary, medical healthcare infrastructure is very important. Maybe there have been small problems in some directions, but these mistakes were made by those executing the projects. I hope all these problems and delays will be resolved and all projects fulfilled.

What changes for the better have occurred since the coming of the new government?

I cannot say that there has been a dramatic re-evaluation of the healthcare system. We cannot say that everything was very bad and we have come and changed everything. This is just not true. As I mentioned the healthcare system is problematic in general. We have merely changed the strategic vector of the healthcare system. Until October 2012 healthcare provision was directed at target groups, for example the elderly, children and the socially vulnerable, and their health insurance was only supported by private healthcare companies. We have changed this, and now insurance and medical services are available not only for target groups but all citizens of Georgia. We have to protect all our citizens, without exception. The second thing we have changed is before we came to power only certain private companies issued and administered health insurance, in fact they were monopolists. We have now created healthy competitive conditions between the government administration and private



company administrations, so that a broader range of providers can offer insurance.

As regards the structure and functioning of the ministry, I have never made any rule which would enable us to fire a staff member for having a different political opinion. For me what is important is how effectively someone does their job. But of course we have made some necessary changes in management for this very reason.

Can you say that the current health insurance situation is radically different to that which prevailed under the previous government?

Yes, because two to three years ago only some of the population could take out government health insurance policies. The rest simply paid money from their pockets to private companies. What has radically changed is that all citizens of Georgia can now take advantage of medical services. Some people continue to use private insurance companies, but we have already begun transferring everyone else onto the government insurance system, so that the government will address the health protection needs of the greater part of the population. This is the main change we have implemented.

There are very long queues at healthcare facilities thanks to the procedures for receiving medical policies. When will this problem be solved?

We can divide the population of Georgia into two parts - those who use insurance policies issued by private companies (which were registered years ago) and those who take part in the new government insurance programme launched by the ministry. Those under the government programme, launched on 28 February, no longer need to take printed copies of their insurance policies to the clinics because

their documents are registered on an electronic database. This procedure is maximally efficient.

If it is efficient, why there are still long queues?

Maybe this is due to issues concerning scheduled operations, but in urgent situations the procedures are efficient. As regards the documentation for these planned operations, I promise the people of Georgia that within a year this problem will be resolved and they will be able to obtain all the necessary medical services without facing any bureaucratic barriers.

Are you still intending to increase pensions in September?

Of course, the increase in pensions was one of the main election commitments of the Georgian Dream coalition. To begin with pensions will be brought in line with the minimum standard of living and then they will increase further. The minimum standard of living is 150 lari, so all the promises given in the sphere of healthcare and social protection will be kept on the basis of this index. From June 1 the minimum living standard calculated for socially vulnerable citizens will be doubled.

What projects will you be implementing in the near future?

The insurance project launched on February 28 will be expanded to include a lot of additional services and the full package can be used by all citizens of Georgia. We are also working on creating a quality control system and evaluation system, because the prices of services should have certain logic behind them and not be overinflated. For example, sometimes medical facilities offer different patients the same services at different prices and this is unacceptable. We are also working on improving the provision of emergency services. I think it is categorically unacceptable to suffer two-hour delays in receiving emergency

treatment and this must be corrected. Another major project concerns children's oncology and hematology. We have negotiated with Harvard Medical School and will soon implement a large project under its patronage and management which will resolve the important problems in this area systematically and radically. We have a lot of big projects in the pipeline: village doctors, a primary health care project, categorisation and classification-reforms and so on. At this stage, the most important project is the one designed to reduce maternal and child mortality.

How does the Georgian healthcare system work for foreigners?

Our main goal is to transfer the Georgian healthcare system from experience based to evidence based decision making. The need for this is clear to all those who have ever had to deal with the healthcare system. We want to create a high class healthcare system which works on the same principle as those in all developed countries. If we develop such a system both foreigners and citizens of Georgia will get the same medical services.

NEWS

Davit Usupashvili :U.S.-Georgia friendship is not in danger

We appeal to all nations to send as many observers as possible to monitor trials. Thus, Chairman of Parliament Davit Usupashvili responded to the statement of the U.S. Congress.

"In any country arrest of a person which had been a Minister for many years and then a Prime Minister causes great interest. Therefore, our friends' interest is quite normal. Their position that there should not be politically motivated arrests in Georgia is quite natural. The government and the parliament, of course, share this position. We thank everyone for recommendations. As for the certain statements, they are based on the lack of information", said the Chairman of the Parliament.

He alleged that despite the critical statements of the Congress, the U.S.-Georgia friendship is not in danger.

"The United States government continues cooperation with Georgia's new government. The future of the U.S.-Georgia friendship is not in danger", the Speaker said.

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Russia's Foreign Ministry releases statement on UN Resolution

The voting process on the UN resolution about the internally displaced persons and refugees reiterated that this politicized initiative has no great support in the United Nations - the majority of member countries abstained in the voting or did not attend the process at all, says a statement released by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Russian Foreign Ministry's statement says that Georgia stubbornly refuses to make appropriate conclusions from the fact that thousands of people of different nationalities were hurt due to the then government's aggressive policy and excessive ambitions.

"Like the previous years, the resolution was considered without representatives of Abkhazeti and South Ossetia. They were not allowed to study the situation in the region before the General Assembly. Such document will not be able to assist in solving real problems of refugees and internally displaced persons", says the Russian Foreign Ministry's website.

According to the statement, if there will be serious and not propagandist talks about the return of refugees to their homes, then of course, the internationally recognized criteria - safety, good will and dignity - should be protected.

"Today, as the United Nations Secretary-General's report notes, these criteria are not fulfilled. Since October 2008, when the Geneva negotiations were launched, Georgia has stubbornly tried to avoid an agreement on non-use of force with Abkhazeti and South Ossetia, without which it is impossible to achieve long-term stability," says the statement

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Kakha Kukava: the current government is a reincarnation of the Citizens' Union and UNM

By MAKHA DEKANOSIDZE, GT

If parliament approves a proposed amendment state funding of political parties will increase to 300-600 thousand GEL. However this will only apply to parties which overcame the 4% barrier at the local elections of 2010 and parliamentary elections of 2012.

The amendments to the "Organic Law on Political Unions" have been prepared by an inter-party grouping but not presented to Parliament for discussion yet. They have been criticised by party leaders whose parties will not qualify for state funding, including Kakha Kukava, leader of Independent Georgia. He discusses these amendments during this interview with geotimes.ge

Mr. Kukava, what are the implications of these amendments?

According to the draft law the Georgian Dream and UNM will gain more financing, 5 million in total, double the present amount. The Republicans, Conservatives etc. will also get bonuses, and we can say that they will be full of money. Several satellite parties will also have their funding doubled, including Zurab Noghaideli's. However the funding of real parties, including Jondi Baghaturia's, Nino Burjanadze's and Shalva Natelashvili's, will be zero.

Your opponents would argue that if a party cannot achieve

the 4% threshold the state should not have an obligation to fund it, as it does not have enough public support. The criteria for granting a party qualified subject status also needs to be reviewed. What do you say about this?

The formula is calculated differently at various stages. At the April 27 elections we got 17% of the vote. David Berdzenishvili explained that this was merely a personal vote for me, but this is a very strange explanation. This is not a legal argument, only a political viewpoint. I can argue in turn, and 100% of the public will agree, that the Georgian Dream's vote on October 1 was a personal vote for Bidzina Ivanishvili. If you receive enough votes to meet the percentage threshold, why try and distinguish whether they were cast for a person or a party?!

In many countries party support revolves around one person, and if the Georgian Dream does not consider its result Bidzina Ivanishvili's personal vote, why it should Independent Georgia's be considered Kukava's?

By the way, the original law about party financing was written by me and accepted under pressure from EC experts and the IRI. Such formula-party financing did not exist then. The law has been changed several times, and some parties missed out but not on this scale. The Republican Party, having a long tongue, says that funding non-qualified



subjects is not allowed, but in 2005 when the original law was adopted it was a non-qualified subject itself and still it received funding. This was my initiative.

After the dissolution of the coalition who will define the qualification for funding? It is possible its constituent parties will be affected by this law themselves in the future?

Parties in government forget to be prudent. We used to compete against the UNM alongside the Republicans and those parties currently in government. They have come to power and now have 10 million in financing. Those still in opposition currently face a problem of maintaining their offices.

The most shameful thing is that Berdzenishvili has added four million for his party and the UNM but the statutory minimum funding set aside for opposition parties has been abolished. We are talking about fifty thousand GEL divided by 12 months,

so it only pays for office rent and utilities. Those in government used to mock the UNM, but have now become just like them. This amendment will result in opposition parties being closed, which has not happened for many years. This is the first step towards autocracy.

Why do you think this change is being proposed?

It is because we have a different ideology, a nationalist one. We do not share the liberal principles on which the cohabitation between the GD and UNM is based. The Georgian public probably remembers that we did not show any solidarity with Ivanishvili prior to October 1. Consequently everything is being done to prevent us entering Parliament even through by-elections.

On May 17 we participated in the rally against gays. Consequently Ivanishvili issued the order to kill our party financially. You may remember that the other parties, apart from Jondi

Baghaturia's, did not take part in the rally on May 17.

I would like to advise Mister Ivanishvili to study Saakashvili's mistakes and not repeat them.

Will lack of financing force parties to seek illegal funding? Does the government see this as a threat?

Along with the risk of illegal funding, I think there is a stronger threat which has not been noticed by the government.

The government is eager to kill off the opposition; therefore it will foment a revolution. Saakashvili did not acknowledge us as opposition, and the same happened to him. Now Ivanishvili says that we are not opposition, we are non-existent; he regards those with his favourite names and surnames as opposition.

If Ivanishvili does not know, let his advisors remind him, taking their examples from recent history, that despite conflict between the authorities and those of different opinions they should still support the existence of a legal political space. The authorities are conceited, but the Georgian political situation is very unstable, it changes frequently, so if we cannot debate we will have to oppose on Rustaveli Avenue. If this does not happen now, it will happen two years from now.

If parliament approves this amendment, how will your party continue without financing?

Our office will probably be closed at the end of the month, as we have 2 months' unpaid rent.

Bidzina Ivanishvili forbids us from conducting our activities, and our donors have been warned that if they fund us they will face problems in business. Our account is zero, and it was not like this before. Opposition parties will not die if they have no offices but it will push us to become more radical. Ivanishvili, like Saakashvili, may regret this later, but it will be too late by then, as people who are considered supporters of the current government may freely cross to the other side of the barricade.

Will ceasing to fund the non-parliamentary opposition before the upcoming Presidential elections mobilise the opposition around one candidate, such as Nino Burjanadze who has shown her readiness to participate in the Presidential elections?

I support the idea of a united opposition candidate and call on everyone to withdraw their candidacy for a certain period so we can have consultations and agree on a common candidate. Nino Burjanadze has refused to participate in previous discussions about a common candidate and I do not think any serious party will support her. Whoever puts their own candidate in will get only 2-4% of the votes, which would not make them president but hinder the mobilisation of a common voice. A common candidate will have an opportunity, as dissatisfaction with the GD is increasing and the public understands that the current government is a reincarnation of the Citizens Union and UNM. This understanding will increase until the October election.

The protest against Saakashvili began in 2004-2005, but we thought it would bring negative results and this is what has happened. Ivanishvili is the hostage of developments. The only outcomes will be negative ones. Do you notice the number of short circuits? Some of the ministers have had problems, causing public dissatisfaction.

On May 17 this dissatisfaction grew into a protest and if the government's course is not changed, something more important that May 17 will take place.

Archive Footage of People's Private Lives to be Destroyed

By TAMTA ASANIDZE, GT

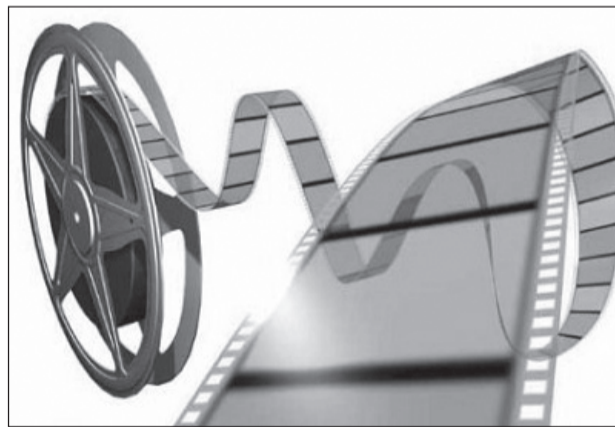
The MIA's controversial archive of illegally obtained footage of people's private lives is to be destroyed, following the conclusion of consultations with the diplomatic corps, international and non-governmental organizations. As a range of opinions was expressed about this matter, a special committee will be appointed to oversee the destruction of the archive. Deputy Minister of the Internal Affairs Levan Izoria says that the decision to destroy the illegal footage will not be changed, but some materials related to the investigation of crimes, which could be used as evidence, will be kept.

"It will take time to sort through this material, as it was not catalogued. Some of it could be useful in crime investigations, but the majority of it has no connection any crime, and was

only obtained to try and discredit people. We would like to finish this practice. We have invited international partners and non-governmental organizations to create a commission to send this material to the past," Izoria said, adding that he was intending to offer an amnesty to those who bring such material to the authorities on their own initiative, if any is in private hands. "In order to avoid misuse of this material we will ask Parliament to pass a special amnesty law for a specific period. However, if people do not take advantage of this they will naturally be pursued".

Non-governmental organizations, political parties and diplomatic corps representatives have welcomed the government's decision. Gia Gvalia from Transparency International-Georgia said that the MIA has taken the right decision, as illegal footage urgently needs to be destroyed.

"It is an absolutely correct legal decision, and as Levan Izoria said, no investigation is about



who conducted this illegal recording, as for obvious reason this is subject to an amnesty. It would be a waste of resources to pursue those who may have been responsible, and previous statements that evidence existed against certain people have since been repudiated. What is important is that this material is destroyed and such surveillance does not happen again."

Gvalia fully trusts the commission which will sift through all the material. "The commission should ensure that the in-

formation obtained about people through these recordings should never be released. Actually, they should not even see the material; they should simply identify whether each individual recording was legal or illegal, undertaken with the permission of the court or not. Everything illegal will then be destroyed, and everything legal reexamined."

Transparency International - Georgia's position is shared by GYLA, the Georgian Young Lawyers Association. Its representative Eka Popkhadze likewise sup-

ports the destruction of the MIA archive, and says that GYLA will only support keeping any information if it is relevant to a criminal case.

"We agree with the destruction of the hidden footage. It is very important to destroy footage containing discretionary evidence and details of people's private lives. We also find it acceptable that a commission will monitor the destruction of this material," says Eka Popkhadze, who suspects that the amount of material in the archive relating to actual crimes, which could be kept and used as evidence, is very small.

GYLA also supports the amnesty in principle. "The amnesty law, which has already been accepted in principle, refers to those involved in the production of the hidden recordings. Let us see what kind of amnesty will emerge in reality. Others may also be amnestied by the state if it helps bring more such recordings to light. This would be a legitimate goal for an amnesty," says Eka Popkhadze.

Both the government and opposition parties also support the decision. Zurab Abashidze, a member of the parliamentary majority, agrees that footage obtained illegally by the former government should be destroyed and such recording should never be repeated.

"Such material may be of two kinds. Sometimes footage is

needed as evidence in order to strengthen the case against someone suspected of a crime, but some is not required by any criminal investigation and is used solely to try and blackmail people. All legal surveillance activities are regulated by the law through the Courts. We have to refine this control mechanism in a serious way," says Zurab Abashidze, who acknowledges that mistakes may be made whilst sorting the footage but is confident that the commission will fulfill its task responsibly.

David Darchiashvili from the Parliamentary minority agrees. "Information about people's private lives may get into the hands of the special services and private detectives, but if it is not linked with a crime it should be destroyed. For example, if two known criminals meet this is important information, but generally, material not linked to criminal cases should be destroyed".

The commission to oversee the destruction of the footage will soon be created. It is already known however that analyst Kakha Khakhiashvili, Chair of Transparency International-Georgia Eka Gigauri, Chief Prosecutor Archil Kbilashvili, Minister of Internal Affairs Irakli Gharibashvili and a representative of the Public Defender will be members of this commission.

Georgian Wine and Alcoholic Beverages will reenter the Russian Market in two weeks

By EKA GAZDELIANI, GT

After a 7-year interval Georgian wine and alcoholic beverages are about to returned to the Russian Market. After the official removal of the embargo, Kakheti Traditional Wine Producers and The Dugladze Wine Company will send the first batch of their products to Russia.

Kakheti Traditional Wine Producers has exported 21,600 bottles of Old Kakheti cognac. These were sent by truck on June 12. Lela Chkheidze, head of the company's export de-



partment, told The Georgian Times that various wines, including Kindzmarauli, Khvanchkara, Alazani Valley, Saperavi, Mukuzani and Tvishi would also be sent. "We are planning to export about 1 million bottles until the next production. We also produce Chacha, which is not exported to Russia at the moment, but we are planning to do so."

The Dugladze Wine Company produces wine, sparkling wine and cognac. It will export wine and cognac to Russia to begin with, and 30,000 bottles of wine were sent on June 13. Zaza Dugladze, founder and General Director of the company, explains that this quantity will be sent every day, as the company was ordered to provide half a million bottles of wine and 80,000 thousand bottles of cognac. He added that each product has its own profit margin for each of its three varieties, economy, premium and elite, but that its high quality products will compete with French and Italian wines.

"The agreements we have demonstrate that our products have not been forgotten and the Russians are looking forward to them, and Georgian wine in general," Dugladze told The Georgian Times.

65 alcohol production companies are being allowed to enter the Russian Market. Levan Davitashvili, the head of the LELP National Wine Agency, explains that the agency will gradually issue further certifi-

cates on application. More than a million bottles of Georgian wine will be exported to the Russian market this summer, where they medium to high end wines will cost between 300-400 rubles.

"We are monitoring this process and know that consumer expectation is quite high. Therefore we have positive expectations. Wine is not sold without attention and effort. There is competition in every market, including the Russian. Our selling point is the high public awareness and positive attitudes towards our products, which no other wine on the market has. If we conduct appropriate marketing, results will be positive. We have various plans, and in addition the Russian press is always talking about the return of Georgian wine," Davitashvili told the Georgian Times.

Demuri Giorkhelidze, an economist, agrees with this positive assessment. "I think there is no threat to Georgian wine on the Russian market if it is high quality. Regardless of the availability of other wines Georgian wine will have is consumers because of its quality. Russians remember this wine, and many other Georgian products, and we will not face any challenges in this field," says Giorkhelidze. He adds however that the return of Georgian wine to the Russian market will not affect the Georgian economy greatly regardless of the scale of exports. "It is more important in terms of reestablishing the economic relationship and free movement of goods between the two states."

Russia imposed an embargo on Georgian products in 2006, claiming they did not meet sanitary and hygiene standards. After the election of the new Georgian government, negotiations on this were resumed at the beginning of this year. Georgian alcoholic beverages will appear in Russian stores in about 2 weeks.

Rustavi Steel LLC responds to untrue statements made by Joseph Kay

Thomas Blake, Director of Rustavi Steel LLC: - "Rustavi Steel LLC is aware of a press conference held by Joseph Kay on 11 June in Tbilisi, and would like to put the record straight in response to untrue statements by Joseph Kay.

The Rustavi Metallurgical Plant was acquired by BadriPatakatsishvili in 2005 for USD 36 million, of which USD 26 million came from the sale of TekhNeftInvest and USD 10 million from the proceeds of the sale of Sibneft. The origin of these funds, transfer documents and the names of the corporate entities through which they were transferred to acquire the Rustavi Metallurgical Plant are available and can be made public.

This has all been well documented in court proceedings against Joseph Kay, who has been unable to provide any proof to back up his wild claims that he paid for Rustavi. Joseph Kay illegally gained control of the Rustavi plant in 2008 following Badri's death, and in 2010 the Gibraltar court ruled that Joseph Kay has no ownership interest in the plant. The Western courts



**Rustavi
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have also labelled Joseph Kay a liar on many occasions. The Patakatsishvili family regained title to Rustavi in December 2011. The legal owner of the Rustavi Metallurgical Plant, whose interests I represent, encourages the Georgian government to open an investigation into the activities of Joseph Kay during 2008-11."

NEWS

Patriarch addresses Parliament Speaker

The Patriarch of Georgia has addressed Parliament Speaker David Usupashvili with regard to turnoff of the private broadcasting frequency for the Patriarchate's TV network 'Etsulovneba'. "It is known that since 2007 the TV network 'Etsulovneba' has been distinguished with its educational, cultural and patriotic programs." The "Etsulovneba" has an agreement had TV Evrika and had been buying frequency from it. On 1 May 2013 the contract has expired and our company

was forced to move to cable broadcasting, which is available just for 40 % of the population, but a great desire among the people watching the channel.

We know that the regulatory commission has no vacant frequency, but we want the Parliament to charge the commission to find some additional frequency for the "Etsulovneba" TV", says the address.

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Parliament elects just 4 members of the High Council of Justice

The Parliament has elected just 4 members of the High Council of Justice. In the second round of voting the majority elected as members of the High Council of Justice: Vakhtang Tordia, Gocha Mamulashvili, Eva Gotsiridze and Anna Sopromadze.

The Parliament has to approve 6 members of the

Council yesterday. The parliament minority did not participate in the vote.

According to Parliament Speaker Davit Usupashvili, another competition will be announced for electing the remained two members of the Council.

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David Tevzadze: We are not occupiers but satellites in Afghanistan

“An alert eye could see the protest in the mass of those people”

GEOTIMES.GE

The participation of the substantial Georgian contingent in the ISAF mission to Afghanistan and the increasing numbers of casualties have provoked comprehensive study. However, the Ministry of Defence has published only dry information regarding the latest terrorist attacks.

Here Geotimes.ge talks to General David Tevzadze, the former Defence Minister and Acting Pro-Rector of IB European Caucasian University, about the ISAF mission, the casualties and the prospects of Georgia joining NATO.

General, most Georgians view participation in the ISAF mission as part of our attempt to join NATO rather than a contribution to the fight against terrorism. What will our participation bring to the country from a military perspective?

Generally, participation in such missions is an indicator of the maturity of the state. Their results are political rather than military. What the mission will bring the country from a military perspective is a bit obscure.

Politicians and commentators are making emotional statements about the frequent deaths of Georgian soldiers. However,

few people are well informed about current developments in Afghanistan, and in particular the location of the Georgian base there, although this is often spoken about. You are one of the few people who knows where it is – will you tell us?

It is true that only a limited number of people are aware of current developments in Afghanistan, and this is a bad thing, but as for the location of the base, it is better that only a few people know.

It has been said that the increasing number of Georgian casualties is being caused by neglecting security measures, do you think it could have been possible to avoid these fatalities?

It is impossible to prevent fatalities in conflict zones. However, risks can be mitigated via adequate training, an effective security system and strict discipline.

It is said that most of those who go to Afghanistan and other missions are from socially deprived families. Is this so?

I think this is correct in part.

Do you think it is appropriate to continue deploying such a large Georgian contingent in Afghanistan, given the number of casualties, or should it be decreased?

I think our political spectrum is not ready to take such a step.

You have said in previous interviews that troop losses are

the greatest problem and when they reach a certain level any political goal is of lesser importance. Have we now reached that level?

There is no preliminarily defined figure. The measure is when the public no longer accepts the political vision of the government and protests against our involvement, and our public is just beginning to understand the casualty levels. The first sign that this level might have been reached was the number of people at the funeral two or three days ago. An alert eye could see the protest in the mass of those people.

Does fighting in someone else's country mean we are occupiers?

No, we are not occupiers, we are satellites. Despite how nicely the idea is packaged, we would need to be more powerful to be occupiers.

It has been said that the current Afghanistan mission will end on December 31, 2014. If Georgia meets its NATO membership obligations by then, is there any chance Georgia will join NATO after completing its mission?

Probably not

What else can Georgia do to increase its security and avoid a rekindling of conflict with neighboring states, especially when the occupier is redefining the borders on a daily basis?

I do not believe that partici-



pation in that ISAF mission increases our national security. This is just a political assumption. As for the occupation line, the occupiers will move this as many times as they think they can get away with it. Even if it moves as far as Gori, we will not say anything, and this is the problem.

How do you assess the frequent visits of the President to

Afghanistan and the footage in which he asks our soldiers how many people they have killed? Do you think there is any link between this and new Taliban activity?

I think the job of Commander in Chief requires that he be more deliberate.

In the long term, what do you think Georgia's place in the world will be, given the geopolit-

ical struggle between Russia and NATO?

It is difficult to say, as Georgia and the rest of the Caucasus will have their places “assigned” to them by the big geopolitical players, in other words, our place will be what they agree it should be. The feature of big players is that ultimately they find the compromise option which is more or less acceptable for them.

“Afghan” Shadow over Georgia: Revenge or Geopolitics?

By DR. VAKHTANG MAISAIA, GT

Events in Afghanistan, and particularly Helmand province, over the last three weeks have raised some important questions about Georgia's military contingent – why did they happen, what was their purpose and what did they hope to achieve?

Why did they happen? – Why did the Taliban militia make two sudden and unprecedented attacks on Georgian military bases, claiming the lives of 10 servicemen and injuring more than 50 others? Considerable attention needs to be paid to this question to prevent such heavy losses occurring in future. The answer could lie in the declaration made on the Taliban propaganda website “Voice of Jihad” on April 28th 2013 that it would launch a massive attrition (cumulative destruction achieved by the systematic application of superior firepower and attacks) codenamed “Khalid bin Valid”, aimed at gaining operational superiority over the south and south-west provinces of Afghanistan, including Helmand province. The Taliban's strategy is to achieve political-military

domination and set up a bridgehead in the area in order to topple Afghanistan's pro-Western government, led by President Hamid Karzai, when the ISAF mission has ended and its forces leave the country in 2014. This repeats the scenario of 1988-89, when the Soviet 40th Army left the country and the pro-Communist government of President Najibullah was left to fight its enemies, the so-called “Peshawari Seven Group” coalition of Islamic resistance groups, alone.

The Georgian military contingent was attacked by a Taliban tactical commando group as a part of the implementation of this attrition strategy. This was confirmed by the strange messages including videotapes, which appeared in Georgia at the time of the attacks, which had apparently originated and been uploaded in Georgia, according to MIA sources. But why should those two videos appear on screen just at the time of the second attack on the Georgian military base? Who would profit from doing this? Answering this would clarify who stands behind the well-coordinated military and psychological warfare tactics used to subvert the Georgian public's



support for Georgia's participation in the ISAF mission and, ultimately, NATO membership. It is as yet unclear whether this was an act of revenge against the very unethical behavior of Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili during his visit to the Georgian military base in Afghanistan on May 26, when he directly asked one of the Georgian soldiers “how many people did you kill on May 13?”, referring to the sudden Taliban attack on the base that day. This question violated the ethical code of “Pash-

tunwali”, practiced by the local Pashtoonethnic group, and automatically provoked the reaction stipulated by this code, “Badal” – revenge. The President could have appealed to the local population by invoking another fundamental principle of the code, “Nanavatai” – forgiveness. However the Georgian military contingent will soon be redeployed to another part of Afghanistan until the NATO ISAF mission leaves the country;

What was their purpose?

– It is important to distinguish between the two attacks. The first was a purely military operation at tactical level – new tactics were being pursued by the Taliban forces. The second was a pure act of terrorism – sabotage by a suicide bomber. This indicates that two attacks had different goals, the first military and the second political. The conclusion that can be drawn is that the Taliban conducts well thought out strategic plans and operations which are not easy to predict.

What did they hope to achieve? –The sudden attacks were directed not against the military but public awareness. The Georgian military participation in Afghanistan is comparatively large (Georgia has the highest proportion of soldiers per capita of any non-NATO member contributing to the NATO ISAF mission). Its casualties are correspondingly high too – 29 Georgian servicemen have killed over the last three years, and their number is increasing. The Taliban is pursuing fourth generation warfare tactics which seek to destroy the enemy not physically but culturally and morally. Unfortunately this strategy appears to be working, as it has raised the question in the public mind, what is Georgia doing in Afghanistan and what will this engagement achieve? It is no accident that some politicians, even some in the ruling party, are now questioning the reasonability of Georgia's participation in the NATO ISAF mission, and some opposition politicians are saying that it hinders rather than helps Georgia's NATO aspirations. It is difficult to counter such arguments, but Georgia's ultimate Euro-Atlantic integration is in fact unquestionable and its security arrangements will therefore have to form part of NATO's military and political structures. This is the reality of 21st global geopolitics.

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The so-called “Mukhrovani Mutiny”: 5th anniversary of intimidation of Georgian Army

By DR. VAKHTANG MAISAIA, GT

5 May 2013 was the anniversary the most fabulous and mystifying event in recent Georgian history, a caper designed to damage the standing of the armed forces amongst the Georgian public.

This scheme had been plotted as soon as the war between Georgia and Russia had ended and Saakashvili's regime had been left defeated and politically bankrupt. Following the very radical protest rallies of November-December 2008 and April 2009, Saakashvili became so scared of losing the power that he was forced to try and regain some kind of control over the armed forces and law enforcement agencies, which had been demoralised by the “Tskhinvali Syndrome” (similar to the “Vietnam Syndrome” which afflicted the US armed forces and the “Afghan Syndrome” which damaged the Soviet army). The possibility of the government being brought down by a military coup, though probably a figment of his imagination, made the President clamp down on the armed forces. Saakashvili remembered Russian President Boris Yeltsin's experience in 1992-93, when he had become very unpopular amongst his people and was almost overthrown. Only a “safety rim”, consisting of the Russian armed forces and MIA internal troops, was able to put down the resistance of the pro-Communist parliament with tanks and keep the President in power. Saakashvili, faced with the same dilemma, began to “appease” the country by exerting political leverage through military and paramilitary formations. This process was driven by the work of the long-established “black PR” outlets run by the ruling political party.

To begin with Saakashvili and his supporters, in the names of Minister of Internal Affairs Vano Merabishvili and National Security Council Secretary Giga Bokeria, set out merely to subdue armed forces personnel and anyone who had credibility and influence among the soldiers, those sergeants and officers who were thought to be the “number one enemies” of the incumbent government. Many experienced combat officers and soldiers were arrested on false charges of consuming drugs, possessing illegal armaments and desertion. More than 10,000 people were arrested in such charges between August 2008 and February 2009. Defence Minister David Kezerashvili and Head of the Joint Staff Colonel Zaza Gogava were ousted from their positions and succeeded by David

Sikharulidze and Colonel Vladimir Chachibaia, who remained in office for only a short time (Sikharulidze was kicked out after the so-called “Mukhrovani Mutiny” and Chachibaia had already left some time before this, their replacements being “prison butcher” Bacho Akhalaia, the “Georgian Beria”, and Lieutenant-General Devi Chankvetadze, who was mentally closer to the Soviet style of officer). The brothers Akhalaia (Bacho and Data) were then sent as political “Commissars” to the Defence Ministry and appointed Deputy Defence Ministers to control the situation in the Army.

Then in October 2008 Saakashvili's regime, in a calculated move, sacked all the high-level officers in the Joint Staff on the same day. After such a “cleansing” and endorsement of political police involvement in armed forces affairs, the government waited for a re-escalation of the situation with Russia, which would divert public attention from the conduct of the previous, already lost war and prevent people asking questions whose answers would threaten the regime's continuance. The puppet Parliament launched a so-called “investigation of the August war” which would drag on for more than three months and draw meaningless conclusions. This was done in order to tighten the government's grip over the military and create a false impression in the eyes of the domestic and international public that it was seeking justice and revealing the truth about the war. Later more than 800 other senior officers (Majors, Vice-Colonels and Colonels) were sacked and contracts with thousands of NCOs and soldiers were breached, leaving them without any means of feeding their families.

Finally Saakashvili's regime sought a “victim” or “sacrifice” it could use to finally bolt down its control of the armed forces. The President provoked the response he wanted by issuing a special decree stating that on Independence Day, May 26th 2009, a large-scale military parade would be held. This order was signed in April, in response to a massive protest rally run by a coalition of opposition parties on April 9. The parade would serve several purposes, notably:

- It would demonstrate a fictitious solidarity between the armed forces and the regime

- It would flex “military muscle” against the protest rally participants

- It would demonstrate that the purge in the armed forces had brought positive results and had the full support of the Army

- It would counter the “defeat-



ed” mentality of the Georgian population by demonstrating the country's military capabilities

- It would demonstrate that everything in the country was fine.

This decree was criticised by the commander and men of the special destination brigade unit deployed in Mukhrovani village, near Tbilisi, which had been directly involved in combat operations in the Tskhinvali region against both Ossetian separatist paramilitary formations and Russian Armed Forces units. Having experienced all the peculiarities of that war, they found a celebration of “defeat in war” both abnormal in itself and politically incorrect. This was a simple objection to the order to take part in the military parade, and the servicemen involved simply ignored the incorrect order, nothing more. The unit leadership did not take any steps against the government, did not seize strategic positions and did

not plan or try to conduct any coup d'état. But President Saakashvili used the criticism of his decree to demonstrate his “PR muscle” and transform a protest conducted according to the accepted military code of behaviour into a “mutiny”. This allegation was consistent with the government's previous rhetoric about “Kremlin-Georgian opposition-military unit mutinies” which no one had taken seriously until then. The absurd allegation was made by President Saakashvili himself, who said he was ready to use all the means at his disposal, including heavy armaments (from multiple launch rocket systems to Air Force combat aircraft) to “quell” the so-called “mutiny”. The “mutiny” unit was disbanded and its soldiers arrested, without them showing any resistance, and charged with treason. Three high-ranking military officers (three former or serving Commanders of the unit, Colonel

Koba Otanadze, Brigadier General George Krialashvili and Vice-Colonel Levan Amiridze were declared leaders of the “mutiny” and hunted down.

In May 2009 General Krialashvili was brutally killed on the orders of then Minister of Internal Affairs Vano Merabishvili, with the consent of President Saakashvili, and Colonels Otanadze and Amiridze were seriously wounded, arrested and later tortured. To continue the fabrication, Major-General Koba Kobaladze (retired) was arrested whilst giving an interview to the media and then I myself, Vakhtang Maisaia, military expert, was arrested. Some other high-level ex-military officers were also supposed to be arrested in connection with the faked “mutiny”, but these two “victims” were ultimately considered to be sufficient. A simple protest against the Supreme Commander's decision to holding a military parade was depicted as a

“full-scale mutiny”, an attempt by “hypothetical Kremlin officials” to overthrow Mikheil Saakashvili. But this incident has now become a fiasco for the President. The persons illegally arrested in connection with the so-called “Mukhrovani Mutiny”, myself included, were granted the status of political prisoners by the Parliament of Georgia on December 5th 2012. General Kobaladze had already been released, eight months after his arrest in 2009, having only been charged with possession of an illegal armament – a curious charge to level at an experienced combat General.

The so-called “Mukhrovani Mutiny” was concocted for two purposes: to counter the massive protest rally on April 9th 2009 and humiliate the armed forces into submission. But the 1st October parliamentary elections ruined everything for the once-ruling National Movement and its autocratic clan.

NEWS

Irakli Menagharishvili: The position of Armenia is not pleasant but it needs not to make tragedy from it

At UN General Assembly, the resolution of Georgia about return of UDPs was supported by 63 state and 16 were against it.

1. Belarus 2. Venezuela, 3 Vietnam, 4. Zimbabwe 5. Cuba 6. Laos 7. Mian 8. Nauru 9. Nicaragua 10 Russia, 11 Serbia, 12. Syria, 13 Armenia, 14. Sudan 15. Northern Korea 16. Sri lank

Geotimes.ge applied Irakli Menagharishvili, the expert in Foreign Relationship, with the question, if there is any threat that those countries will acknowledge Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states.

Irakli Menagharishvili: The states, which were against acceptance of the resolution, are not specifically against the IDP return. There is another factor. It

does not mean that all those countries will admit South Ossetia and Abkhazia independent in future, as supporting to UN resolutions has several motivation, some of the countries were for the country position being against supporting the resolution, for example, like Russian. States may not support any resolution due to the fact, that its internal situation or regional context requires doing so. The reason may be diversified. In this specific case, there is no threat of admission of the independence of the units established as a result of Russian aggression. we have not exclude it entirely, but we have not to link those two cases to each other.

Special irritation was caused the position of Armenia in the

society. It is not the first case, when Armenia votes against us.

There are several factors; there is a problem of territorial integrity along with other problems. Armenia often has different position from other states in post-soviet space, not only due to the relationship with Russia, but also because of Karabakh conflict. It is very unpleasant attitude of Armenia for us, but we have not to make the tragedy from it. It is more important the international community asserted integrity once again with the majority of votes

As for your question if the number of resolution opponents increase in future, it is difficult to talk about it in advance. It depends how the things develop in the World, and how the global

developments will be reflected in Caucasian context,”-said Irakli Menagharishvili

The paper received by resolution highlighted the importance of uninterrupted implementation of humanitarian activities in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali and protection of IDP property rights

Resolution condemns the demographic changes conducted in a forced way in the occupied regions. Document includes call for the participants in Geneva negotiation in order to intensify efforts for returning IDPs. Accepted resolution makes General Secretary of UN obliged to submit annual report about the IDP conditions to the General Assembly.



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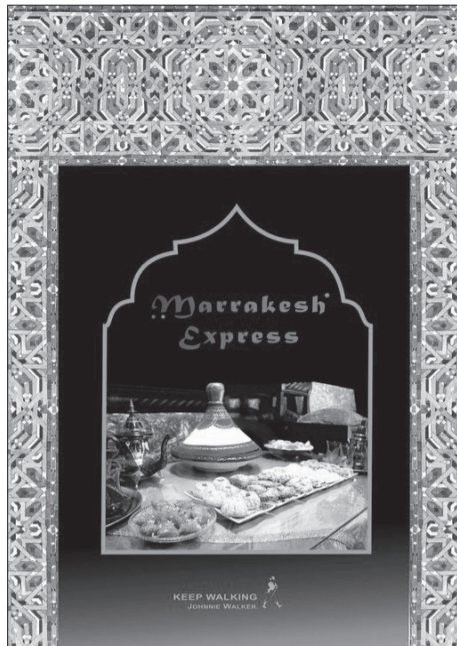
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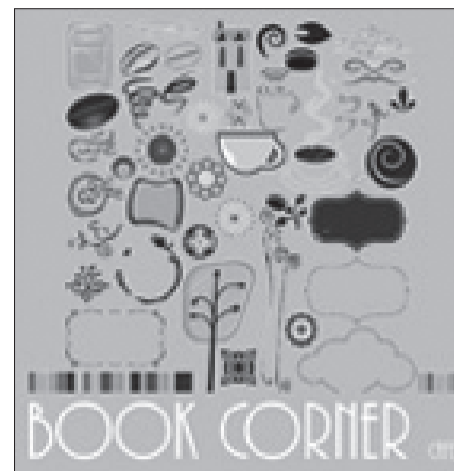
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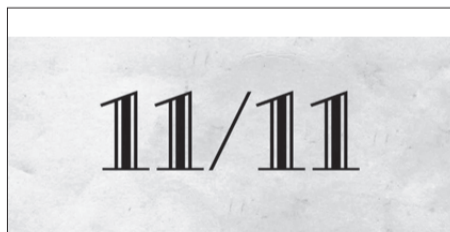
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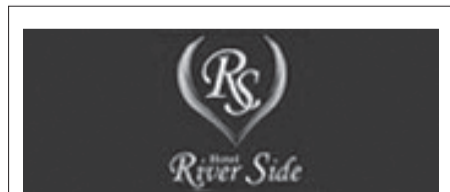
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