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BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The administration of US President Donald Trump said that in 2019, 'dangerous terrorist threats have remained' despite the failure of Iran, the Islamic State and other extremist groups.

State Department released its annual Country Reports on Terrorism on 24th of June, which provides assessments of global counterterrorism landscape during 2019 for the U.S. Congress.

The report noted that the number of attacks by followers of the ideology of white supremacy was increasing.

Iran, which has been described in the report as 'the worst supporter of terrorism in the world,' and its puppets continue to 'plan and execute terrorist attacks around the world.'

Tehran also continued to allow Iran to operate a network linked to al-Qaeda, 'sending money and fighters to conflict zones in Afghanistan and Syria and continuing to allow (al-Qaeda) members to live in the country.'

"Finally, the Iranian regime has continued to use force, both directly and through intermediaries, to provoke violence in Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen," the report said.

The document reads that despite the loss of territory in Iraq and Syria, as well as the loss of the leader, the 'Islamic State' adapted to the situation and 'continued to fight around the world through

Georgia remained strong US security partner in 2019

US STATE DEPARTMENT OUTLINES IN ANNUAL TERRORISM REPORT.



► Georgia also adopted the Law on Facilitating the Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing, aimed to create effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, enhancing the ability of law enforcement to retrieve information from the Financial Monitoring Service. Photo: US Embassy

its own branches and encouraged its followers to attack.' At the same time, the State Department notes that last year both Iran and the Islamic State and al-Qaeda suffered serious defeats, including the killing of some high-ranking commanders.

The State Department said the attacks by white nationalists were of particular concern and 'a serious challenge to the world community.' The report lists a number of such attacks in 2019, including in New Zealand, Germany and the United States.

According to the report, in 2019 Georgia, 'a longstanding member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, continued its

robust engagement' with the U.S. across a range of counter-terrorism issues.

"Georgia participated in numerous bilateral counter-terrorism exercises and trainings with the United States and remained a strong U.S. security partner," the report reads. It notes that although there were no terrorist incidents in Georgia during the past year, the country 'is generally capable of detecting, deterring, and responding to terrorism incidents.'

The report also notes that 'recognizing the need for a whole-of-government response to the challenges of terrorism,' in January the government approved the National Strategy of Georgia on the Fight Against Terrorism 2019-2021 with

an accompanying action plan. It also notes that the State Security Service of Georgia (SSSG)-chaired Permanent Interagency Commission is responsible for oversight of the strategy and action plan and providing annual status reports on implementation.

It further adds that the country 'continued in 2019 to improve its border, maritime, and aviation security,' and is 'actively engaged on counter-terrorism issues at the international, regional, and bilateral levels.'

The report said that the SSSG, which is the head agency for terrorism-related incidents and investigations, is overall 'well-equipped and well-trained,' while its counterterrorism unit 'continues to receive regular training and equipment.'

In particular, the report says, Georgia cooperates closely with NATO, the Council of Europe, the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation, and the Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova (GUAM) Organization for Democracy and Economic Development.

Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia says that the most recent report on terrorism by the US Department of State has 'highly praised' the activities of Georgian law enforcement and security agencies, adding that US-Georgia cooperation in the security field should become 'more and more effective.'

"We should understand that we have our role in the region. The role, first of all, is ensuring peace and security and our cooperation with the US in this regard is gaining more importance," Gakharia said.



► "Of course, we should do our best to cooperate with our strategic partner, the US, especially in the security field, for it to become more and more effective," Gakharia said in the report. Photo: GoG Facebook

On Giorgi Shakarashvili's death

THE BODY OF A 19-YEAR-OLD FOOTBALL PLAYER GIORGI SHAKARASHVILI WAS FOUND IN THE RIVER ARAGVI AFTER A FOUR-DAY SEARCH.

BY ANASTASIA SOKHADZE

Giorgi Shakarashvili's family reported that the boy went missing on June 19th, 11PM.

Numerous versions have been made about the death of Shakarashvili, but the investigation has not been completed yet. Initially, an investigation was launched into the illegal detention.

So far, the investigation knows that Giorgi Shakarashvili was at a rented house in the village of Narekvavi, Mtskheta Municipality, on June 18-19th, where a physical and verbal confrontation between the young people took place; the reason is yet unknown to the public. According to their version, Shakarashvili's part in the confrontation is not clear.

Relatives of the football player



Giorgi Shakarashvili.

say that after the confrontation, Shakarashvili left the house with several people and went to the highway to get a taxi and return to Tbilisi.

Versions about the events unfolding near the bridge are divided. One of the versions belongs to Shakarashvili's uncle, who says that on June 22nd the second episode of the confrontation took place on the highway after the birthday party. According to him, after the confrontation, Shakarashvili left the house with three people to get a taxi, adding that several people caught up with them on the road after which Shakarashvili's traces disappeared.

The investigation into the case is still ongoing. The Ministry of Internal Affairs issued a general statement on June 23rd, stating that it's working

in all directions, a number of investigative versions are being considered, and an investigation team has been set up with investigators of various specialties.

The agency says only that 'the conflict continued on the Tbilisi-Senaki-Leslidze highway, near the bridge over the river Aragvi, after which the traces of Giorgi Shakarashvili were lost', but they don't indicate whether there was a car or how many.

It should be noted that Public Defender Nino Lomjaria also responded to the case. She drew a parallel with the Khorava Street case and said she had some fears about how effectively and timely all investigative actions would be carried out. The ombudsman offered assistance to the victim's family and said she was ready to get involved if needed.

Coronavirus: European Commission makes rules on cross-border programmes and projects more flexible



Following the launch of the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative packages, the European Commission has now also adjusted the rules for Cross-border Cooperation programmes between EU Member States and EU's neighbouring countries funded by European Regional Development Fund and European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI CBC).

This allows the regions on both sides of the EU's external borders to benefit from the simplified financial and legal measures put into place to fight the coronavirus crisis under these packages.

Among its many advantages, the regulation allows ENI CBC programmes and projects to benefit from a 100% EU financing, to get more flexibility for project implementation and to reduce the administrative burden for a faster project selection in the response to the coronavirus pandemic.

It is also a step towards a better harmonisation of rules between Interreg and cooperation programmes at the EU's external borders with the Neighbourhood partner countries and Russia.

Fresh food producers from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine took part in innovative virtual trade fair

Fresh produce companies from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine participated in the leading international fruit and vegetable trade fair United Fresh.

Organised annually, the fair assembles people from the fresh produce industry for networking events, community receptions, conferences, webinars, meetings, on-demand education and other social gatherings. This year, due to COVID-19, the organisers set up a virtual event – the United Fresh Live.

Thanks to the EU-funded project 'Eastern Partnership: Ready to trade', companies and trade promotion organisations from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine presented their businesses with four virtual booths. The Taste with Ukraine booth featured products such as frozen and freeze-dried berries, jams and marinades, organic berries, berry fillings and fillers,

syrups and toppings, drinks, sweets, purees, baby food, and snacks. A total of 17 companies from Georgia displayed their produce at the country's Flavours of Life booth. Similarly, the #Full-FruitArmenia booth featured over 50 Armenian exporters of dried fruit, canned fruit and vegetables, herbal tea and organic products. The Taste of Azerbaijan booth featured eight companies, including six beneficiaries of the 'Ready to trade' project, showing both processed fruit (fruit crisps, preserves, sauces), fresh fruit and vegetables (blueberries, tomatoes, apricots), and honey.

'Eastern Partnership: Ready to Trade' is an EU4Business project that helps small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) access new markets, with a focus on the EU. The project helps SMEs meet international requirements and standards, links them with buyers along the value chain, and provides them with advisory support.



EU helps Georgian agribusinesses attend international fair

Between 15 and 19 June, fresh produce companies participated in the leading international fruit and vegetable trade fair United Fresh.

Organised annually, the fair assembles people from the fresh produce industry for networking events, community receptions, conferences, webinars, meetings, on-demand education and other social gatherings. This year, due to COVID-19, the organisers set up a virtual event – the United Fresh Live.

Thanks to the EU-funded project 'Eastern Partnership: Ready to Trade', 17 small and medium-sized enterprises from Georgia had the chance to display their produce at a virtual booth.

This year, more than 200 companies exhibited their products and 12,500 people registered for the event, with 7,500 people being online at any time.

To help the exhibitors from Georgia, the EU project provided daily support, designed business catalogues and helped them 'build' their virtual booth. During the fair, the Georgian booth had more than 500 visitors. The companies established more than 30 new contacts with businesses from all around the world.

FRIDAY JUNE 26

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 30°C

Night Thunderstorms

Low: 18°C

SATURDAY JUNE 27

Day Rain

High: 22°C

Night Cloudy

Low: 16°C

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Ban on regular flights may be extended until end of July

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Natia Turnava, the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development announced that the ban on regular flights may be extended until the end of July due to the rapid increase in the number of the coronavirus cases in neighboring countries. She said that the restoration of regular flights depends primarily on the epidemiological situation in the rest of the world, and it is up to the country with whom these regular flights should be resumed.

According to Turnava, the issue of regular flights is expected to be resolved by the end of July, but charter flights will be operated regularly.

Turnava mentioned that the main task for the Georgian government is to strengthen the gains made in properly managing the epidemiological situation and protecting the population.

"It is in our best interest to resume regular flights, as you know that our ministry was at the forefront of the process of bringing in new airlines, but now the epidemiological situation is more favorable," the economy minister said, adding that probably by the end of July, regular flights will be opened on a full scale, but nevertheless charter flights will be carried out, albeit very selectively.



► "A separate rule has been developed for business visitors and students, and the regulations will be made public soon, but it will be easier to enter our market," Turnava said.

The minister announced that the government will be very careful with international visitors and tourists in July as well and there will be different rules for business visitors and students. According to her, the government is waiting for the

decision of the European Union, which has just opened borders between its member states and soon it will make decisions for non-member countries as well.

The EU has gradually begun to open its internal borders, as most of the continent, at least

temporarily, seems to have managed to stop the growth of cases of coronavirus infection. And now the bloc is preparing for a second, and much more difficult step - to ease restrictions on passengers on its external borders from third countries.

This month, the European Commission issued a recommendation to gradually open the borders from July 1st, proposing that citizens of non-EU member states in the Western Balkans continue to be able to enter the EU for unavoidable purposes.

EU member states are now trying to come up with a clear list of countries whose citizens the bloc should accept.

After five meetings, a preliminary list of countries that the EU should open from July 1 has been developed. The list included 47 countries from around the world, including seven European countries - Georgia, Bosnia, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as three micro-states. But ahead of the June 24 meeting, the list was reduced to 29 states. Georgia has been removed from this second, truncated list - sources told RFE/RL that although the country has handled the pandemic well so far, questions remain about the country's healthcare capabilities. The next meeting is scheduled for today, 26th of June.

The EU hopes to compile a list of the 20 countries from which the bloc will open its doors to citizens. However, so far nothing can be said for sure. After the agreement, the countries may be removed from the list if the epidemiological situation worsens there.

Note that Georgia has completely shut down air traffic in the country on March 21st in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Since late March Georgia has carried out over 60 charter flights to evacuate thousands of Georgians from abroad amid the coronavirus outbreak.



► On June 9th, PM Gakharia said that 'imported infections from tourism could cost the country so much that it would leave no cost to tourists.'

Czech Beer Days

The Embassy of the Czech Republic to Georgia along with

the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic organized Czech Beer Days 2020 in Tbilisi. The Czech Beer Days Tbilisi took place on 23rd through 25th of June, at recently opened Czech Pub U LVA. The event aimed at introducing traditional Czech Beer - a delicious beverage with a rich flavor and Czech cuisine.

During the Czech Beer Days visitors had an opportunity to benefit 1+1 offer on purchasing beer (buy one 0.5 L of Pilsner Urquell and get 1 for free) and 50% discount on national Czech dishes. During the Czech Beer Days Tbilisi, visitors had an opportunity to taste original, imported Czech beer Pilsner Urquell.

Pilsner Urquell was first brewed in 1842 in Plzen (Pilsen) in Western Bohemia (part of the Czech Republic) and is regarded as the historically first lager type beer. This crisp, refreshing golden lager was made with local ingredients: sweet Moravian barley, delicately bitter Saaz hops, soft Pilsen water, and bottom-fermenting H-strain yeast.

The beer was named after the city where it was brewed - Pilsen, where it is still brewed today. Over the last 178 years, pilsner-style lager has become the world's most popular beer, with seven out of 10 beers in the world imitating this innovation. There are many pilsner-style beers out there, but only one original.



HE Petr Mikyska - Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Georgia and Kubicek Leos - Chef

