

NATO Deputy Assistant Sec-Gen Pays Official Visit to Georgia



► James Appathurai served as NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the South Caucasus and Central Asia from 2010 to 2019.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary-General for Modern Security Challenges James Appathurai addressed the Committee on Defense and Security of the Parliament of Georgia. The topic of Appathurai's report was NATO cooperation with Georgia in the field of cyber security and combating hybrid threats.

Before the meeting, Appathurai commented on the media and stressed the current security situation in the world and the unwavering attitude of the Alliance towards Georgia.

"It is clear that the security situation has deteriorated, it is clear. But what has not changed is NATO's commitment to its open-door policy. In my opinion, this is still the case with Georgia. I am convinced that when NATO leaders meet in Madrid at the end of June, they will reaffirm their commitment to the open door," Appathurai said.

Appathurai stated he has specific issues and ideas on what practical help to provide to their ally in the fight against cyber and hybrid threats. According to James Appathurai, Russia carried out cyber-attacks in Ukraine before and after the war, so it is important to increase Georgia's defense capabilities in this direction.

"We also have concrete ideas on how to protect Georgia from coordinated attacks, which include information, cyber, or energy attacks.

As for energy security, while European countries stop receiving energy

from Russia, Georgia's role in supplying energy to Europe is even more important. So it is very important to consider how Georgia can protect itself in terms of energy security, as well as hybrid, cyber and physical attacks," Appathurai said.

Appathurai was also asked to assess Georgia's position on sanctions against Russia.

He added that the North Atlantic Alliance wants to see every country do its utmost to support Ukraine and put pressure on Russia to end this war. He also clarified that NATO, as an organization, does not participate in sanctions.

According to Appathurai, as to what Georgia should do to become a NATO member, the Alliance expects to see Georgia continue democratic reforms and reduce political polarization.

Before the closing of the sitting, Irakli Beraia, Chairman of the Defense and Security Committee of the Georgian Parliament, spoke about the security situation in the world and the challenges in the Black Sea region in the wake of the Russian war in Ukraine, as well as the importance of Georgia-NATO partnership.

"Georgia is an enhanced aspirant partner of NATO, has all the practical tools to join the Alliance, and has never been so close to NATO as it is today. At a time when the rule-based international order is at stake when the Russian Federation is waging one of the most brutal wars in the history of mankind against our strategic partner, a sovereign, European state, the international

architecture, especially the Black Sea security measures, the expansion of the alliance and Georgia's integration into it is of particular importance."

According to him, NATO needs a responsible ally like Georgia in the future.

Beraia stressed how much Georgia welcomed NATO's commitment to open-door policy and the decision of the Bucharest Summit in 2008 to emphasize that all countries decide for themselves whether to choose alliances and that no third party can veto it.

"We expect that the communiqué of the Madrid Summit and the new strategic concept of NATO properly reflect these aspects and further specify Georgia's Euro-Atlantic perspective."

During the visit, Appathurai will also hold meetings with Georgian government officials. In addition to the Parliament, meetings are planned at the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Defense. He will also meet with the ambassadors.

NEWS IN BRIEF

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

Freedom House Report, Democracy Rate Drops in Georgia



According to a Freedom House report, democracy in Georgia has deteriorated. According to the rating, the democracy rate fell from 3.18 to 3.07. The Freedom House report Nations in Transit 2022 assesses the state of democracy in the regions. The ranking is based on the events of the past year and is based on seven indicators: National Democratic Governance, Electoral Process, Media Independence, Local Democratic Governance, Judicial Reform and Independence,

Corruption, Civil Society. The rating is based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 being the highest score in a democracy. Accordingly, Freedom House assigns each country one type of regime. In the case of Georgia, it is a "transitional or hybrid regime".

"Countries that receive this score are typically electoral democracies, where democratic institutions are fragile and there are significant challenges to the protection of political rights and civil liberties," the report said.

EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.0530 | EURO - 3.2930 | GBP - 3.9756 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 3.8419 | SWISS FRANC - 3.2194 |

Georgian and Ukrainian Agencies Sign Memorandum on Strategic Partnership



► The memorandum focuses on bilateral cooperation between the sides in detecting, preventing, and investigating crimes committed in the financial and economic fields.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

The Investigation Service of the Ministry of Finance of Georgia and the Economic Security Bureau of Ukraine signed a memorandum on strategic partnership and cooperation on Wednesday. The document was signed in an online format by Soso Ramishvili, the Head of the Investigation Service, and Vadim Melnik, the Director of the Economic Security Bureau of Ukraine.

According to the Investigation Service of the Ministry of Finance of Georgia, the memorandum involves bilateral cooperation between the sides in detecting, preventing, and investigating crimes committed in the financial and economic fields. Ramishvili welcomed the cooperation between the two countries and expressed hope that the partnership would continue in the future.

"I am glad that despite such a difficult situation, our agencies have not stopped communicating and we have managed to

formalize the already established professional relations. I hope that our relations will continue in the future and will be fruitful for the agencies of both countries," Ramishvili said. He also expressed his condolences to the Ukrainian families of the victims of the war, expressing his support and solidarity with Ukrainian colleagues and people.

The Ukrainian official stressed that communication, exchange of information, and attraction of foreign experience would be useful in fulfilling the main tasks of the Bureau. According to him, establishing cooperation with foreign partners is one of the priority tasks of the Economic Security Bureau of Ukraine.

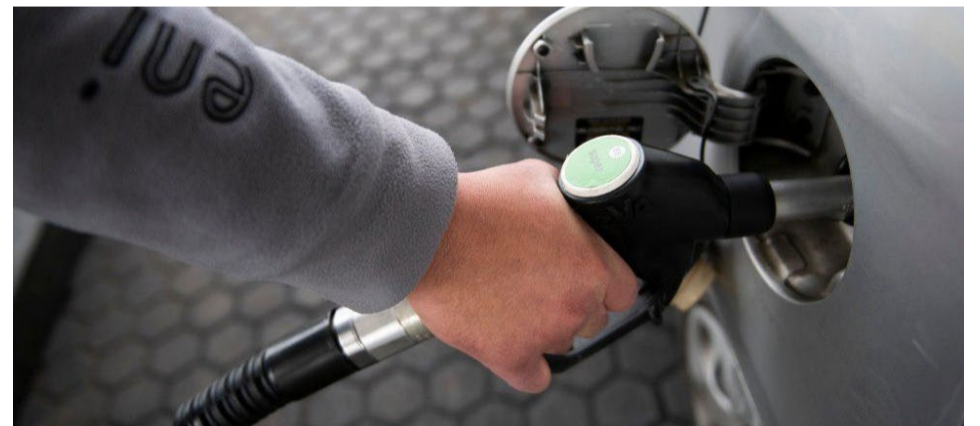
"Signing a memorandum with the Investigation Service of the Ministry of Finance of Georgia is the first important step in gaining international experience, especially in the current difficult situation and in terms of identifying new risks for the economies of both countries," Melnik said adding that "strengthening our partnership will definitely be mutually beneficial and effective."

As the Georgian Investigation Service said, the two officials also discussed specific areas of their activities during the online meeting to enhance future cooperation between the law enforcement agencies of Georgia and Ukraine.

NEWS IN BRIEF

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

Germany to Stop Importing Russian Oil by the End of the Year



Germany says it will stop importing Russian oil by the end of this year.

"We will halve the oil by summer and it will be zero by the end of the year. Next will be gas," said Foreign Minister Annalena Berbock.

The Ukrainian authorities say that buying oil and gas from Russia is a direct financing of the war. Due to its

invasion of Ukraine, the US has already refused to import Russian oil, while the UK plans to phase out imports by the end of the year.

According to the European Union, Europe will be independent of Russian energy until 2030. According to Berbock, Germany has already rejected the North Stream 2 pipeline project.



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THURSDAY		APRIL 21	
Day		Partly cloudy	High: 20°C
Night		Rain	Low: 9°C
FRIDAY		APRIL 22	
Day		Some clouds	High: 22°C
Night		Partly cloudy	Low: 8°C

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