

## Gov't Interest is to not 'Destroy' Georgia by Sanctioning Russia, Irakli Kobakhidze Says

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Irakli Kobakhidze, the chairman of the ruling party Georgian Dream spoke about sanctions against Russia in Parliament. According to him, Georgia has the military resources to worsen the situation for Russia, but they will refrain from doing so to not 'destroy' Georgia.

According to Kobakhidze, it is in the interest of the government not to destroy the country and Georgian authorities are planning to follow this interest until the end.

"There is a specific interest in opening a second front, in order to aggravate the situation on the first front for Russia. We have 25 thousand well-trained soldiers, we have about a hundred tanks, two fighter planes, etc.

There are certain resources for us to make the situation worse for Russia, but it will ultimately come at the cost of destroying Georgia. It is in our interest not to destroy the country, so we will follow this interest to the end."

Kobakhidze also noted that, given the last two weeks, Russia has the advantage on the front, because Ukraine "has not returned" any populated points during this time.

"If we take the last couple of weeks, none of the settlements were taken by the Ukrainian side, and at least in the last week, about ten settlements were taken by the Russian side. This shows that, at this stage, the Russian side has the advantage.

In general, before the war, Russia occupied Crimea and part of Donbas. Today, Russia occupies 80% of Kherson, as well



as part of Kharkiv district and 80% of Zaporizhia district," Kobakhidze said, adding that under these conditions, the interest of some forces to 'get Georgia involved in a military conflict' is increasing.

Kobakhidze also said that the Georgian government is actively protecting people's best interests,

similarly to the United States, member states of the EU, etc.:

The United States of America, Japan, South Korea, all try their best to protect their national interests and not harm their own people. When we do this in Georgia, we are 'roasted' by the opposition, but if you really look at it, why didn't the United States

of America cut off trade in specific areas? There are very important areas where trade with Russia has not stopped.

The same applies to the member states of the European Union, where the volume of funds has increased. They themselves say that they were transferring a billion euros a day to

the Russian Federation and thereby directly financing the war. Why - Because in the end, the protection of people's interests turned out to be a priority for them. At such a time, our discrimination is absolutely unfair. We protect the interests of our country and will continue to do so, of course," he said.



## Kelly Degan: US Has Never Pressured Georgia to Join War

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The US Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degan in an interview with 'Interpressnews', responded to the Georgian government's recent statements saying that international partners are pressuring the country to be involved in the Ukraine

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6702; Euro - 2.8758; GBP - 3.2430; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.6662; Swiss Franc - 2.9084

# Kelly Degnan: US Has Never Pressured Georgia to Join War

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war. Degnan once again denied allegations and added that their discussion with Georgia was always about what is convenient for the country to help Ukraine as they understand the 'sensitive' nature of this situation.

As the ambassador noted, the United States of America has always been understanding and sensitive to the situation in Georgia, because 20% of the territory of this country is still oc-

cupied. According to Kelly Degnan, Georgia is in a comfortable position regarding the aid to Ukraine.

"Georgia has taken the position that is convenient for it regarding Russia's war against Ukraine. From the very beginning, we have understood and treated the fact that Georgia is in a sensitive situation, 20% of its territory is occupied. Our discussion with Georgia was always about what is convenient for Georgia to help Ukraine.

The government of Georgia knows very well that we never pressured Georgia to get involved in this war. The only discussion we have had regarding this issue is what kind of assistance would be comfortable for Georgia.

At stake here is Ukraine's ability to defend its identity, sovereignty and territory. The United States coordinated support to help Ukraine defend its identity, territory, and sovereignty. We have asked all our

partners and allies to contribute as they see fit. This kind of misinformation is being spread by those who are trying to confuse Georgians and who are trying to further divide this country by those who are trying to undermine the longstanding partnership between Georgia and the United States of America.

The United States and its friends of Georgia have spent 30 years helping Georgia build a strong, independent country capable of making its own decisions, with its own identity and sovereignty. We want to help Georgia protect its identity, just as we are trying to help Ukraine," said Kelly Degnan.

The US Ambassador to Georgia said that Russia wants its partners to be weak and dependent. Degnan also discussed the country's work that has been done, in order to reduce its dependency on Russia, and said that the US has been helping Georgia to create a strong, independent state that has the abil-

ity to protect its own freedom and economy for 30 years.

According to Kelly Degnan, Lavrov has lost trust for a long time, although his statements made it clear what Russia wants.

"Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov does not enjoy much credibility. This has been the case for years, but this is a good example of what Russia wants. Russia wants weak and dependent partners. If you look around you will see who are Russia's partners, they are weak and dependent on Russia. What the United States of America has been creating together with Georgia for 30 years is a strong, independent state that has the ability to protect its own freedom and its own economy," the ambassador said.

According to Kelly Degnan, Georgia can access markets other than Russian and attract tourists from all over the world, not only from Russia. She said it is 'wrong' to say that Georgia

is dependent on Russia.

"This is an excluded country. No one wants to get closer to Russia now. Georgia has spent years trying to reduce its dependence on Russia, be it energy or trade, and has made quite good progress in this regard. Georgia does not need Russia to sell its goods. There are many other markets that Georgia has successfully entered. Georgia also attracts tourists from all over the world. It is not dependent on Russian tourists, so it is wrong to think that Georgia is dependent on Russia.

It's not, and as I said before, this is something we've been working on together with another friend of Georgia to help Georgia reduce its dependence on a country like Russia, which only uses this to make the country weak, dependent on it, and use it against the country when it needs or wants. This is not the situation in which Georgia or any other country wants to be," said Kelly Degnan.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Ruling Party's Statements Contradict Those of Our Partner Countries, President Zourabichvili says



The President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, stated that the messages of the ruling party Georgian Dream contradict the statements of the state leaders of all partner countries.

According to the president, Georgia's defeatism is in unison only with the Russian narrative.

Salome Zourabichvili's statement was released by the presidential administration:

"The certain caution ex-

pressed so far by the government of the occupied territories is understood and understood by everyone, although caution has never excluded, especially for us and in our country, neither dignity nor solidarity.

Today's situation is completely different. The new mes-

contradict the statements of the state leaders of all our partner countries. Our defeatism is in unison only with the Russian narrative, echoes only Russian propaganda. I can neither explain nor understand nor share this."

### Strasbourg Court Orders Georgian Gov't to Pay Euro10K to Gigi Ugulava

The European Court of Human Rights of Strasbourg has published its verdict in the case of Gigi Ugulava v. Georgia. The issue of the pretrial detention of Gigi Ugulava in 2014-2015 was appealed in court.

In the case, the Strasbourg court found a violation of several clauses of Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights and ordered Gigi Ugulava

to pay the government 10,000 euros.

"The applicant disputed the legality of the restraining measure (imprisonment) applied to him in the framework of two criminal cases from July 2014 to September 2015. He also claimed that the only purpose of

ment reads

According to the court's decision, Ugulava's claim was partially satisfied and the state was ordered to pay 10,000 euros as compensation.

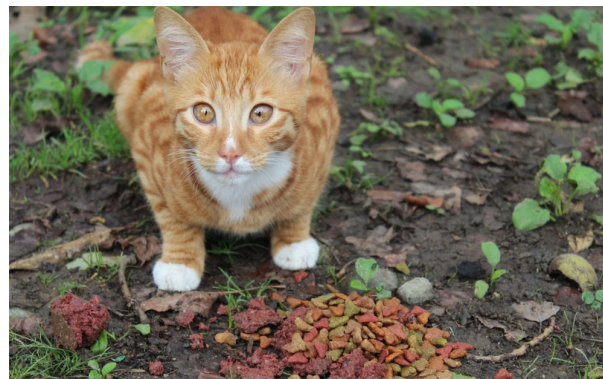
The court established a violation of the first and third articles of Article 5 of the Convention,



his imprisonment was to remove him from political life," the state-

which implies the right to freedom and security.

## Georgia: street cats and dogs in Batumi fed as part of EU and UNDP project



Over 50 street cats and dogs are receiving their daily food rations in Batumi, Georgia,

as part of an EU-supported initiative.

They were fed by members of the 'Eureka' youth club, established at the Black Sea College, who decided to raise public awareness of the need to care for homeless animals.

This initiative is part of the 'Month of Good Deeds' an-

nounced by the 'Mziuri sahli' (Sunny house) non-formal education youth centre with support from the European Union Delegation to Georgia and the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) Georgia. Nine colleges and vocational schools joined the activity.

The EU and UNDP joint project for 'Lifelong Learning Opportunities Through Local Partnerships' promotes non-formal education and helps young people to unlock their talents and potential.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

### Weather

Friday, February 10

Day Light Snow  
High: 3°C

Night Cloudy  
Low: -2°C

Saturday, February 11

Day Mostly Cloudy  
High: 5°C

Night Partly Cloudy  
Low: -2°C

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