

## Minister of Justice Candidate Rati Bregadze Speaks on Saakashvili's Potential Transfer

By Liza Mchedlidze

Rati Bregadze, the candidate for the position of the Minister of Justice, stated that the decision to transfer Saakashvili to the penitentiary institution will be made only after they receive confirmation from the doctors recommending the transfer.

Bregadze stated that doctors have reported an improvement in Saakashvili's health.

"It is not just my opinion; it is the assessment of the doctors that Saakashvili's health condition has improved, and each of us is happy. We eagerly await Saakashvili's full recovery. We have done everything, we are currently doing everything, and we will continue to do so in the future to ensure his health remains in the best condition.

As for the issue of transfer, the relevant decision will only be made after we receive confirmation from the doctors recommending the transfer to a penitentiary institution. We maintain regular communication with the medical professionals," stated Bregadze.

Additionally, Rati Bregadze was asked to evaluate the statement from Mykhailo Podoliak, an adviser to the administration of the President of Ukraine, who stated that Saakashvili's fate is a priority for the Ukrainian government, and they are interested in Saakashvili being free. In response, Bregadze stated



that Georgia is a legal state, and their actions are in accordance with the law.

"Georgia is a legal state; therefore, we act strictly within the

law. The Ministry of Justice is responsible for the execution of sentences, while at the same time protecting the rights of any prisoner. We carry out sentences

while protecting the rights of all prisoners. We have stated many times that under no circumstances will we act on the basis of feelings or political state-

ments. There are strictly written legal norms, which we strictly adhere to," Bregadze stated.

## State Security Service Successfully Prevents Explosive Device Transfer from Ukraine to Russia via Georgia

By Liza Mchedlidze

During a briefing at the State Security Service, officials

revealed the successful prevention of the transfer of explosive devices from Ukraine to Russia via Georgia. According to them,

six containers, each holding an explosive device, were discovered during a vehicle search and subsequently seized.

"As a result of the comprehensive actions carried out by the Counter-Terrorist Center, based on the testimonies of the interviewed witnesses and the recovered audio files, it has been determined that the mentioned explosive devices and substances were transported from the Ukrainian city of Odessa through Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey to Georgia on January 19 of this year. The transportation occurred via the 'Sarp' checkpoint using a minivan owned by a Ukrainian citizen. The intended destination was the Russian Federation, specifically the city of Voronezh, through the 'Darial' checkpoint.

Later, at the request of the instigator, the decision was changed, and the persons involved in the process tried to take one of the containers, where three explosive devices were placed, out of the country from the mentioned point. The second container, containing three explosive devices, was left at a specific address in Tbilisi. The mentioned package was intercepted

and confiscated by the personnel of the counter-terrorist center as it was about to cross the Georgian-Russian state border from the Georgian side," the statement reads.

The State Security Service has launched an investigation to uncover individuals involved in the creation of specialized explosive devices. The objectives encompass determining the transportation route, identifying the final destination, discerning potential targets for the attack, and gathering relevant information.

As per their statement, the three devices left in Tbilisi were either intended for export to Russia or meant to be left in Georgia for activation. The ultimate determination of their purpose will be established through the ongoing investigation.

The investigation is currently underway under Article 236, Part 3 of the Criminal Code. It is noted that the charges may be reclassified under Article 18-322, which pertains to the preparation of a terrorist act.



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Defense and Security Committee Chairman Irakli Beraia Meets with U.S. Ambassador Robin Dunnigan



Chairman of the Defense and Security Committee, Irakli Beraia, met with the United States Ambassador to Georgia, Robin Dunnigan. The meeting,

as reported by the Parliament's press service, focused on strategic cooperation directions between the two countries and addressed American support in defense and security matters.

"The role of the United States of America in strengthening Georgia's security and defense

for the enhancement of regional security as a whole. Further deepening and strengthening these relations with the United States is of particular interest to us. During the meeting with the ambassador, we discussed the existing strategic partnership between the two countries, with a focus on cooperation in the field of defense and security," said Beraia.

According to the assessment of the US ambassador, a productive and interesting meeting took place with the chairman of the committee.

"We discussed the US-Georgia strategic partnership, with a specific focus on our existing relations in the field of security. I believe our security relations represent one of the strongest pillars of our strategic partnership. Additionally, we explored how the United States can continue supporting Georgia's accession to NATO and the European Union. I hold great respect for our partnership and highly appreciate the role that Committee Chairman Irakli Beraia has played in strengthening our defense and security relations," said Robin Dunnigan.

capabilities is special. The strategic partnership between the two countries is of great importance, not only for the protection of our national interests but also

Protest Held Outside Parliament Against Tsulukiani's Candidacy for Minister of Culture

In parallel with the committee meetings, where ministers presented the government plan, representatives from the cultural sphere and scientists organized a protest at the parliament opposing Tea Tsulukiani's appointment as the Minister of Culture in Georgia. Rally participants demanded that the committee refrain from expressing confidence in Tea Tsulukiani.

"On February 5, the Parliament of Georgia will once again listen to Tea Tsulukiani's strategy of culture management, which, in reality, is the destruction of culture, in order to once again express confidence in her for the post of Minister of Culture on February 8.

The representatives of the cultural sphere express no confidence in Tea Tsulukiani! Tsulukiani is destroying Georgian culture! Tsulukiani cannot be the Minister of Culture! Culture is alive, independent and political!" the protest organizers stated.



Georgia: Winners of 'EU Prize for Journalism 2023' announced in Tbilisi

On 2 February, the 12th award ceremony of the EU Prize for Journalism 2023 took place in Tbilisi.

EU Ambassador to Georgia Pawel Herczynski awarded the winners in six categories covering print, broadcast, online, and photo journalism. The winner of the EU Monitoring Mission's (EUMM) special prize for peace journalism was awarded by the Acting Head of the EUMM Mission in Georgia, Tibor Kozma.

Established by the European Union Delegation to Georgia in 2012, the EU Prize for Journalism encourages professionalism and ethical conduct in Georgian journalism. The Special Prize for conflict-sensitive journalism rewards media outlets contributing to confidence building and



dio Liberty)

- Best blog, opinion or column in print, online or broadcast media: Winner: Mariam Natroshvili (Indigo)
- Best documentary photo reflecting EU values: Winner: Zurab Tsertsvadze (Agence France Press)
- Best Student work in print, online or broadcast media: Winner: Anastasia Bakhturidze (Indigo)
- The EUMM Special Prize for Peace Journalism: Winner: Mamuka Kuparadze (Co-author Madina Gagloeva, Studio "RE")

The winners of the first six categories will receive a cash prize of approximately 5,200 GEL each, while the winner of the EUMM Special Prize will receive a one-month fellowship at the Institute of War and Peace Reporting in London.

The next edition of the EU Prize for Journalism will be announced on 3 May, 2024. (euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Tuesday, February 6

Day Mostly Cloudy High: 9°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 5°C

Wednesday, February 7

Day Partly Cloudy High: 12°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 3°C

peace and is handed out by the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM).

The winners and finalists of the EU Prize for Journalism 2023 are:

- Best story in print or online media: Winner: Lana Kokaia (Radio Liberty)
- Best feature story in broadcast or online media: Winner: Sesili Botchoidze (Formula TV)
- Best investigative story / feature in print, online or broadcast media: Winner: Giorgi Mgeladze (Ra-

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