

**Advanced Research
and Assessment Group**

Caucasus Series

08/22



**Georgia and Russia: A
Further Deterioration in Relations**

C W Blandy

July 2008

Defence Academy of the United Kingdom

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Key Points

- * Moscow's attempts to destabilise Georgia have not declined since the accession of President Medvedev.
- * Two recent incidents: the introduction of Russian railway troops without informing or seeking permission from Tbilisi, and the arrest of Russian peacekeepers carrying unauthorised anti-tank missiles have further exacerbated the situation.
- * With the Russian Gazprom planning to prospect for oil and gas off the coast of the unrecognised Republic of Abkhazia, the stage is set for a further escalation.

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Recent Moves

Whilst Georgia has made significant progress along the path of democratisation over the last 10 years, it had experienced some 200 years of direct rule under Russia and then the Soviet Union. Reliable institutions could not be created overnight even with the help of friendly, well-disposed groups of nations and organisations such as the Baltic Republics, the USA, Turkey, UNO, World Bank, EU and NATO. A common border continues to bring aggravation from the large land mass of Russia to the north, and Russia dominates the small republic. In practice it appears that Moscow chooses not to fully recognise Georgian sovereignty even after 17 years of independence. Words which Alexander Rondeli wrote in 2002 have continued to retain their resonance:

*“[It is difficult]...to find common language with a country which is much bigger and stronger and which has assisted two secessionist parts of your territory with military force, has given [Russian] citizenship to people who live there, did nothing to restore Georgia’s territorial integrity, aggravated Tbilisi’s relations with the regions and keeps applying pressure on Georgia”.*¹

Moscow’s attempts to destabilise Georgia have neither stopped nor declined since Georgia became a sovereign republic.² Moreover, the scale of provocation has increased since the USA’s proposed establishment of a missile defence shield in Poland and the Czech Republic. Tension between the West and Russia has grown with Moscow’s withdrawal from the Conventional Forces Europe Treaty, the Kosovan declaration of independence, and Russian opposition to the accession of Ukraine and Georgia to membership of the alliance at the recent NATO Bucharest summit.³ The deterioration in relations has been read in Moscow as an almost subconscious invitation to Russia to indulge in another round of its popular sport of ‘Georgia-baiting’.⁴

The visit of Matthew Bryza from the US State Department and the US ambassador to Georgia John Taft to Sukhumi in May 2008 underlined the international community’s serious concerns about the deteriorating relationship between Abkhazia and Georgia over the continued presence of Georgian troops in the upper reaches of the Kodori gorge. *“Over the whole of the previous week the situation in the unrecognised republic was balanced on the edge of war, with both sides resonating with aggressive statements”.*⁵ The ataman of the Don Cossacks, Nikolay Kozitsyn, had visited the head of the unrecognised republic, Sergey Bagapsh, and promised some 10,000 to 15,000 volunteers in the event of a Georgian attack.⁶

On 29 April 2008 Russia announced that it was increasing its peacemaking contingent in Abkhazia by 1,000 men to the maximum 3,000 allowed under an earlier agreement. On 30 April 2008 an armoured column and wheeled troop-

carrying vehicles accompanied by police vehicles with flashing lights travelled through Sukhumi. The new arrivals occupied observation posts and set about sorting out a new base in the Tkvarcheli rayon of Abkhazia in the immediate vicinity of the Kodori gorge. Georgia had reinforced its own military group in the upper part of the gorge a few days previously.

On 26 May 2008 the UN Monitoring Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) unequivocally placed responsibility on Russia for the destruction of a Georgian unmanned reconnaissance aircraft in Abkhazia on 20 April 2008.⁷ Diplomatic relations between Georgia and Russia deteriorated further still when the Russian MOD on 30 and 31 May deployed an additional 400 Russian railway troops and engineers to Abkhazia without either informing Georgia or obtaining Georgian permission.⁸ In the past the deployment of Soviet railway troops was synonymous with the opening of a new front or direction in a military campaign, and more recently Russian railway troops prepared for the forceful intervention into Chechnya in 1999.⁹ Their deployment to Abkhazia provided additional grounds for Tbilisi's concern about an insidious, step by step but illegal annexation of the unrecognised Abkhaz Republic by Russia. Tbilisi considered the deployment of Russian railway troops into Abkhazia as an act of aggression. Georgian officials were not satisfied with Moscow's explanation that troops were deployed for the restoration and repair of the Abkhaz section of the Russo-Georgian railway, even though Guram Gubaz, the General Director of the "Abkhaz Railway" in a statement to the press confirmed that the request came from the Abkhaz authorities to Moscow on account of the "*state of the rail sector Sukhumi-Ochamchire being so bad that the restoration could take up to four months*".¹⁰

Deployment of Russian Railway Troops

The Russian defence ministry stated that Russian railway troops' subunits entered the territory of the neighbouring self-proclaimed state "*in accordance with the decision of the president of the Russian Federation concerning the provision of humanitarian aid to the Republic of Abkhazia and to take measures for the restoration of railway routes and infrastructure*".¹¹ The Russian reasoning behind their deployment is overtly linked to Kosovan independence:

*"The self-proclaimed 'independence' on 17 February 2008 of Kosovo, an inalienable part of Serbia, in a literal sense sold by the leading countries of the West, has created an extremely dangerous precedent for the whole system of international relations and has even complicated the political-military situation not only in the area of the Western Balkans."*¹²

It had certainly provided Moscow with an opportunity to manipulate the Georgian-Abkhaz dispute to the detriment of Georgia and its Western allies.

An article in the Russian military newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* on 17 April 2008 trumpeted the fact that Russia is stepping out onto a new level of relations with the unrecognised republics of Abkhazia and South Osetia.¹³ It stated that the fulfilment of the Russian president's mission would permit comprehensive mechanisms for the protection of rights, freedoms and the legal interests of 'our' citizens resident in Abkhazia and South Osetia. The mission for the Russian government was to organise cooperation with the government organs of Abkhazia and South Osetia, including collaboration in the economic-trade, social and technical-scientific areas and in the spheres of information, culture and education. A communication from the Russian foreign ministry noted that after years of extended conflict the inhabitants of these

unrecognised republics appeared to be in a calamitous situation. In fact they had lost the possibility of realising the universal rights of a deserving life and a steady development.¹⁴

Whilst the construction of the Transcaucasus Railway was started in 1871, its later development and operation has been curtailed by both politics and war: the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the West closed the Kars to Gyumri line and more recently the war between Georgia and Abkhazia has left this sector of the line in a dilapidated state.¹⁵ Some details of the railway can be found in the Appendix.

The task which the railway troops will be undertaking is the restoration of 50 kilometres of railway line on the sector between Sukhumi and Ochamchire.¹⁶ This includes: 55 man-made objects, amongst which are one tunnel, two large bridges,¹⁷ 44 minor, medium and trestle bridges, and eight pipelines. There are around 50 network pylons and supports and a complete absence of cable support brackets over a sector of 14 kilometres. According to the independent commentator Vladimir Socor, the Russians would almost certainly then go on to repair the Ochamchire-Inguri section which would enable the transportation of armour, artillery and heavy equipment to the line of the Georgian-Abkhaz internal border along the Inguri River.¹⁸ The restoration of a north-south railway line would also benefit Moscow's relations with Yerevan, which have become cooler since the Armenian presidential elections on 19 February 2008. Map 1 below shows the Inguri River and approximate position of the Kodori gorge marked by the letter K.

Map 1 – Russia, Georgia and Abkhazia and the Black Sea Coast



The servicemen belong to the MOD's Volgogradskiy 76 Railway Corps (76 ZhDK).¹⁹ The order concerning the deployment of troops from 76 ZhDK into Abkhazia was

received at the end of May. By 5 June 2008, 400 servicemen from the Corps were already in Abkhazia. The majority of the troops dispatched to Abkhazia were serving on a contract basis in 37 Separate Railway Brigade which is part of 76 ZhDK. From the beginning of 2008 the brigade was fully up to strength with contract servicemen and is considered to be one of the most combat efficient units of the Volgograd ZhDK. The Volgograd railway troops are expected to carry out their task in the course of the summer. Officers of 76 ZhDK emphasised that the deployment was of a peaceful nature: *"We are occupied exclusively in engineering work. In contrast to our operations in Chechnya during the second war, where our servicemen carried weapons, in Abkhazia soldiers and officers in the corps do not have weapons."*²⁰ However, in the event of a deterioration of the situation railway troops are not without means to protect themselves. A significant part of 76 ZhDK is made up of normal motor rifle subunits, the so-called railway spetsnaz which provide combat protection for railway troops. The Volgograd railway unit has the status of a corps, and it could include other military subunits, including tank, motor rifle and artillery troops. The 76 ZhDK is the only railway troop formation in the south of Russia. During the second war in Chechnya, railway troops not only worked on engineer tasks but also participated in combat operations, controlled and operated armoured trains and in 2001 restored eight railway bridges in Chechnya.²¹ It is also of interest to note the statement by the commander of Russian railway troops, Lieutenant General Sergey Krimets, concerning some of the past tasks undertaken by railway troops in Box 1 below.

Box 1 – Previous Tasks of Railway Troops²²

Railway troops are well known for the fact that they constructed the eastern, most difficult sector of the Baykal-Amur main line (BAM) from the geographical and topographical aspects. Two separate battalions in Chechnya very quickly restored 18 railway bridges over mountain rivers including the Rivers Argun, Dzhalka, Aksay, and Terek, and in parallel cleared mines from the tracks and adjacent areas. Railway troops have modern and well-tries equipment at their disposal. All the equipment is at world standard level, and sometimes even higher. It is possible to judge this from an event in 2005 when railway troops in front of two ministers - of transport and defence - crossed the Volga in the area of Yaroslav with a floating railway bridge of half a kilometre in length ferrying a complete train.

The Russian Peacemaking Mission in Abkhazia

Fourteen years have elapsed since the introduction of Russian peacemakers into the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict zone.²³ The Russian peacemakers are acting under the CIS collective forces mandate for the 'maintenance of peace in the conflict zone' (KSPM), agreed after the conclusion of the 'explosive phase' of the conflict in September-October 1993 when the Abkhaz forces ejected the Georgians and took Sukhumi under their control and separate armed clashes took place in the areas of Gali and the Kodori gorge. In April 1994 a declaration about measures for the political normalisation of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict was signed and in May 1994 the leaders of Georgia and Abkhazia, Edouard Shevardnadze and Vladislav Ardzinba, turned to the CIS heads of state council with a request for the introduction and deployment to the conflict zone of peacemaking forces. At the same time an agreement was signed in Moscow which provided for a cease-fire, the separation of the warring sides and the stationing of CIS collective peacemaking forces. This agreement was also supported by the UNO, in as much it foresaw the monitoring of the situation by its own observer group in the conflict zone. The

UNOMIG observer mission currently consists of some 121 observers and the UN Security Council regularly extends their mandate.²⁴

On 21 June 1994 CIS Collective forces undertook responsibility for the support and maintenance of peace in the region. The KSPM mandate has not changed since its inception, although there have been discussions both within the CIS and the UNO. 1,500 to 2,000 men have controlled their zone of responsibility, but by the end of June 2008 their numbers had increased to 3,000 men.²⁵

From the beginning these forces had two tasks. The first and by far the more important one was the banning of any resumption of shooting in the conflict zone. The second task, which the KSPM could not fully accomplish, was to advance towards peaceful normalisation. Due to the inability to fulfil this task official Tbilisi has often criticised the Russian side. However, it should be remembered that without the political will of Russia, and in particular of the conflicting sides it was not possible to resolve the fundamental political problems, the return of refugees and the status of the disputed territory.²⁶ At least one Russian commentator has noted that there appears to be no real alternative to the Russian peacemaking mission: the North Atlantic Alliance does not envisage dispatching its own peacemakers to Georgia.²⁷

On 29 April 2008 the outgoing Commander of the North Caucasus Military District (NCMD) Army General Aleksandr Baranov, opined that whilst the counter-terrorist operation on the territory of the North Caucasus had been concluded,²⁸ the prime tasks of troops in the NCMD remained the maintenance of peace and stability in the North Caucasus region. However, *“It was important to take into account the special geographical and political-military character of the North Caucasus Military District, the presence of the unregulated Georgian-Osetian and Georgian-Abkhaz conflicts in the direct vicinity of the state border, in the district’s zone of responsibility.”*²⁹ Intemperate, hot-headed action by Georgians in the upper Kodori gorge could well be the catalyst to set the Caucasus alight once again: events in 2001 illustrate this point.³⁰

Reporting on the handover of command in NCMD from Army General Baranov to Colonel General Sergey Makarov,³¹ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* inferred that the zone of Georgian conflicts with the Abkhaz and South Osetians now demanded an increased level of attention owing to the strained relationship between Moscow and Tbilisi.³² Moreover, troops from NCMD have a direct responsibility for peace-making operations in the region.³³ For instance, servicemen from 135 Motor Rifle Regiment based at Prokhladnyy are responsible for the maintenance of peace in the zone of the Georgian-Osetian conflict. Collective forces for the preservation of peace in the zone of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict are provided from 131 (Maykop) Separate Motor Rifle Brigade.³⁴ Leaving aside the activities of Russian peacemakers in South Osetia, in the zone of Georgian-Abkhaz conflict Russian ‘blue berets’ operated over an area of more than 3,000 sq km, where *“many spoke about the fact that more than 50,000 people had returned to their former places of residence”*.³⁵ There is a tendency to forget that this moderate success came at the cost of 117 Russian peacemakers’ lives.³⁶

Some insights into the rotation of servicemen from 131 Separate Motor Rifle Brigade based in Maykop, Republic of Adygeya in December 2007 are listed in Box 2 below. They include movement and handover procedures of a subunit travelling from its parent base at Maykop in NCMD to its peacemaking location in Abkhazia. However, it should also be remembered that Tbilisi considers the routine rotation of Russian peacemakers in the zone of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict as being illegal.³⁷

Box 2 - Rotation Procedure³⁸

The military troop train of four tens of passenger and freight wagons, including open flats (wagons) with equipment entered Abkhazia, covered from the air by one Mi-24 attack helicopter. The new replacement of peacemakers from 131 Separate Motor Rifle Brigade based at Maykop numbered 600 men including motor riflemen, combat engineers and men from the subunit's integral mortar detachments and took over from identical subunits with a similar number of 'blue berets' in the conflict zone. Originally the rotation had been planned for the end of December (2007). The date was brought forward to allow servicemen to vote in the State Duma elections at their permanent base location and the rotation was switched to the first ten days of December. To gain some perspective in relation to other peacemaking subunits it will be remembered that the rotation of the peacemaking battalion responsible for the southern security zone (south of the Inguri River, Zugdidskiy rayon of Georgia) had taken place in May 2007.

The troop train arrived at the detraining and unloading station at Ochamchire on 5 December 2007, although the peacemakers had crossed the border the day before. The wagons spent the night at the capital of the unrecognised republic on account of the fact that movement on the sector between Sukhumi – Ochamchire at night was somewhat dangerous due to the state of the track. A special temporary movement control group was formed from staff of the Joint Command HQ of the CIS Forces for the Maintenance of Peace for implementing measures connected with the rotation of blue beret battalions, deployment of a field communications centre, a medical post, and protection and logistic subunits. Peacemakers are obliged keep to defined timetables relating to the replacement of subunits, movement control points and observation posts, and only the shortest possible time is allowed for unloading logistical resources. In truth a battalion leaves Russia with a full scale of rations and even firewood for heating. A special requirement was the replacement of combat and technical equipment which had become worn out or was beyond local repair, requiring major workshop overhaul for armour or other stipulated vehicles. Due to the time restrictions infantry vehicles, heavy plant such as earthmoving vehicles, excavators and radio trailers were assembled for loading long before the arrival of the train with the new subunit.

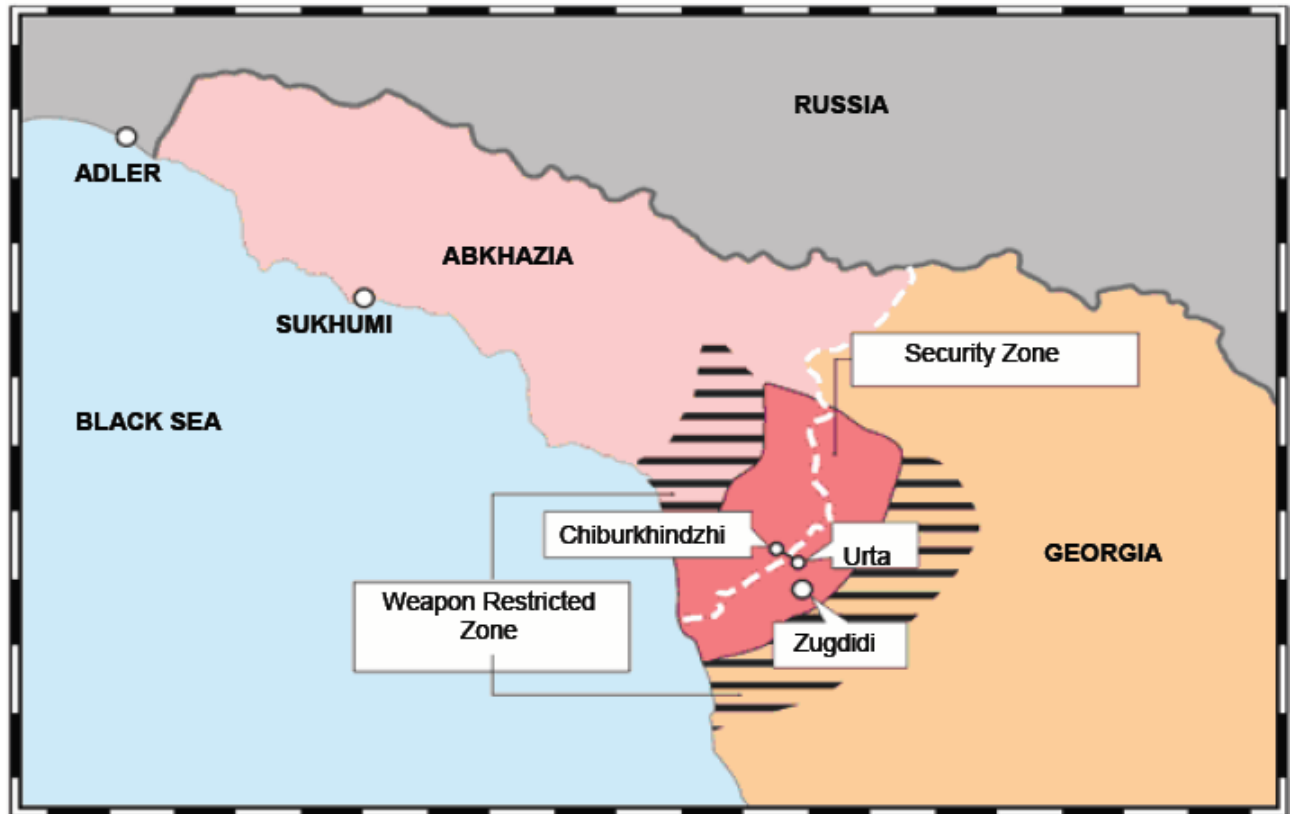
One point of interest in the rotation procedure at Ochamchire was the complete replacement of small arms which previously battalions had handed over to one another – they had become worn out over the years, and the '*Maykoptsy*' who replaced their comrades from 527 Motor Rifle Battalion brought their own personal weapons with them. The collective weaponry such as anti-tank grenade launchers, mortars, air defence self-propelled ZSUs-23-2 remained in situ.

Provocation on Georgian-Abkhaz Border

The meticulous observation by the Russian military of the requirements and time frame for the rotation of peacemaking subunits would appear to be at odds with the recent incident on the Georgian-Abkhaz border. The incident had much in keeping with the series of 'provocations' which have taken place between Russia, Abkhazia and Georgia over the years. It occurred on 17 June 2008 in the area of responsibility of the Russian peacemaking battalion situated on the Georgian-Abkhaz border. Map 2 below shows the border between Georgia and Abkhazia which follows the course of the Inguri River together with the security zone marked

in pink and the weapons restricted zone marked by black horizontal stripes. The overall measurement of both zones is 85 km in length and 24 km in width along the border.³⁹

Map 2 – Peacemaking Zone on Georgian-Abkhaz Border⁴⁰



The incident, in which Russian peacekeepers were arrested by Georgian police, happened at 1830 hrs. The story from the Georgian side, as reported in the Russian *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* on 19 June,⁴¹ was that the Megrelian region police received information that Russian peacemakers without the appropriate permission from Georgia intended to bring into the conflict zone certain weapons, namely 20 anti-tank missiles and around 35 boxes of assorted ammunition. According to the head of the analytical department of the Georgian interior ministry Shota Utiashvili, “*the apprehension of the peacemakers’ vehicle carrying the cargo at the entry point to Zugdidi was due to the lack of conformity between the accompanying documents and the actual cargo. Why was there a need for guided missiles in the conflict zone, we don’t understand it.*”⁴²

Moreover, the chief of staff of the Georgian MOD’s armed forces peacemaking operation Mamykha Kurashvili, commenting on the incident, stated that:

“The Georgian side would not allow violations of the contracted agreement. The Russian military are attempting to create similar bases on the territory of its own headquarters in the village of Urta in Zugdidi rayon. We would not even allow this if the cargo was accompanied by a whole brigade of assault troops. Weapons of this type which have been confiscated should not be in the conflict

zone. This is provocation from the Russian side. Russians must understand that they themselves agreed earlier that this would never be repeated."⁴³

Kurashvili went on to repeat President Mikheil Saakashvili's favourite phrase: "Georgia has changed greatly over the last years".⁴⁴

The press service of the Georgian interior ministry reported that the carriage of 35 boxes containing anti-tank guided missiles was a criminal matter.

*"An investigation is being conducted. Four arrested Russian peacemakers after eight hours of questioning were handed over on Wednesday morning to a representative of the Russian CIS peacemaking command in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict zone. Personal weapons and documents were returned to them. The military cargo which they accompanied was confiscated."*⁴⁵

Despite the fact that the servicemen were released, the matter was not closed. A representative of the Russian peacemakers' command, Vladimir Rogozin, stated to journalists that the arrest of the peacemakers was illegal and carried out in an uncivilised manner. A different version of events was voiced on the Russian side by an assistant to the commander of Russian land forces, Colonel Igor' Konashenkov, who stated that the peacemakers were held not by the police but by unidentifiable civilians. "The police and TV cameras arrived at the location 20 minutes later. All the time the peacemakers were positioned under the sights of submachine guns... Then they were disarmed by bandit methods and taken to the police station."⁴⁶

The incident has not only complicated and worsened the situation in the conflict zone, but also relations between Moscow and Tbilisi at a higher level. The First Deputy Chief of the Russian General Staff Lieutenant General Aleksandr Burutin on 19 June gave notice to the Georgian government that Russian troops involved in peacemaking had the right of self defence and that next time a similar incident occurred the consequences of such an event could be bloodshed. More significantly, Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev and Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili have been unable to move away from the incident. According to Georgiy b-Dvali, the key part of the communications between both presidential press services showed that neither president had let the matter drop. Both presidents had exchanged mutual claims and reproaches. In "reviewing the situation in the conflict zone in Abkhazia Mikheil Saakashvili called on the Russian side to abstain from unilateral actions and observe all the important obligatory procedures in the transfer of ammunition".⁴⁷ The Kremlin from its side stated that "Dmitriy Medvedev called the provocations incomprehensible in relation to the Russian peacemakers who are carrying out all their activities in conformity with international obligations."⁴⁸

Moreover, this telephone conversation put in doubt Tbilisi's hopes that with a new Russian president it would be easier to find a common language on problematic questions in bilateral relations. In Georgia people had been very hopeful that in contrast to relations between Vladimir Putin and Mikheil Saakashvili, relations with the new Russian president would be warmer, and would proceed with a readiness for dialogue on the difficult questions.

Conjecture and Exploitation

In view of the uneasy, apprehensive and stressful relationship which the smaller state has with its much larger and more powerful neighbour to the north, it is not surprising that suspicion, speculation and conjecture remain high in Georgia about

Russia's future intentions with regard to the unrecognised Abkhaz republic and to Georgian aspirations to join NATO. There can be little doubt that the bullying of Georgia will continue. Harassment and manipulation with a view to provoking a hasty, hot-tempered overreaction would of course be a well-tried stratagem.

As Vladimir Socor wrote, the Russians almost certainly intend to go on to restore the railway between Ochamchire and Inguri, which would enable "*Russia to transport tanks, artillery, and other hardware at locations throughout Abkhazia, down to the ceasefire line along the Inguri River*".⁴⁹ There is speculation in some quarters that from the Inguri River Russia could launch an assault into Georgia. In view of the problems with regard to Russia's Black Sea fleet at Sevastopol' in Ukraine, Socor mentioned that Moscow could also have thoughts about developing Ochamchire, which had been a former submarine base utilising the deep waters of Ochamchire Bay. In a later article, Socor noted the Russian energy giant Gazprom's announcement that it intended to launch seabed exploration for oil and gas in the Black Sea just offshore from the Abkhaz coast.⁵⁰

In view of the geopolitical confrontation shaping up on the Black Sea coast, Georgia's Western partners must continue to support Georgia and whilst encouraging Georgia to continue with non-provocative responses, make it abundantly clear that such stratagems will not achieve their aim of destabilising Georgia or provoking a Western over-reaction.

Appendix

The Transcaucasus Railway Network in Georgia⁵¹

The Transcaucasus Railway was started in 1871 with the opening of the Poti-Zestafon sector. In 1833 the railway was linked to Georgia and Azerbaijan: in 1899 to Georgia and Armenia. The Abkhaz sector of the Georgian railway was formed during Soviet times. In 1930 the main Senaki-Inguri-Gali line was opened followed by the Gali-Ochamchire-Sukhumi eight years later. The construction of the sector Sukhumi-Adler was initiated during the Great Patriotic War and completed in 1949.

The railway connected the ports on the Black Sea coast of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan with the central areas of Russia until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, when the Transcaucasus railway was separated into the Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani railways. When the war started in the summer of 1992 in Abkhazia, passenger rail routes were operating Moscow-Tbilisi, Moscow-Tskhaltubo, Moscow-Batumi, Moscow-Sukhumi, Moscow-Yerevan, Rostov-Yerevan, Kiev-Tbilisi, St Petersburg-Sukhumi, and Sochi-Yerevan. Georgian armed subunits went into Abkhazia ostensibly to protect the railway; then practically all the trains were subject to pillage and ransacking. Warfare continued for more than a year. The railway bridge over the Inguri River on the administrative border between Abkhazia and the remainder of Georgia was destroyed, as was much of the Abkhaz sector of the Georgian railway: through traffic ceased. Comparatively quickly the Abkhaz government was successful in restoring rail movement on the sector between Tkvarcheli and the Psoy River on the border with Russia. Freight transport between Abkhazia and Russia was a rarity, limited to the transfer of military freight in the main for peacemaking forces. Passenger traffic was resumed on 25 December 2002.

Endnotes

- ¹ <http://www.civil.ge/cgi-bin/newspro/fullnews.cgi/newsid1031040820.47411> *Civil Georgia on-line magazine*, 3 September 2002, "Alex Rondeli: Russia Should Try to Generate Some Trust".
- ² There have been numerous examples of Russian pressure on Tbilisi. It suffices to mention a few: Russian demands and military threats over the presence of Chechen fighters and Islamic radicals in the Pankisi gorge in 2002; the granting of Russian citizenship to the Abkhaz and South Osetians; price increases and irregular supply of natural gas to Georgia by Gazprom; an embargo on Georgian wine and cancellation of air travel links with Moscow.
- ³ C W Blandy "Azerbaijan: Is War over Nagorny Karabakh a Realistic Option?", ARAG Caucasus Series 08/17, May 2008 page 1.
- ⁴ See http://www.iwpr.net/?p=crs&s=f&o=344630&apc_state=henpcrs Caucasus Reporting Service, 15 May 2008, "Bullies of the Caucasus" by Thomas de Waal and <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=899218> *Kommersant* No. 94 "Abkhaziya vstraiwayut v Rossiyu" by Nikolay b-Ful'chenko.
- ⁵ http://www.ng.ru/cis/2008-05-12/12_suhumi.html *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* 12 May 2008 "Met'yu Brayza pribyl v Sukhumi s mirom" by Marina Perevozkina.
- ⁶ http://www.ng.ru/regions/2008-05-12/8_rostov.html *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* 12 May 2008 "V sluchaye napadeniya Gruzii na Abkhaziyu donskoye kazachestvo pomozhet dobrovol'tsami" by Maria Bondarenko.
- ⁷ <http://kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=896445> *Kommersant* 27 May 2008 "OON vzyala rossiyskiy sled" by Georgiy b-Dvali, Sergey b-Strokan'.
- ⁸ http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2373110 "Russia deploys railway troops to Abkhazia" by Vladimir Socor.
- ⁹ <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/data/2008/40//10.html> *Novaya Gazeta* 5 June 2008 "Konflikt dal'nego sledovaniya" by Pavel Fel'gengauer. "Around Abkhazia a situation is being formed reminiscent of the year [19]99. Even then in the early spring, according to the testimony of the former prime minister Sergey Stepashin, a principle decision was taken to begin the war against Chechnya in August-September 1999. Engineer preparation for the deployment of strike groupings continued throughout the summer. Simultaneously a series of provocations were prepared for ensuring the grounds for war. Since it was decided to fight, any attempts of Aslan Maskhadov to begin any negotiations were ignored." On possible preparations for war see also Charles Blandy "Chechen Status – Wide Differences Remain" P27, CSRC, February 1998, pages 22, Box 7 and 23, Map 1, Railway Bypass Route around Chechnya.
- ¹⁰ http://www.redstar.ru/2007/12/12_12/3_01.html *Krasnaya Zvezda* 12 December 2007 "Eshelony Mira" by Vitaliy Denisov.
- ¹¹ <http://newizv.ru/news/2008-06-02/91054/> *Novyye Izvestiya* 2 June 2008 "Zheleznodorozhnyye chasti Rossiyskoy Armii voshli v Abkhaziyu" by Irina Baramidze.
- ¹² http://www.redstar.ru/2008/03/28_03/3_02.html *Krasnaya Zvezda* 28 March 2008 "Nezavisimost' Kosovo: opasnyy pretsedent" by Vladimir Kozin, Candidate Historical Science. In 2001 Kozin worked as the director of the Regional Centre of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo.
- ¹³ http://www.redstar.ru/2008/04/17_04/1_01.html *Krasnaya Zvezda* 17 April 2008 "Nam nuzhen stabil'nyy Kavkaz!" by Oleg Gorupay.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2373110 *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 3 June 2008 "Russia deploys railway troops to Abkhazia" by Vladimir Socor. "The railroad running the length of Abkhazia, from the Russian border on the Psou River to the ceasefire line on the Inguri River, was severely damaged during the 1992-1993 Russian military intervention."
- ¹⁶ <http://www.smi.ru/08/06/04/9086626309.html> *SMI.ru* 4 June 2008 "V NATO po shpalam" by Yelena Denisova.
- ¹⁷ <http://www.izvestia.ru/world/article3116896/> *Izvestiya* 5 June 2008 "Chto privezet v Abkhaziyu novaya zheleznaya doroga" by Aleksandr Nashvili. The bridges are over the mountain rivers of Kodori and Mokva.
- ¹⁸ http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2373110 *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 3 June 2008.

- ¹⁹ Information and quotations in this paragraph are taken from http://www.ng.ru/regions//2008-06-10/12_zhd.html *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* 10 June 2008 “*Abkhazskiy proyekt volgogradskikh zheleznodorozhnikov*” by Andrey Serenko.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² <http://www.izvestia.ru/world/article3116896/> *Izvestiya* 5 June 2008 p5.
- ²³ <http://www.politcom.ru/article.php?id=6373> *Politcom.ru*, 23 June 2008 “*KSPM v Abkhazia: Itogi i khronika missii po podderzhaniiu*” by Sergey Markedonov.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ From the purely military point of view where the tasks of Russian MOD forces and troops are directed against external threats and large illegally armed bandit formations this is a valid viewpoint, but with regard to the overall situation in the North Caucasus the situation is far from satisfactory. See, for example *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* 26 May 2008 http://www.ng.ru/nregions/2008-05-26/13_permanent.html “*Permanentnaya nestabil'nost*” (‘Permanent instability – Militarisation of the North Caucasus does not guarantee military security of the region’) by Vladimir Mukhin. See also Charles Blandy “*North Caucasus: Advent of Mountain Brigades*” ARAG Caucasus Series 07/35, November 2007.
- ²⁹ http://www.redstar.ru/2008/04/29_04/1_07.html *Krasnaya Zvezda* 29 April 2008 “*Tverdynaya Yuga Rossii*”, interview with Army General Aleksandr Baranov by Aleksandr Khrolenko.
- ³⁰ See C W Blandy “*Pankisskoye Gorge: Residents, Refugees and Fighters*” P37, CSRC March 2002, p2.
- ³¹ Not to be confused with General Nikolay Makarov, recently promoted to Chief of the General Staff in place of General Baluyevskiy.
- ³² http://www.ng.ru/politics/2008-06-02/4_army.html *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* 2 June 2008 “*V Severo-Kavkazskom voyennom okrugye proizoshla smena komandyushchego*” by Viktor Myasnikov.
- ³³ http://www.redstar.ru/2008/04/29_04/1_07.html *Krasnaya Svezda* 29 April 2008.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ <http://www.politcom.ru/article.php?id=6373> *Politcom.ru* 23 June 2008.
- ³⁷ http://www.redstar.ru/2007/12/12_12/3_01.html *Krasnaya Zvezda* 12 December 2007 “*Eshelony Mira*” by Vitaliy Denisov.
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- ³⁹ <http://www.politcom.ru/article.php?id=6373> *Politcom.ru* 23 June 2008 “*KSPM v Abkhazia*” by Sergey Markedonov.
- ⁴⁰ <http://www.izvestia.ru/world/article3117489> *Izvestiya* 20 June 2008 “*B'yut rossiyskikh mirotvortsev*” by Dmitriy Litovkin.
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- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=904347&NodesID=5> *Kommersant* 20 June 2008.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.
- ⁴⁹ http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2373110 “*Russia deploys railway troops to Abkhazia*” by Vladimir Socor.
- ⁵⁰ http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2373168 *Eurasia Daily Monitor* “*Gazprom's move on Abkhazia: more reasons for Georgia to block Russia's WTO accession*” by Vladimir Socor.
- ⁵¹ Information taken from <http://www.izvestia.ru/world/article3116896/> *Izvestiya* 5 June 2008.

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ISBN 978-1-905962-54-9

Published By:

Defence Academy of the
United Kingdom

Advanced Research and Assessment Group

Defence Academy of the UK
Block D, JSCSC
Shrivenham
SN6 8TS
England

Telephone: (44) 1793 788856

Fax: (44) 1793 788841

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ISBN 978-1-905962-54-9