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Provocation, Deception, Entrapment: The Russo-Georgian Five Day War

C W Blandy

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Key Points

- Russian annexation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia has increased instability throughout the region.
- Georgians will not accept annexation of their territory
- Within weeks snow will melt increasing the danger of war
- Tbilisi must be made aware of the need for restraint
- Cross-border ethnic groups possessing dual nationality are vulnerable to manipulation

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Introduction

Still embittered by the fall of the Soviet Union, angered by the West and its policies, emboldened by revenues from hydrocarbon production and transportation, there can be no doubt that Russia still intends despite the financial downturn to re-establish its former position and influence throughout the Caucasus, Black Sea and Caspian regions.

Russian assertiveness as exhibited in Georgia in August 2008 not only fuelled concerns in the West, but also prompted 'shock and horror' amongst near-abroad states, unease amongst signatories of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation and silence from the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.¹ Certainly, Moscow's intervention changed the geopolitical landscape in the Caucasus-Caspian region dramatically. It was not so much the fact of Russian armed intervention into South Ossetia itself, but the scale of the subsequent military encroachment into the rest of Georgia that changed the geopolitical landscape. Ostensibly a Georgian artillery bombardment of Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia, on the night of 7/8 August 2008 triggered the Russian ground intervention. Air strikes were carried out on the Georgian infrastructure in parallel with amphibious landings on the Georgian coast.

Many articles and analyses have been devoted to the conduct of the Five Day War (FDW), not only highlighting the Georgian President's foolhardy attempt to restore constitutional order in South Ossetia, but also casting a critical eye over the Russian army's performance, its leadership at the higher level and lack of modern equipment. Little analysis has been published about the provocation, deception and entrapment by Russia which led to its de facto annexation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The purpose of this short paper is to examine Russian pressure on Georgian decision-making in the period between April and August 2008, with a view to identifying some of the escalatory and obfuscatory techniques that may have been used, and the potential for future conflict. Without repeating earlier published analyses,² it is appropriate to make two basic observations in this paper to set the events in context.

First, an article by Yuliya Latynina in *Novaya Gazeta* provides an interesting insight into the internal dynamics of the 'local war'. Latynina stated that Russia and Georgia did not have any strategic differences in the Caucasus, in fact they both needed peace. In the case of Russia, it had lost control over Ingushetia, Dagestan was in chaos, Kadyrov controlled Chechnya, but then who controlled Kadyrov? Under these conditions Russia simply did not need a war in the Caucasus.³ In her view it was the Kremlin *siloviki*, the military, security and law enforcement officials in the power wielding structures who needed this war. Nowhere could the inconsistencies between the strategic interests of Russia and those of the Kremlin be seen so vividly as in the Caucasus. Latynina went further:

The siloviki have no strategic interests whatsoever. They only have tactical interests. Furthermore, a major has an interest in obtaining a star, a general has an interest to receive 'readies', a Kremlin person has an interest in the siloviki remaining in power.⁴

Latynina opined that there were not two, not three, but four parties which participated in the war: Russia; Georgia; the South Ossetian authorities with the Chekists; and the South Ossetian people who were squeezed between Saakashvili and Kokoyty.⁵

Second: traditionally the Russian military mind, as embodied in the General Staff, looks further ahead than its Western counterpart, on the basis that "foresight implies control".⁶ Having made the 'decision', the military mind works backwards from the selected objective to his present position. Subsidiary goals are identified for achieving the objective. The Soviet and Russian General Staffs over a long period of time have studied the application of reflexive control theory both for deception and disinformation purposes in order to influence and control an enemy's decision making processes, for:

Control of an opponent's decision, which in the end is a formation of a certain behavioural strategy on him through reflexive interaction, is not achieved directly, not by blatant force, but by means of providing him with the grounds by which he is able logically to derive his own decision, but one that is predetermined by the other side.⁷

This can be achieved:

- By applying the pressure of force.
- By assisting the opponent's formulation of an appreciation of the initial situation.
- By shaping the opponent's objectives.
- By shaping the opponent's decision making algorithm.
- By the choice of the decision making moment.

All of these applications could be regarded as having some utility with regard to relations between Moscow and President Saakashvili. Whether the removal of President Saakashvili was a subsidiary goal or the main objective remains to be seen, but it may certainly be regarded as a stepping stone to the reassertion of Moscow's influence and power throughout the Caucasus. Whilst Russian armed intervention has as yet not achieved the removal of President Saakashvili, military action has wrested the unrecognised republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia away from Tbilisi's grasp. Perhaps the article published so appositely in the Russian military newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* on 13 August 2008 at the end of the FDW containing a detailed psychological profile of President Saakashvili was indicative of studies and assessments which could have formed a useful template for shaping the Georgian President's decisions.⁸

Provocation

Spring Activity in NCMD

Plainly in the spring of 2008 Tbilisi was becoming concerned about Russian military activity in the North Caucasus, which was stretching over into Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Georgia launched a number of drone reconnaissance flights to try to assess the military activities taking place on the northern side of the Great Caucasus Range with particular emphasis on Abkhazia. Unfortunately for the Georgians, the Abkhaz downed two Georgian drones on 18 March and 20 April, with a further two more on 4 May and a fifth on 8 May.

As the outgoing commander of North Caucasus Military District (NCMD), Army General Aleksandr Baranov, stated in April 2008, Russian troops in NCMD had a direct responsibility for peace-making operations in the region. Russia's contribution to the composite Control Commission's force for the maintenance of peace in the zone of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict was one motor rifle battalion from 135 Motor Rifle Regiment whose permanent base location is at Prokhladnyy in Kabardino-Balkaria. The collective forces for the maintenance of peace in the zone of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict were formed from subunits belonging to 131 Separate Motor Rifle Brigade from its permanent base at Maykop (Republic of Adygeya).⁹

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



Key

K – Kodori Gorge; S – Shatili and P – Pankisi Gorge.

There was also a deployment of units into the field from NCMD's 58 Army to various locations in NCMD long before the commencement of major military exercises due

to be held in July as “Kavkaz-2008”. During May units from 58 Army set up encampments throughout the length of the Transcaucas Highway (Transkam) from Vladikavkaz to the Roki tunnel on the border between North and South Ossetia. This early field deployment of 58 Army’s units and subunits took place about the time of the handover of command of NCMD between Army General Baranov and Colonel General Sergey Makarov.¹⁰

*The Georgian leadership simply could not fail to know about the concentration of forces on the border, nor the clear demonstration of Russian preparedness to intervene if the situation required.*¹¹

At that time Tbilisi’s attention was being diverted increasingly to the situation in Abkhazia. Was Moscow at this stage considering contingency plans should there be a military move from Georgia over Abkhazia and in the upper Kodori Gorge? Before any movement of ground forces in NCMD due to the unsettled and tense situation throughout the military district, a requirement would exist for route clearance involving sapper reconnaissance and regular culvert patrols to neutralise improvised explosive devices. Time and space calculations were other factors to be considered in any large movement of troops and equipment. Under normal circumstances the rate of movement of a column would be restricted to 40 kph.¹² Furthermore roads are not up to Western European standards. Prior deployment of troops in encampments with detachments for collection and repair of vehicles along the Transkam would certainly ease problems should a major deployment of ground forces become a necessity.

Between April and June 2008, the three main indicators of immediate concern for Tbilisi were, first, the increase in strength of the Russian peacemaking detachment in Abkhazia to the maximum ceiling of 3,000 men. Second, at the end of May a detachment of 400 Russian railway troops and engineers was deployed to Abkhazia to restore 50 kilometres of railway line between Sukhumi and Ochamchire without either informing Georgia or obtaining Georgian permission.¹³ As Pavel Felgengauer noted, in the past the deployment of Soviet railway troops was synonymous with the opening of a new front or direction in a military campaign.¹⁴ A third indicator of future trouble was the unauthorised transportation of weapons and explosives by Russian peacemaking troops in the area of Zugdidi in Georgia and their arrest by Megrelian region police.¹⁵ Other matters of longer term unease for Georgia were the possibility of Ochamchire being used as a base for the BSF and Gazprom’s announcement of offshore exploration for oil and gas in the Black Sea adjacent to the Abkhaz coastline.¹⁶

Georgians had been hoping that with the change of Russian president from Vladimir Putin to Dmitriy Medvedev relations between Tbilisi and Moscow would improve. Not only did this prove to be a pipedream, but relations between the Russian and Georgian presidents fell to an even lower level after the recriminations over the Zugdidi incident. So the Georgian president might reasonably have felt himself under mounting pressure.

“Kavkaz-2008”

The active phase of the “Kavkaz-2008” exercises began on 15 July, the same day that the exercise “Immediate Response” began on the other side of the Great Caucasus Range in which 600 Georgian troops and 1,000 American servicemen participated. As Vladimir Mukhin noted in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, the General Staff “organised a larger scale arrangement”.¹⁷

Servicemen were deployed in 11 areas of the Russian Southern Federal District. Officially no more than 8,000 troops participated in the exercises. However, 42

Motor Rifle Division (MRD) in Chechnya, in a state of permanent readiness, could alone account for more than 15,000 servicemen. Fully trained servicemen from 58 Army stationed in Vladikavkaz, two mountain brigades based in Dagestan and Karachayevo-Cherkessia and 7 Mountain Division of the Airborne Forces also took part. Subunits from 76 Airborne Division from Pskov were flown to Mozdok to take part in the same exercise. From Volgograd the assault regiment of 20 motor rifle division (MRD) was also dispatched to Krasnodar kray.¹⁸ Federal border troops and internal troops were also involved. Retired Lieutenant General Yuriy Netkachev, who had commanded an army in the North Caucasus and was later a deputy commander of the Group of Russian Forces in the Transcaucasus, considered that the number of troops on exercise “Kavkaz-2008” had officially been understated so that there was no obligation to invite international observers.¹⁹

Netkachev said that the exercises would cover practically all the mountain passes of the Great Caucasus Range along the length of the Russo-Georgian border including the Rokskiy pass (Roki tunnel) and Mamisonkiy pass further to the West. The General Staff confirmed that on the passes considered to be ‘problematical’ from a security viewpoint, Russian servicemen participating in “Kavkaz-2008” would be given exercise-combat tasks of ‘*blokirovaniye*’, detecting, isolating and destroying bandit formations.²⁰ Table 1 details the major routes over the great Caucasus Range and the series of minor mountain passes which lie on either side of the Transkam.

Table 1 – Highways, Routes and Passes over the Main Caucasus Range²¹

	West	West Central	East Central	East
Highways	Sukhum Military Highway	Ossetian Military Highway	Transkam	Georgian Military Highway (GMH)
Main Routes	Cherkessk Klukhori Teberda Kodori Gorge	Alagir Verkhniy Zaramag Mamison Kutaisi	Alagir Nizhniy Zaramag Roki tunnel Tskhinvali	Vladikavkaz Verkhniy Lars Tbilisi
Main Passes	Klukhorskiiy	Mamisonskiy (2820m)	Rokskiy tunnel	Krestoviy (2388 m)
Minor Passes		Gurdzuaftsag Gebeaftsag	Kutkh Bakhfandag Zekarskiy Dzedo Kudarskiy Kozskiy	East of Roki GMH unnamed pass Truso

Appendix 1 contains an outline of activities during “Kavkaz-2008”. The exercises were mainly subunit manoeuvres, but not ones that exercised the command functions of higher headquarters in the military district. (Exercising this higher level might have avoided some of the criticism that was directed at formation commanders and above in the FDW.) There was, however, also a large naval and amphibious landing element to “Kavkaz-2008”, which included the large assault ship (BDK) “Tsezar’ Kunikov” of the Black Sea Fleet (BSF). Such amphibious task force exercises just off the Black Sea coast would be another form of pressure on the Georgian president.

More was to come. Reliable sources in Abkhazia were talking about an impending attack on Georgian forces in the upper Kodori Gorge, the one remaining area which was under the jurisdiction of Tbilisi.²² Some gave a time frame for the attack as the middle of August 2008, but others went further, giving firmer details of who, where and when Georgian subunits would be attacked. "In short Russian troops are in a state of readiness and wait only for the order. From somebody."²³

"General Netkachev considered that troops who had arrived on the Russo-Georgian border could stay there for a long time."²⁴ For the Georgian leadership, this would undoubtedly have been a significant point, increasing pressure in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The menace of a heavily-armoured force sitting along the Transkam, positioned between Nizhniy Zaramag and the entrance to the Roki tunnel could have given encouragement to the South Ossetians to step up their campaign against Tbilisi and increase nocturnal raids and small arms fire.

Another factor which could have been instrumental in giving the South Ossetian population encouragement to step up activity was the fact that elements of the Chechen-manned Battalion Vostok (East) had served repeated three month tours of duty over the previous 18 months in deployments to the unrecognised republic.²⁵ Under the original Dagomys Accords the scale of peacemaking forces was one Russian battalion, one Georgian battalion and one South Ossetian battalion commanded by a North Ossetian. The overall commander of the composite peacemaking force was a Russian. It seems strange that elements of a battalion such as Vostok with a somewhat dubious reputation should have been deployed in South Ossetia, unless of course it was made on the basis that the detachment could make life difficult for Georgians: Georgians have always had a degree of wariness with regard to the Chechen.

Small arms fire between Georgians and South Ossetians gave way to the use of mortars and grenade launchers on the night of 1 August, and the unofficial fighting escalated from then until 6 August.

Deception and Entrapment

The introduction to the report by Amnesty International on the Georgian-Russian Conflict, *Civilians in the Line of Fire*, published on 18 November 2008 highlighted the difficulties of obtaining an objective view of the situation:

The conflict was characterised from the outset by misinformation, exaggeration, in reports of the scale of fighting and numbers of casualties and sometimes wildly conflicting accounts of the same events... While the exact circumstances surrounding the onset of hostilities on 7 August remain the subject of dispute, all sides have declared their actions to be "defensive" even when civilians on the other side have born [sic] the brunt of their military operations... Nevertheless, numerous alleged facts and figures have been extremely difficult to independently verify.²⁶

It would be much harder for the Georgian leadership to make reliable assessments at the time, with confusion about the timing and locus of any potential Russian 'attack' – Abkhazia or South Ossetia? – though they had long expected such an event.

"Kavkaz-2008" officially ended on 4 August. The possibility cannot be discounted that the Georgian military became aware of subunits such as those from 76 (Pskov)

Airborne Division returning to their permanent peacetime locations, particularly if the military departure airfield was at Mozdok: a large number of Georgians lived in Vladikavkaz,²⁷ and ‘blue beret’ transport could hardly pass by unnoticed. Aleksandr Gol’ts also noted that all the officers of the division on returning from the exercise had been granted leave.²⁸ It would appear that some subunits of 42 MRD also returned to their base locations in Chechnya. It will be remembered that this division was one of the first formations to be completely manned by contract servicemen: it also included the two Chechen-manned West and East Battalions. Subunits of 42 MRD would probably have returned to Chechnya via Alagir – Beslan – Nazran’ – Khankala on their journey eastwards: only to return to South Ossetia on 8 August 2008 by the same route in reverse.²⁹

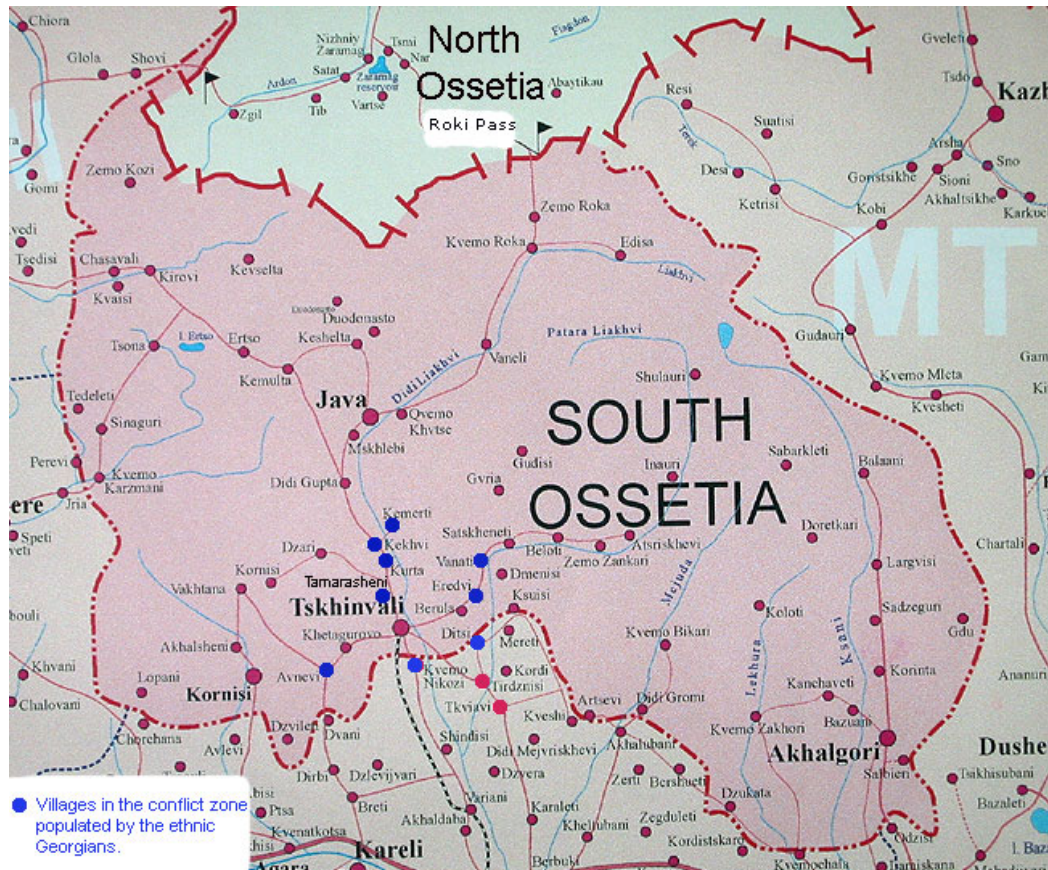
Such factors as these would naturally have been taken into account in any plan for a Georgian operation to retake Abkhazia or South Ossetia. Not all NCMD subunits would have returned directly to barracks, however. Lieutenant Maksim Timov joined 135 Motor Rifle Regiment (MRR) at Prokhladnyy garrison straight from the Yekaterinburg Higher Artillery Command School. His diary read: “*1st August arrival in regiment, 6th August in the field and 8th August already en route to South Ossetia*”.³⁰

With a battalion of 500 men from 135 MRR forming the Russian contribution to the peacemaking force based in Tskhinvali, it is likely that the parent regiment would have a contingency plan for reinforcement should matters go badly wrong. The escalation in exchanges of fire from 1-6 August may well have triggered this procedure to reinforce the beleaguered battalion. The critical day was 7 August.

On the morning of 7 August the news appeared that the South Ossetian leader Eduard Kokoyty had abandoned the South Ossetian capital and was preparing to command wide-ranging combat operations from Dzhava where volunteers from Russia were already beginning to assemble.³¹ At 1150 hrs President Saakashvili ordered the commencement of an artillery bombardment on Tskhinvali.³² During the second half of the day President Saakashvili ordered the Georgian military to stop firing. Later, TV showed the Georgian leader agreeing to negotiations under any format and proposing to Russia a guarantee allowing South Ossetia the widest possible autonomy within Georgia.³³ The commander of the composite peacemaking forces, Marat Kulakhmetov, announced that the sides had ceased firing, but firing had not in fact ceased. At 2330 hrs Georgian artillery again opened mass intense fire on Tskhinvali.³⁴

The Georgian government’s defence for their action was based on information that a Russian force had entered the Roki tunnel. Even taking account of the difficulty of gaining reliable information, it is perhaps worth noting that:

*Judging as a whole, there was absolutely accurate information about the start of the Georgian intervention: yet on the night of 7 August 135 MRR of 58 Army received the order to move out to Tskhivali – that is a few hours before the beginning of the Georgian intervention. Of course Mikhail Saakashvili committed his main mistake not on 7 August at 1150 hrs in the morning, when the order was issued to begin firing on Tskhinvali with large-calibre guns. And not even at daybreak on 8 August, at 0420 hrs when infantry stormed into the town. His main mistake was in the fact that he had not grasped the fact that South Ossetia and Abkhazia were self-sustaining.*³⁵

Map 2 – South Ossetia³⁶

Whether Russian forces had entered the tunnel before the official Georgian bombardment of Tskhinvali or not, the fact remains that under President Saakashvili Georgian forces had in fact prepared for an intensive operation against South Ossetian forces with the deployment of two brigades to Gori. Sadly, the Georgian president had miscalculated and ignored the advice of his military staffs. By 15 September international public opinion had shifted: “Washington is beginning to suspect that Saakashvili, a friend and ally, could in fact be a gambler – someone who triggered the bloody five day war and then told the West bold-faced lies”.³⁷ Since then, international media have tended to highlight Georgia’s aggression.³⁸

There can be little doubt that President Saakashvili’s inflammatory style, expressions of nationalism and precipitate action served to remind the Abkhaz and South Ossetians of Georgian ‘imperialism’. However, it should not be forgotten that Moscow had certainly fostered and encouraged Sukhumi’s and Tskhinvali’s separatist aspirations to the detriment of the Georgian state. Any form of reconciliation between Tbilisi and Sukhumi or between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali must now be regarded as defunct. The unrecognised republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to all intents and purposes have become dependencies of the Russian Federation.

The Future

Digging In

South Ossetia

It will be interesting to see whether there will be an influx of Ossetians from North Ossetia.

Only a few kilometres but on that side of the Caucasus mountains, having passed through the Rokskiy tunnel, everything is different. Different climate, different landscape, different vegetation. Warmer, more beautiful, richer. Although for me in spirit the beauty of the North Ossetian landscapes are braver, graphic and fantastically diverse. But here, on the South Ossetian side, on the southern slope of the Caucasus mountains - of course a little corner of heaven.³⁹

Will there be a reversing of the events of February 1944 when Ossetians were moved north from South Ossetia to replace the Ingush who had been deported en masse with their Chechen cousins to Central Asia? Whilst there is a grave shortage of workable arable land in the North Caucasus, it could perhaps enable the authorities to allow the Ingush to return to Prigorodnyy rayon.⁴⁰

Abkhazia - Ochamchire

Moscow has wasted no time in securing a stronger hold on Abkhazia, with moves toward using the harbour at Ochamchire on the Black Sea coast. The official reason given by the Russian naval staff for this move was to create a naval base to counter the threat of diversions and terror acts on the part of Georgian special services.⁴¹ Another factor is undoubtedly the future basing of the BSF: the treaty with Ukraine on the use of Sevastopol' expires in 2017. The Russian naval staff acknowledges that the transition of Ochamchire into a base for warships will require not a little volume of work. It will be necessary to create an infrastructure for the shore base, to include technical maintenance and repair facilities, port protection, moorings and anchorages for both large and small craft, including various classes of landing craft, launches and naval trawlers.⁴²

There have been questions as to why the Russian naval headquarters is directing its plans towards Ochamchire and not Sukhumi. Sergey Shamba, the Abkhaz Foreign Minister, believes the selection of Ochamchire was due to the fact that it used to be a harbour and post for border troops. The Georgian view was that the "creation of a naval base at Ochamchire was part of the Russian occupation plan".⁴³ Opinions vary as to the depth of water in Ochamchire Bay.⁴⁴

Abkhazia – Gudauta

As well as a naval base, an aviation grouping will appear at the 'Bombor' aerodrome by Gudauta. In Soviet times practically all types of aircraft including fighters and heavy lift transport aircraft were based here.⁴⁵ According to the Chief of the Russian General Staff and first deputy minister of defence Army General Nikolay Makarov, the strength of Russian servicemen at the Gudauta base is 3,700, belonging to 131 Maykop MR Brigade under the command of Colonel Sergey Chebotarev. They will carry out their duties throughout the whole territory of Abkhazia including the Kodori Gorge.

Construction is happening at an intensive pace. It is planned by 2010 to construct a base according to the last word in technology. And meanwhile the

servicemen of NCMD live in tents. In the period from 18 August to 20 September the whole brigade left its permanent base at Maykop and deployed to Gudauta. Today, two MR battalions cover Inguri and in the Kodori Gorge one reinforced MR company. The remainder of the brigade are permanently based in Gudauta. Much engineer work is being undertaken in Gal'skiy rayon and in the Kodori Gorge to clear mines, ditches, remove obstacles and repair bridges. The work is being carried out by two engineer sapper battalions with two excavator detachments from 20 Division NCMD and a brigade from the Volga-Ural MD.⁴⁶

Sensitive Border Areas

There are a number of border areas between the North and South Caucasus where ethnic groupings could be used by Russia to exert pressure on Georgia and Azerbaijan using the tool of Russian citizenship, as happened in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Box 1 below outlines potential problems of this kind. Perhaps of greatest importance is the need for the Nagorno-Karabakh issue to be settled once and for all between Armenia and Azerbaijan. There is also the need for Tbilisi to be more sensitive in its relations with Armenians resident in Samtskhe-Dzhavakheti.⁴⁷

Box 1 – Cross Border Span of Ethnic Groups

Avars in Georgia There are some 15,000 Avars still awaiting transfer and resettlement from the Kvareli region of Georgia to Yuzhno-Sukhokumysk in the north of Dagestan west of Kizlyar since 1992. Tbilisi was to cover the practical costs of resettlement.⁴⁸

Lezgin refugees from Dagestan in Kakheti region of Georgia Since October 2008 dozens of ethnic Lezgin refugees have sought refuge in Kakheti region in three Lezgin populated villages of Kvareli rayon, namely Tivi, Saruso and Chantliskure. The Lezgins wanted to avoid the military call-up in Dagestan and also to get away from the worsening security situation in Makhachkala and Dagestan as a whole. Some Lezgins were born in Georgia and have dual nationality.⁴⁹

Chechen Kistin, Chechens, Separatists and Followers of Radical Islam The Pankisi Gorge was used by anti-Russian groups during the 2nd Chechen War. A recurrence could bring Russian armed interference.⁵⁰

Lezgins separated by Russo-Azerbaijan Border This has been a long standing problem. There is a need to resolve the problems caused by the Lezgins who live on both sides of the Dagestan – Azerbaijan border.⁵¹ The Lezgin issue could be used by Moscow to exert pressure on Baku.

More Trouble to Come

The paper summarises some of the military events in the run up to the FDW, with the aim of showing the difficulties of reliable decision making at the time and possible future trigger points.

Russia's relations with all countries in the region have changed. Georgians will not accept annexation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Russia. Such blatant examples of forceful annexation will fester in the proud Georgian mind and lead to diversionary action by Georgian special services or other hotheads and the threat of future war. One foolhardy incident from any of the parties involved could precipitate Russian punitive action and further destabilise the whole region, particularly once the winter snows disappear and movement in mountain terrain becomes easier.

Appendix 1**“Kavkaz-2008”⁵²**

- BDK “Tsezar’ Kunikov” of the BSF participated. For command and control purposes in the amphibious assault phase a mobile headquarters was embarked on the BDK. From Novorossiysk naval base the BDK proceeded to Cape Maliy Utrish, the designated embarkation area for the leading detachment of naval infantry from Novorossiysk naval base which completed a 120 km march there. Having loaded combat equipment on board, the BDK set sail to a rendezvous with nine ships and vessels of a naval amphibious task force from the BSF. Having shaken down and successfully completed the first phase of the exercise the task force moved to an amphibious tactical assault area on 24 July.
- Naval infantry, ships’ crews and aviation of the BSF and the Caspian Flotilla provided support to NCMD troops operating along the coast. In the course of the training exercise ships of the BSF carried out a tactical amphibious landing in the zone of combat operations. The fleet provided naval gunfire support⁵³ for the amphibious assault landing. Having captured the bridgehead, naval infantry with artillery support isolated and destroyed bandit formations on the coast. Organisation of coastal defence followed.
- Over in the east of NCMD similar amphibious landings from the Caspian Flotilla took place on the Russian Caspian coast on 23 July.⁵⁴
- On the territory of Krasnodar kray a battalion tactical exercise took place with live firing with subunits of the assault regiment of the Volgograd motor rifle formation [20 MRD]. Having completed a combined march to the exercise area and engineer positions, the *desantniki* isolated a bandit formation and in coordination with federal border service organs and the North Caucasus regional command of internal troops destroyed the bandit formation.
- Subunits of the Budennovsk motor rifle brigade [205 Separate MR Brigade] in the Niklo-Aleksandrovskiy training area exercised as part of a combined troop grouping in the destruction of a bandit formation and setting up military control of the liberated territory.
- Subunits of the separate motor rifle brigade (mountain) [33 Separate MR Brigade (Mountain)] based in Botlikh (Dagestan) carried out reconnaissance-sweep operations and successive isolation and destruction of a bandit formation in forested-mountainous terrain in coordination with internal troops and border organs.
- Subunits of the separate motor rifle brigade (mountain) [34 Separate MR Brigade (Mountain)] based at Zelenchukskaya (Karachayevo-Cherkessia) in the course of a company tactical exercise stealthily moved into a forested-mountainous location in the area of an isolated bandit formation and conducted a sweep for and destruction of terrorist groups, and pursuit of bandit groups attempting to break out of the isolated area. After the series of tactical exercises in the mountain passes *desantniki* completed a several kilometre march to the Dar’yal training area (North Ossetia – Alania) and Sernovodsk training area (Stavropol’ kray) where fortification of positions was carried out. In the course of a battalion live firing exercise conducted with artillery fire support, front and army aviation *desantniki* worked through the questions of isolating a bandit group’s area followed by pursuit and destruction. Bombs and artillery strikes were inflicted

on a collection of *boyeviki* with the aim of preventing their breaking through the battalion battle order.

- At Dal'niy (Dagestan) a battalion tactical exercise with live firing was carried out by subunits of the Buynaksk motor rifle brigade [136 Separate MR Brigade]. Brigade subunits completed a march to the exercise area and in the course of the battalion tactical exercise smashed and forced out a bandit formation from its area of operation. Motor-riflemen were supported by fighter aircraft and army aviation helicopters.
- On the Molkino training area (Krasnodar kray) *desantniki* discovered and isolated a large bandit formation in a forest area.
- Subunits of the motor rifle regiment of the Vladikavkaz formation having completed a march to the area of the Rokskiy pass carried out operations for repulsing bandit formations breaking through the state border.
- In Ingushetia subunits of a motor rifle regiment carried out a training combat task against terrorists attempting to capture a populated point. The terrorist group was isolated and destroyed by a motor rifle battalion.
- Having completed a march to the area of the Mamisonkiy pass, a battalion of the Prokhladnyy motor rifle regiment [135 MRR] isolated and destroyed bandit formations attempting to break through onto Russian territory.
- Special-tactical exercises included different logistic and administrative subunits – rear, technical, medical and others. At the Tarskoye training area in North Ossetia a special-tactical exercise was carried out by a special-designation medical detachment belonging to NCMD permanently based at Rostov-on-Don.
- A tactical exercise with live firing was carried out by subunits of the NCMD Buynaksk separate motor rifle brigade [136 Separate MR Brigade]. In the scenario a bandit formation up to 300 *boyeviki* captured a populated point. At the Dal'niy training area (Dagestan) subunits of the motor rifle brigade, nominated for dealing with anti-terrorist tasks in conjunction with federal internal troops subunits, isolated the populated point inflicting strikes from artillery formations and army aviation helicopters. As a result of the combined operations of the brigade and subunits of internal troops the enemy was dispersed and destroyed.

Endnotes

¹ http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca7s=f&o=346545&apc_state=henh Institute for War and Peace Reporting, *Reporting Central Asia* No 549 5 September 2008, “Moscow Fails to Win over Regional Allies” by Lola Olimova. See also Stephen J Blank “Georgia: The War Russia Lost” in *Military Review* November-December 2008 p42.

² Russian pressure on its neighbours is well documented. On Georgia, see C W Blandy *Georgia and Russia: A Further Deterioration in Relations*, ARAG Caucasus Series 08/22 July 2008: “Moscow’s attempts to destabilise Georgia have neither stopped nor declined since Georgia became a sovereign republic. 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”, and furthermore, “Moscow’s attempts to destabilise Georgia have not declined since the accession of President Medvedev”.

³ <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/data/2008/58/11.html> *Novaya Gazeta* 11 August 2008. “Chetyrekhstoronnyaya agressiya” by Yuliya Latynina.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Colonel General F F Gaivoronskiy and Colonel M I Galkin *Kul’tura Voyennogo Myshleniya*, Voenizdat, Moscow 1991 p243. See also Blandy *Calculating Military Outcomes*, Soviet Studies Research Centre, AA24, February 1993, p11.

⁷ See V A Lefebvre and G L Smolyan *Algebra Konflikta*, Moscow 1968; V A Lefebvre *Konflikhtuyschkiye Struktury*, Soviet Radio Publishing House, Moscow, 1973; Chapter 14 “Reflexive Control in Soviet Military Planning” by Clifford Reid in *Soviet Strategic Deception* ed Brian D Dailey and Patrick J Parker, Lexington Books, 1985.

⁸ http://www.redstar.ru/2008/08/13_08/4_06.html *Krasnaya Zvezda* 13 August 2008 “Virus Vozhdizma” by Viktor Ruchkin. S I Ozhegov, *Slovar’ Russkogo Yazyka*, Moscow 1978 p78 defines Vozhdism as: “A policy directed at the affirmation /confirmation of one person in the role of an indisputable or infallible leader”. The article was divided into five sections: 1. History of Illness and Family Case-History; 2. Models of Behaviour; 3. Psychological Aspect; 4. Diagnosis; 5. Recommendations.

⁹ Blandy *Georgia and Russia: A Further Deterioration in Relations*, ARAG, Caucasus Series 08/22, July 2008, p5.

¹⁰ http://www.redstar.ru/2008/06/04_06/1_03.html *Krasnaya Zvezda* 4 June 2008 “V SKVO Novyy komanduyushchiy”. Sergey Afanayevich Makarov was born on **19 September 1952** in the village of Nikolayevka, Smidovicheskiy rayon, Jewish Autonomous Oblast’. In **1974** graduated from the Blagoveshchensk Higher Tank Command School. Later commanded tank platoon, company; chief of staff – deputy commander of tank battalion in the Far East Military District; Group of Soviet Forces in Germany. After completion in **1987** of the Military Academy of Armoured Troops continued services in NCMD as chief of staff, deputy commander of a tank regiment; commander of a tank training regiment; commander of a separate motor rifle brigade; deputy commander of army combat training. In **1998** graduated from the General Staff Academy. In **1998-2000** Chief of Staff – First Deputy Army Commander in NCMD; Chief of Directorate – Deputy Head of the Interior Ministry Operational Headquarters for the North Caucasus seconded from the Ministry of Defence. From **2002** Army Commander in Moscow Military District. In **2002-2005** Deputy Commander of Troops of NCMD, Commander Forces in the North Caucasus. **2005-2008** Chief of Staff – First Deputy Commander Volga-Ural MD.

¹¹ http://www.sovsekretno.ru/magazines/article/2015_Sovershenno_Sekretno_10/233, September 2008, “Pobeda, kotoruyu my poterpeli” by Leonid Velekhov.

¹² C W Blandy *Chechnya: Federal Retribution ‘Encirclement, Forceful Intervention & Isolation’* P34 CSRC March 2001 p87.

¹³ Blandy *Georgia and Russia: A Further Deterioration in Relations*, ARAG, Caucasus Series 08/22, July 2008, p2.

¹⁴ <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/data/2008/40/10.html> *Novaya Gazeta* No 40, 5 June 2008 “Konflikt dal’nego sledovaniya” by Pavel Felgengauer. See also Blandy *Georgia and Russia: A Further Deterioration in Relations* and Charles Blandy *Chechen Status – Wide Differences*

Remain P27, CSRC, February 1998, p22, Box 7 and p23, Map 1, Railway Bypass Route around Chechnya.

¹⁵ C W Blandy *Georgia and Russia: A Further Deterioration in Relations*, ARAG, Caucasus Series 08/22, July 2008, p2.

¹⁶ 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. See also Blandy *Georgia and Russia: A Further Deterioration in Relations*, ARAG, Caucasus Series 08/22, July 2008, p9.

¹⁷ http://www.ng.ru/regions/2008-07-18/1_peacemakers.html *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* 18 July 2008, "Voinstvuyschkiye mirotvortsy" by Vladimir Mukhin.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Artur Tsutsiyev *Atlas Etnopoliticheskoy Istorii Kavkaza (1774-2004)* p107, Map 39 "Kavkazskiy Kommunikatsii".

²² On 25 July 2006 Georgia reasserted control of the upper Kodori Gorge with a combined presence of Interior Ministry troops with Defence Ministry support.

²³ http://www.ng.ru/courier/2008-07-28/12_georgia.html *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* 28 July 2008 "Voyna ne budyet" by Yuriy Karlenovich Simonyan.

²⁴ http://www.ng.ru/regions/2008-07-18/1_peacemakers.html *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* 18 July 2008.

²⁵ <http://zavtra.ru/cgi/veil//data/zavtra/08/771/33.html> *Zavtra* No 35, 27 August 2008 "Sulim Yamadayev 'Khoroshiy boy yeshche budyet'..." by Yuriy Kotenok. Yamadayev is commander of "Vostok".

²⁶ Amnesty International, *Civilians in the Line of Fire – The Georgian-Russian Conflict* EUR 04/005/2008, 18 November 2008, p6.

²⁷ <http://www.sovsekretno.ru/magazines/article/2015> *Sovershenno Sekretno* September 2008 "Pobeda, kotoruyu my poterpeli" by Leonid Velekhov.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ http://www.redstar.ru/2008/09/17_09/2_02.html *Krasnaya Svezda* 17 September 2008 page 2 "Kuznetsy pobedi?" by Oleg Pchelov.

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³¹ <http://kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?Docs1D=10119097print=true> *Kommersant' Vlast'* No 32, 18 August 2008 "Pyatidnevnyaya voyna".

³² <http://www.sovsekretno.ru/magazines/article/2015>.

³³ <http://kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?Docs1D=10119097print=true>.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ <http://www.sovsekretno.ru/magazines/article/2015>.

³⁶ <http://www.civil.ge/img2004/South-OssetiaMap.jpg>

³⁷ *Der Spiegel* 15 September 2008 "Did Saakashvili lie – The West Begins to Doubt Georgian Leader" by Spiegel Staff.

³⁸ See, for example BBC *File on 4*, 29 October 2008 "BBC investigates Georgian War Crimes in South Ossetia" by Tim Whewell; *Times Online* 9 November 2008 "Georgia fired first shot, say UK monitors" by Jon Swain,

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³⁹ <http://www.sovsekretno.ru/magazines/article/2015>.

⁴⁰ C W Blandy *Whither Ingushetia*, CSRC Caucasus Series 06/03 January 2006 p3.

⁴¹ http://www.ng.ru/politics/2009-01-27/1_flot.html *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* 27 January 2009, "Chernomorskiy flot dreyfuyet v Ochamchiru" by Yuriy Simonyan.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Simonyan (ibid.) says there is no deep water at Ochamchire, whilst Socor

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to Abkhazia”) mentioned that Ochamchire during Soviet times had been a base for submarines utilising the deep waters of Ochamchire Bay.

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⁴⁸ C W Blandy *Pankisskoye Gorge: Residents, Refugees and Fighters*, P37 CSRC, March 2002, p4.

⁴⁹ *North Caucasus Weekly* Vol 9 Iss 46, 4 December 2008 “Lezgin Refugees from Dagestan Seek Refuge in Georgia’s Kakheti Region” by Alexander Melikishvili.

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⁵² Mainly from http://www.redstar.ru/2008/07/30_07/1_06.html *Krasnaya Zvezda* 30 July 2008 “Eto nashi gory” by Aleksandr Khrolenko.

⁵³ It would be of interest to know whether fire support was carried out in the direct fire role or by indirect fire.

⁵⁴ http://www.redstar.ru/2008/07/25_07/1_01.html *Krasnaya Zvezda* 25 July 2008 “Mezhdu dvukh morey” by Vladimir Pasyakin, Aleksandr Tikhonov.

Want to Know More ...?

See: *“Countdown to War in Georgia – Russian Foreign Policy and Media Coverage of the Conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia”* East View Press 2008, Managing Editor Ana K. Niedermaier

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Telephone: (44) 1793 788856

Fax: (44) 1793 788841

Email: arag@da.mod.uk

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