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Georgia continues contributions to international peace and stability



Georgian peacekeepers in Afghanistan

The UN charter gives the UN Security Council the power and responsibility to take collective action to maintain international peace and security. For this reason, the international community usually looks to the council to authorize peacekeeping operations.

Peacekeeping is a way to help countries torn by conflict create conditions for sustainable peace.

In this respect, the Georgian armed forces play an important role in global peace and stability and have been participating in peacekeeping missions since 1999.

Today, sending a Georgian contingent to Afghanistan is a vital mission for the Georgian Army.

Despite the fragile security

situation in the country, the army stands ready to contribute in maintaining security all over the world.

Participation in international peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan has particular importance in achieving global security and stability.

The Georgian military contingent thus intends to go to Afghanistan this year to perform a peacekeeping mission.

Georgian Defense Minister Vasil Sikharulidze spoke about the issue at a meeting of NATO defense ministers in Krakow in February. He attended the meeting in International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) format with non-NATO troop-contributing nations to discuss a number of issues regarding NATO's sup-

port to the expanding Afghan National Army and possibly enhancing support to the Afghan police.

Sikharulidze highlighted that in spite of Georgia's occupied territories by Russia, Georgia continues to develop its defense capabilities and makes a valuable contribution to international security policy. He added that Georgia is ready to participate in operations under the ISAF format and Georgian military forces are prepared to take part in the peace mission in Afghanistan.

The Georgian military units will head to Afghanistan for the second time since 2004, when Georgia deployed 50 military personnel to support the first democratic elections in Afghanistan.

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Solemn anniversary ceremony of Second Infantry Brigade held

The Second Infantry Brigade celebrated its 17th anniversary on June 24.

The solemn ceremony was held at the Senaki military base.

Chief of the Joint Staff of the Georgian Armed Forces Major General Devi Chankotadze congratulated the military servicemen.

Relatives and family members of fallen Georgian soldiers in the battle against Russian aggression were also invited to the ceremony.

Commander of the Second Infantry Brigade, Major Zevva

Liparteliani congratulated the servicemen and discussed the Infantry Brigade's past activities and achievements.

The 30 distinguished soldiers received letters of commendation. An additional 30 soldiers were thanked for their outstanding service in the armed forces.

Chaplain of the Second Infantry Brigade, Father Ioseb conducted a special prayer and gave his blessing to the personnel.

At the end of the ceremony, Chankotadze opened the memorial to servicemen who made the ultimate sacrifice for defending

their country. Their family members planted trees to commemorate them.

"It is a great honor for me to be here," Chankotadze said. "These fellows together with other Georgian soldiers demonstrated bravery and valor in the August war against Russian invaders. This memorial will honor their memory eternally."

The Second Infantry Brigade was established in 1992 as the Twenty-First Mechanized Brigade.

It became the Second Infantry Brigade in 2004.



Georgian peacekeepers in Iraq

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NATO defense ministers meet in Brussels

Defense ministers from 28 NATO member countries and 21 partner nations gathered in Brussels from June 11-12 for their first formal meeting since the Strasbourg/Kehl Summit.

The ministers discussed important challenges to NATO operations, particularly Afghanistan and Kosovo, and the alliance's defense transformation efforts.

The ministers addressed anti-robbery and piracy measures and intensifying security cooperation among NATO

international peacekeeping operations.

"I am proud to mention that since 1999, more than 10,000 Georgian military servicemen have participated in peace support operations," he said. "Despite the fragile security situation in our country, we stand ready to continue contributing our share to maintain security all over the world. Participation in international peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan attaches particular importance to achieving global security and

important, much appreciated contributions to NATO-led operations. Ten Partnership for Peace nations participate in NATO-led operations and missions from the Balkans to Afghanistan, contributing some 2,700 personnel."

Following two days of formal meetings and working sessions at the NATO headquarters in Brussels, the ministers approved three separate initiatives – to enhance training for Afghan National Security Forces, improve the command



member countries. They also held talks on defense planning procedures and nuclear policy.

Within the framework of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, Georgian Defense Minister Vasil Sikharulidze delivered a speech at the meeting. He presented information on the security situation in Georgia to the remaining 49 ministers.

Sikharulidze also spoke about further improving NATO-Georgia relation and outlined the reforms being successfully pursued in the field of defense.

He stated that a top priority for the Georgian foreign and security policy is the country's full-fledged membership in the alliance. Earlier NATO-Georgia relations were said to have entered a new phase after launching the NATO-Georgia Commission and Annual National Program.

Sikharulidze commented on the participation of Georgian servicemen in

stability. The Georgian military contingent intends to go to Afghanistan this year to perform a peacekeeping mission there."

Meanwhile, Sikharulidze stressed Georgia's geopolitical significance and the necessity to preserve a stable and peaceful environment throughout the region.

The importance of strengthening relations with partners and their contribution to peacekeeping operations was highlighted in the opening remarks of NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer.

"This includes the alliance's commitment to further develop the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and Partnership for Peace program as an essential framework for substantive political dialogue and practical cooperation, including efforts aimed at enhancing military interoperability," he said. "This is particularly relevant as our partners make

and control structure for ISAF and deploy NATO AWACs to assist with air traffic control in Afghanistan.

The ministers also tackled the transformation agenda.

This process is driven by a constant need for modernization, updating and resourcing key capabilities required by NATO, so it can deal successfully with 21st-Century security challenges.

NATO believes this puts a premium on multinational solutions and prioritizing resources and innovative thinking.

The ministers reviewed and provided guidance on a wide-range of intra-allied initiatives, including, Allied Ground Surveillance, strategic airlift and helicopter projects.

During the Ministerial, an agreement was also signed between the Georgian and Lithuanian governments to exchange and mutually protect classified information by their respective defense ministers.

Defense minister visits U.S.



Defense Minister Vasil Sikharulidze paid a four-day working visit to the U.S.

The minister held meetings with representatives from the U.S. Congress Representation Chamber, Senate and state and defense departments.

Sikharulidze also met U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and his assistant Alexander Vershbow to discuss the situation in Georgia. The talks composed reforms at the Defense Ministry, along with prospects of future military cooperation between the U.S. and Georgia.

Topics which were also outlined included Georgia's accession into NATO

and the potential involvement of the Georgian armed forces in the International Security Assistance Force.

Sikharulidze and Gates focused on the U.S.-Georgia Strategic Partnership Charter and bilateral cooperation within the framework of the document.

A series of meetings were also arranged with the U.S. North-Atlantic Council and Johns Hopkins University. At the meeting with U.S. researchers, the minister highlighted the key directions of Georgia's defense policy and reforms to be implemented in the near future.

U.S. assistant secretary of state visits Defense Ministry

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Philip Gordon made an official visit to the Defense Ministry on June 10.

Defense Minister Vasil Sikharulidze and Deputy Minister Giorgi Muchaidze hosted the U.S. delegation.

During the meeting, Sikharulidze provided information on the security situation in the country, as well as developments in the breakaway regions.

The participants also discussed a number of ongoing military reforms.

The talks also covered Georgia's full-scale accession into NATO and bilateral military cooperation proposed between Georgia and NATO member states.

Both sides analyzed the significance of the multinational Cooperative Longbow/Lancer 2009 exercises recently conducted in Georgia under the auspices of NATO.



Georgia continues contributions to international peace and stability

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Only one Georgian military doctor, Captain A. Gvalia is participating in an ISAF operation under the leadership of a Lithuanian team.

The second official statement by the Georgian side on sending the Georgian contingent to Afghanistan was made at NATO Defense Ministerial in Brussels on June 11.

Sikharulidze declared his country's intention to sent servicemen to international peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan in a speech to 49 defense

ministers.

After the announcement, the Defense Ministry released an official statement regarding the contribution of the Georgian armed forces to international security and stability.

According to the statement, the Thirty-First Battalion of the Third Infantry Brigade will join NATO-led operations in 2010, ISAF in Afghanistan, under U.S. command.

Georgian soldiers will participate without national caveats attached. It was earlier announced that in autumn 2009, one company of the Georgian

Second Infantry Brigade would join the ISAF under French command.

"Georgia is proud of its armed forces," Sikharulidze said.

"They are well-trained. They have gained real experience in other operations and have met NATO standards.

Georgia is a small nation, but we are playing our part to fight terrorism and bring peace and stability to the world.

This is not only a contribution to international efforts, but an important part of enhancing Georgia's own security. I am confident that our men and women

will do a great job."

Today around 10,000 members of the Georgian armed forces have served in NATO or coalition-led peacekeeping operations around the world.

The Georgian armed forces began participating in peacekeeping missions in 1999.

The first Georgian peacekeeping platoon was deployed in the Balkans. Ever since the military has participated in KFOR peacekeeping operations, one platoon in a Turkish battalion in Mamusha and one company in a German brigade in Prizren since 2003.

Georgian peacekeeping missions departed the Balkans in March 2008.

The first peacekeeping contingent, medical group and engineer platoon was sent to Tikrit, Iraq in 2003.

Georgian military personnel performed a peacekeeping mission as part of the Coalition Forces at the CLEAR base in Al Kut, Iraq, and DELTA base in Baghdad.

The Georgian armed forces have truly gained genuine experience in all kinds of peacekeeping operations.

Tea Kerdzevadze

Summer mountain basic training



Sachkhere Mountain Training School Sergeant Giorgi Dzindzibadze said.

“The soldiers acquire knowledge that is important for every serviceman. Sure there were some problems, but they have done everything well. The only thing that was a little bit difficult was their fear of heights. Some soldiers had problems with the high altitude. However, after several days of training, the problem vanished. There are four training areas in Sachkhere where the company was trained. I also want to say that such training must be done very intensively, and personnel must also be trained in a winter course, and in additional 5-week courses. All these courses are planned by the Defense Ministry, of course, but my wish is for all the subunits to undergo much more difficult training.”

He also mentioned that next year the military will train units in mountain combat tactics.

“All serviceman who have passed the basic summer training this year will be trained in mountain combat tactics next year,” Dzindzibadze said.

“The training includes mountain combat, tactical movement and combat operations in mountains when high-level obstacles are present.”

During a conversation with *Georgia Today*, another instructor said such mountain training is important and every intelligence company from each brigade will undergo the training.

Two intelligence companies from the first and second infantry brigades have already been trained, he said. A company from the Third Infantry Brigade starts the exercises on July 1.

“We are very satisfied that the company’s personnel are well-motivated,” he said.

“They know their liabilities and they have successfully passed the training. They obey all their instructors’ orders.”



We want to say thank you to the whole second infantry brigade.”

Eighty-nine students entered the training program and 28 graduated with honors.

Ground Forces Deputy Command-

er Col. Aleksandre Kiknadze and Chief Sergeant, Master Sergeant Aluda Kopaliani attended the ceremony.

The training course ran from June 1-20.

David Jokhadze

Military servicemen from a Second Infantry Brigade intelligence company finished their summer mountain basic training on June 20.

Eighty-nine servicemen endured training over 19 days.

The company servicemen were trained in rock climbing, moving on mountain locations, obstacle courses, forced crossing, and planning routes using various techniques and facilities. “This is not only physical training,”



Professionalism – basic demand for military servicemen

The Georgian armed forces are developing a new personnel management system.

The Defense Ministry’s Human Resources Department, Joint Project Team, J-1 Personnel Department and CUBIC group experts have been involved in reviewing the current personnel management system since September and began designing new subsystems targeting the career development of officers and sergeants.

Under the new system, basic stages will be determined on a preliminary basis to define how each soldier will develop professionally.

The system’s development is seen as a requirement for Georgia’s integration with NATO and a chief priority of the Defense Ministry’s 2009 Vision project.

Military personnel have taken a great interest in this project.

Defence Today spoke with J-1 Personnel Department Deputy Chief Giorgi Jachvadze to learn more.

Jachvadze said the reforms are likely to take several years, which is why no radical changes should be expected in the near future.

Although some small-scale changes will be seen at first, he added, all those involved should understand that this is a long process that will be implemented slowly to cause as little disruption as possible.

The main component of the reforms is a new evaluation system that is under development. Supervisors will evaluate their subordinates using the system according to special rules.

The ministry hopes the system will better reveal the capacity, skills, poten-



tial and characteristics of servicemen. The system will also improve their chances of being recognized and promoted.

The system will also assist officers and sergeants in following a career-advancement plan on a competitive basis taking into account their personal strengths.

The reforms also include establishing central and independent “selection boards.”

Board members will rely on instruc-

tor evaluations of servicemen when making their selections. This will reduce subjective features of the selection process and be based strictly on the talents and qualifications of the individual.

The system also involves other mechanisms that help ensure its objectivity. However, Jachvadze said the success of the system depends on the attitude taken by each individual officer towards the issue. The real outcome will only be seen after the system is fully implemented, he said.

The military occupational specialty system – another key reform – is also under development. A new Personnel Management System will function on its base.

Under the system, branches and specialties will be defined in compliance with the educational system, according to which military occupation specialty (MOS) codes will be determined.

The system will more easily identify deficiencies or surpluses in personnel, where more training is needed, or where

attention must be focused to better prepare servicemen.

MOS codes will be awarded to each member of the armed forces taking into account specialties and skills to allow the servicemen to develop professionally.

The reform will also result in switching to a pay by rank system in which the Financial Management Department is actively engaged together with the J-1 Personnel Department.

The purpose of the system is to make sure that servicemen are compensated for their actual rank, as opposed to position.

In accordance with Western standards, the system is a precondition for advancing the professional development of servicemen and may serve as the basis for forming an objective, fair, transparent and effective personnel management system.

Jachvadze said the system will avoid negative factors that come with the pay by position structure, such as unjustified increases in rank and rather focus on the potential of the servicemen.

The reform also addresses other subsystems to regulate areas such as promotion, professional development, recruiting, integration of former military personnel into civil society and several other concerns.

In view of the crucial task of Georgia joining NATO, the reform must be implemented in the armed forces.

Jachvadze said the reform is being developed to help individual military servicemen, and contains a system of levers to protect them from the impacts of the subjective factors.

Eka Gakhokidze

Defense Ministry helps director make film on war and wedding

The aim of every author is to imitate reality in creation.

When director Zaza Kolelishvili read the unusual story in the "Mediatori" magazine about celebrating a wedding during a war, he said he immediately felt that altering this real life episode into a movie script would be an interesting way to express his emotions about the August war.

The story is about an ordinary Georgian wedding and the circumstances in which it was celebrated.

When the groom from western Georgia headed to the conflict zone village Dzevera to marry his fiancée, Russian tanks and planes started attacking the country.

Without the help of Georgian soldiers, it would have been impossible for him to reach his destination. Despite the tragedy of the situation, bombs blasting, tanks rolling and TU-122 crashing 200 meters away from the tent where the wedding was taking place, they still did not postpone the wedding.

"Maybe I have a very exaggerated opinion about Georgians, but still I am sure that there is no other nation in the

universe that can celebrate a wedding during a war," Kolelishvili said.

"This movie is about people who have lived in constant fear and violence 15 years, but have not lost their kindness, morals or traditions. All this time, there were numerous terrible things happening, which we paid no attention to. Conflict zone residents became victims of everyday kidnappings, robberies, and killings. The world did not start to take an interest in the fate of these people until wide-range warfare broke out."

He said the film is a story about how to stay humane during violence. The film is a subjective view of the August war through a series of small stories about human relations revolving around a wedding.

"The war opens on the background of the two-square-kilometer village Dzevera," he said.

"Despite the tragic events of the war, this is a movie about people and their life that naturally cannot be completely tragic." That is why this movie is not only a tragedy, but a mixture of genres such as a comedy and tragedy with heroic elements."



Film Director Zaza Kolelishvili with the Georgian soldiers

The film is about war, and could not have been shot without soldiers and military equipments.

The Defense Ministry thus worked as a key supporter of the movie working group.

"No words of gratefulness are enough to express our thankfulness towards the ministry," Kolelishvili said. "This film could not have been made without their support. As the film is about a real story it is dramatically important to create a real environment. The ministry has helped us with all the necessary military equipment, even military aircraft. Georgian soldiers have been

with us all day long and I want to highlight that they have even worked the cameras well. Of course, we know they have a difficult regime and we try not to overload them. But I am sure that while working with us they have felt that they are still serving Georgia because this film will preserve part of our history for future generations. Also the Culture and Sport Ministry has helped us. The film is mostly being made with state donations, but we are also contributing our own funds."

The film is being shot near Tbilisi in the Didi Digomi village, Teleti and several pavilions.

The most important part of the film is staged in a camp where the wedding takes place.

Ninety actors are taking part in addition to a large crew.

The film will premier in September to select audiences, and hit cinemas on Oct. 1. Kolelishvili hopes the movie will draw a large audience.

"We want the movie to be a big success," he said. "It is obvious that the film will be very interesting. This is not something invented, but rather a story from our real lives."

Ana Alania



'Aliante 2009' winners visit Krtsanisi Training Center

The winners of the 'Aliante 2009' international competition visited the Krtsanisi National Training Center this week. Twelve individuals were announced as winners and each became familiar with various small caliber firearms, along with their technical specifications and rules of use.

The winners had the opportunity to fire M-4 and Kalashnikov rifles.

The basic objective of the 'Aliante 2009' competition was to inform teenagers aged 15-19 of important issues regarding NATO, security issues and

international relations.

Aliante consisted of three stages. The first and the second stages were held in the form of testing and interviews throughout Georgia. The final stage was conducted on an international level.

The winners will leave for Kaunas, Lithuania on July 27 to visit various military installations. The project is implemented in Georgia with the assistance of the New Generation-New Initiative project and Information Center on NATO.

The defense and education ministries supported the event.



Estonian Air Force commander visits Defense Ministry

Estonian Air Force Commander, Brigadier General Valeri Saar paid a formal visit to Georgia.

The aim of the visit was for Georgia and Estonia to share their air force experience.

Saar visited the Defense Ministry where he was received by Georgian Air Forces Commander Col. Zurab Pochkhua.

During the meeting, Estonian officials made a presentation on the Estonian Air Force for their Georgian colleagues.

The sides discussed the importance of familiarizing Georgian officials with Estonia's experience gained while integrating with Western alliances.

After the presentation, the military officials provided their comments.

"The visit will likely facilitate bilateral defense cooperation between the countries," Pochkhua said. "The issues raised at the meeting included providing assistance for Georgia in the form of consultations and underscored the need to exchange military experience. It is clear that Estonia is quite experienced in its interaction with Euro-Atlantic institutions."

Saar said Estonia faced similar problems to as Georgia prior to its accession into NATO in 2004, adding that the country will willingly share its experience with Tbilisi.

Discussions at the meeting covered



future cooperation between the countries.

Saar also expressed a desire to discuss the Georgian military's experiences during the Georgia-Russia war in August 2008.

Saar also visited the Marneuli Aviation Base.

Towards the end of the visit, he laid wreaths at a memorial dedicated to fallen soldiers at the Mukhatgverdi Military Cemetery.