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## Richard Holbrooke pays visit to Georgia

U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke arrived in Georgia Feb. 21 to discuss the country's contribution to operations in Afghanistan.

He arrived to the Black Sea town of Batumi, where he was welcomed by President Saakashvili. He visited Krtsanisi National Training Center Feb. 22 and observed a training of the Georgian troops for the ISAF operation in Afghanistan.

Holbrooke, U.S. Ambassador to Georgia John Bass, President Mikheil Saakashvili, Defense Minister Bacho Akhalaia and Chief of the Joint Staff of GAF Maj.Gen. Devi Chankotadze attended the demonstrative training operation specially conducted for the visitors.

Saakashvili said that the Georgian battalion's mission in Afghanistan will be very complicated, but Georgia must stand together with its allies. The president declared that this is one of the most complicated missions, as on the one hand the mission's success will largely define the security and stability worldwide and especially for Afghanistan and the coalition countries but on the other, successful performance of our allies and friends, those who actively support the Georgia's integrity and future

prosperity, will contribute to resolving a lot of internal affairs which are of great concern to us... our soldiers are real professionals knowing what is at stake.

As the president noted this mission is not simply some general mission, this mission is about Georgian patriotic deed as well.

"We pin great hopes on them. Their families and we worry about their safety and security. But we at the same time understand very well that we are engaged in this battle together with allies in order to accomplish our common cause without any retreat," Saakashvili said. "Georgia participated in the operations of this kind previously and as Mr. Holbrooke told me and as Gen. Petraeus also told me they were impressed by professionalism of the Georgian soldiers."

Holbrook agreed with Saakashvili that Georgian soldiers' participation into the Afghan mission serves the common mission of the whole civilization. He said that the United States appreciated Georgia's contribution to the Afghan operation without any national caveats, which he said was "not easy" for a small country.

"Mr. President, dear friends, I want to express gratitude on the behalf of American people

and the whole world for the decision you have made - to send one additional battalion to Afghanistan. Georgian troops would play a vital role in the effort to defeat terrorism around the world. I am pretty familiar with Georgian character and I honor it very much. I am impressed with what I saw. The Georgian colonels explained me the plot of your training. I am proud that I saw the U.S. marines here; they were part of this training. I will tell about all to the president of United States, to the Secretary of State, to the big friend of Georgia Joe Biden and my other colleagues in Washington," Holbrook said.

During his speech with journalists Defense Minister Bacho Akhalaia said that the battalion will head for Afghanistan presumably by April 2010.

"As you know, this battalion has undergone special trainings with the U.S. marines. The final phase of the training was conducted in Germany. All of this gives us the ground to argue that Battalion is quite well trained causing satisfaction from both Georgian and American sides. There are some other details after specifying of which the Georgian militaries will leave for Afghanistan," he said.

## The US Frigate's arrival in Georgia

Deputy Ministers of Defence Nikoloz Vashakidze and Nodar Kharshiladze together with the Chief of Joint Staff of MoD, Major-General Devi Chankotadze have been on board of the U.S. guided missile destroyer, John L. Hall recently visiting Georgia.

According to Nikoloz Vashakidze, the US Frigate's port call in Georgia is a vivid demonstration of fruitful cooperation ongoing between the US and Georgia in the security sphere. "This visit is of great importance for us as we, with this kind of intensive and productive collaboration with the

US, place a key focus on the improvement and strengthening of national security forces", declared Mr. Vashakidze.

The US Navy Frigate arrived in the Batumi port on the 1st of March. The American ship was received by the Georgian government officials. John L. Hall with its crew has already started joint military trainings with the Georgian coastguard personnel. The goal of the joint trainings is perfection of rescue and survival skills among the Georgian militaries along with ship ransacking and boarding capabilities.

The US Frigate visited Ba-

tumi port within the frames of "Global Marine Partnership" Program as well as with the aim of strengthening secure movement on sea with Black Sea Basin Countries. The visit of the American Vessel in Georgia is part of the strategy of the US Armed Forces' European Command and Europe-deployed American Navy Fleet, as well as the part of the US 6th fleet strategy, the one providing for enhancement of regional stability and overall marine partnership.

The U.S. guided missile destroyer will leave Georgia on the 3rd of May.



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# Afghanistan, the central battle for the transatlantic community



*NATO has the most challenging mission in its history. Success or failure in Afghanistan will have a significant influence on the transatlantic community and its neighbors. In this complicated and strained environment, the Georgian state has its own and common interests. Georgia realized that by providing international peace and security it is trying to protect vital interests and values.*

*"Georgian troops are deployed and more will be sent to Afghanistan to serve for common cause, which Georgia shares with its western allies," President Saakashvili said.*

Georgian Institute of Public Affairs expert Tornike Sharashenidze talked to Defense Today about Afghanistan and its importance for Georgia.

**Q: Afghanistan and its region are now the central battle for the transatlantic community. When Georgia decided to contribute to the international security, it proved that shares the same security concerns and the same values as other NATO members. Can you define the importance of ISAF for Georgia?**

**A:** Firstly, the ISAF mission has a political importance for Georgia. This

is an opportunity to remind our partners about us and send them a distinct message that we aren't only consumers but a contributor to a security. In addition, the Afghanistan mission will provide our military with the opportunity to obtain practical experience and to demonstrate our nation's readiness to cooperate with NATO and with other partner countries.

**Q: Many international security experts and analysts think that Georgia's NATO membership goes through Afghanistan. Can it really help Georgia pursue its goal to become a member?**



**A:** We should understand that ISAF is one of the breaking points for Georgia in order to hold the West's attention. Afghanistan gives us a chance to prove that Georgia is a warrant partner for NATO, which participates in its own to provide global security. Georgia must accumulate positive examples for the time when the political situation in the country is ready for NATO membership. In this case we'll have more opportunity to become equal members of the alliance.

**Q: After full engagement in Afghanistan, Georgia practically turn into the most important strategic partner for the United States and NATO. Will there be any positive consequences for the Georgian state security?**

**A:** In my opinion we have a big perspective in the future. Georgia will have a huge potential if President Saakashvili can put in motion the Caucasian Corridor. In this case, our country will develop into a really serious partner for NATO. The West will accept that the transit route goes through Georgia and it will be almost impossible for hostile countries to seize this function.

**Q: U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke arrived in Georgia to discuss the country's contribution in Af-**

**ghanistan. How can you evaluate these frequent visits of top U.S. officials?**

**A:** First of all, I should mention that Holbrooke is responsible for this region and the secondly and most importantly, he is one of the most enthusiastic supporters of Georgia. Besides, Holbrooke has big experience and ability to spur action in Washington. We have a well-known example from the 1990s, when his actions became the basis for NATO's future eastern enlargement. Now we can't exclude that he works on a new corridor to Afghanistan through Georgia and with him it's more realistic to implement this project.

*Irakli Gurgenidze*

*Irakli Gurgenidze*



## Qualification course

Training courses began for middle and high-ranking officers of the Joint Staff of GAF in the office of Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS).

An opening ceremony was attended by Deputy Defense Minister Nodar Kharshiladze. During the ceremony he reiterated that professional development of Defense Ministry personnel is one of the top priorities set by the Ministry's Leadership.

"The given program being realized in coordination with GFSIS have been generally designed to improve senior officers' professional capabilities, and in particular, to raise an awareness over the military strategic issues", the deputy minister said.

The senior officers' training program is going on within the frames of Memorandum signed between the Defense Ministry and GFSIS on the Feb. 18. According to the Foundation's President Alexandre Rondeli it was the Defense Ministry that introduced the initiative of launching the training courses for the Georgian senior military personnel. He added that this kind of training program



will help the officers improve, along with professional abilities, personal characteristics as well, as they are duly

required to be not only the high-level professionals but also the best citizens of their country.

Meanwhile the course in the GFSIS office, Georgian militaries will be afforded the real opportunity to obtain the

knowledge regarding international security environment, which will contain post soviet sphere, creation of Georgian foreign policy and its challenges. Besides, participants will receive detailed knowledge about conception of Georgia's national security. In this case, lectures will touch subject like a security aspects, traditional and nontraditional threats.

Military officers will gain useful information related to international security system and its institutions like the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the European Union, the Western European Union and the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization.

One of the most important subjects of the courses will be civil-military and media relations. Officers of Joint Staff will be reminded again that the key stone of the country's security is based on transparency and democratic civil control of defence sector. The training course for middle and high-ranking officers of the Joint Staff of GAF will last for two months.

*Irakli Gurgenidze*

# Defence minister attending NATO meeting in Istanbul

Allied defense ministers gathered in Istanbul Feb. 4-5, 2010 and discussed a number of issues on NATO's agenda, including the evolving NATO-led operation in Afghanistan, NATO's engagement in Kosovo and defence transformation. Minister of Defense of Georgia Bacho Akhalaia arrived in Turkey on Feb. 4 to take part in the informal meeting.

The working session was opened by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

"44 nations in the ISAF coalition are gathered here today. We are here to discuss our operations in Afghanistan. After a difficult year 2009 we will see new momentum in 2010. And it is already starting. 36 ISAF contributing nations have now made offers to send more troops – a very strong testament to the commitment and solidarity of the countries represented here today. Tens of thousands of additional forces are now deploying to Afghanistan. The Afghan Security Forces are growing in number and capability. The NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan is now up and running. And transition to Afghan lead will begin this year. There is no doubt 2010 will be a challenging year. There will be more fighting; militants and terrorists will seek to kill ISAF soldiers and innocent Afghans. But this is also the year that we should begin to see Afghanistan's future take shape: where it starts to stand on its own feet and provide for its own security, and where terrorism will find no safe haven from which to threaten us all. NATO and our Partners will play our full part in making that future a reality," the secretary general said in his opening remarks.

Topics discussed at the meeting included the need to fully fulfill the training and mentoring requirements for the NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan (NTM-A). During the meeting, the ISAF nations had the opportunity to review progress made during the London conference on Afghanistan on Jan. 28.

Akhalaia informed attendees about Georgia's participation in ISAF Mission.

"We have accumulated significant part of human and financial resources to ensure full involvement in the NATO-

led operation. By the spring of this year, Georgia will become the largest per capita contributor of the ISAF mission. Currently, a reinforced company is being deployed under French command in Regional Command HQ in Kabul and within the Turkish detachment 2 Liaison Officers are conducting liaison between Regional Command Capital HQ and the Afghan Ministry of Defense. Besides, we continue to deploy one military doctor in Afghanistan as part of the Lithuanian Provisional Reconstruction team. In April, Georgia will deploy the battalion size unit in Afghanistan to conduct full spectrum operations in support of the U.S. Marine Corps. The Battalion has just completed the mission rehearsal exercise being deployed to Germany and will be continuing pre-deployment trainings back to Georgia. Their combat readiness assessment had been carried out in Hohenfels which turned out to be very positive to take over the mission."

In his speech Akhalaia underscored the importance of participation in peacekeeping mission for international security.

"We have all together been applying our utmost efforts to provide a secure environment and ensure stability in Afghanistan and the entire region. The significant progress has been achieved since creation of the ISAF. Nevertheless, at this turning point, democratic countries should further strengthen their efforts alongside with Afghan government in order to create relevant, sufficient environment facilitating improvements in governance and sustainable development of Afghanistan," Akhalaia said. "Our joint efforts and enhanced participation will ensure success of the mission for the sake of Afghan nation and for the sake of peace, stability and security in a global sense."

In addition to the troops' contribution, Georgia stays devoted to the commitment to provide transit route via air, road and rail infrastructure to NATO, opening its territory and any facility on the ground.

On the sidelines of the NATO Defense Ministerial Georgian Minister of Defense held meeting with his colleague



Mehmet Vecdi Gönül. In the course of the meeting the sides addressed the bilateral cooperation prospects in technical and education spheres of the two countries.

"We continue bilateral cooperation with Turkey for many years already. The subject of our conversation covered the deepening of collaboration in these fields," the minister said in an interview with media representatives.

When asked about the possible purchase of weapons by Georgia, minister answered that the conversation did not refer to this particular subject. He added that the meetings of this format do not cover such issues.

"What I can say is that we carry on very close and intensive business relationship with Turkey which was one of the first countries providing Georgia with both - moral and financial assistance following the 2008 August war. At present our relationship already has reached higher levels, giving us confidence to make it more fruitful and sufficient," Akhalaia said.

At the press conference held after the ministerial meeting, the NATO Secretary General thanked the Georgian side and stated that realization of the proposal needs further consideration.

"We consider positively all offers to facilitate our mission in Afghanistan. We also appreciate very much the significant troop contributions from Georgia and similarly we appreciate other contributions that can support in Afghanistan. So we will look closer into this offer," NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said.

Rasmussen reaffirmed that ISAF will continue to focus on improving security, on building Afghan capacity, and on setting conditions to enable Afghans to assume key responsibilities.

Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), Admiral Stavridis, and ISAF Commander, General McChrystal, briefed the Ministers on the situation in Afghanistan and on the way ahead throughout 2010.

Ministers also discussed the current issues underpinning NATO

and ISAF partner support to the mission in Afghanistan. General McChrystal highlighted that as resources continue to flow into Afghanistan to enable the implementation of NATO's refreshed strategy, the conditions are now set to make substantive progress in 2010.

The secretary general welcomed commitments by 36 ISAF nations to provide additional commitments of nearly 40,000 additional troops and trainers to the mission. At the same time, he reminded all the participants of the shortfalls in trainers and mentors for the Afghan security forces, requesting that all nations look once again to see what more they might provide for this important mission.

The secretary general highlighted that the measures being taken in Afghanistan will speed up transition to ownership by the Afghan authorities for their own affairs. It is expected that substantive progress will be made in 2010, but that this will be based on conditions on the ground rather than calendar-driven.

## The year of decisions

The strengthening of global cooperation was the underlying theme of the 46<sup>th</sup> Munich Security Conference. More than 300 high-ranking participants from the political, scientific, economic and military spheres came together to discuss the urgent challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the field of foreign and security policy.

The Annual event will address Afghanistan, Middle East stability, global

energy security, arms control and future NATO strategy.

One of the main important topics during the discussions was the Euro-Atlantic understanding of Russia. Representatives of different European countries believe that it would be a mistake for NATO to cling to a cold-war perception of Russia as a potential aggressor and not a strategic partner too, with

whom alliance will share common strategic interests. Despite Medvedev's new military strategy, where NATO is a threat for Moscow, some European diplomats think that the Alliance should accept in the future that Europe's security and stability in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is only possible with Russia and not without it.

Georgian expert Bakur Kvashilava thinks that without doubt Europe will

have more chances to reach stability with Russia, but he adds that the important in this case is to realize content of this discussions.

"Some countries can consider another as an enemy or ally with whom it is useful to cooperate but the main things is the product," Kvashilava said.

It's very interesting to see where Georgia stands in these unpredictable relations between West and Russia.

Bakur Kvashilava thinks that Georgia's case is important if it forms a precedent for Russia's further actions.

"We should pay attention to the events in Dnestr related to Iskander missile issue. Off course Kremlin didn't declare any official statements about it but Moscow did it through the regime which totally depends on Russia. From this development we can see some trends between the west and Russia. So we have a conflict and an attempt to create spheres of influence. With all ensuing consequences, if Russia continues to say that the war with Georgia was just an exception, it has better chance to prove to the west that it's impossible to establish European security without Moscow. But if it appears that Georgia is just a beginning than Russia will become a real strategic opponent" – the expert said.

At the conference, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen urged for a redirection of the North Atlantic

Alliance. To accomplish this, NATO needs to become a globally networked security institution.

"In an age of globalized insecurity, our territorial defence must begin beyond our borders," he said in his statement. This would not mean, though, that NATO had to pursue military activities on a global scale. He thinks that the Alliance should become the hub of a network of security partnerships and a center for consultation on international security issues. He also added that he did not see this proposal as competing with the UN.

"To achieve these goals, all major players have to come together," he said, adding that Afghanistan's neighbors needed to engage in this process as well.

Bakur kvashilava thinks that it is some kind of counter proposal against Medvedev's idea to create New European Architecture.

"This proposal is distinctly defined message to Kremlin," Kvashilava said.

In this strained global environment, Georgia understands that it has its own mission and tries to keep close to the alliance. Georgia already realized that ISAF is NATO's number one priority and the most difficult mission in the history of alliance and it's not only rhetoric. The decision of official Tbilisi to deploy troops in Afghanistan was a distinct example for other NATO neighbor countries.

*Irakli Gurgenidze*



# Military skiing course over in Bakuriani



The Sachkhere Mountain Training School has conducted the first winter course in the Bakuriani ski resort. In total, 20 military servicemen from various subunits of the Georgian armed forces participated.

The training program began on Jan. 18 and lasted for three months. At the beginning, soldiers complained about the lack of snow but soon the situation changed and participants got down to full-time training.

The course generally covers standing, sliding and moving with skis, as well as searching and evacuating injured in an avalanche. At the initial stage of training, they adopted basic skills. School instructors gave lessons in the technical aspects of skiing as well; moving with skis both on paved and unpaved

tracks and crossing obstacle lines.

Later, attendees practiced setting up Iglu snow shelters. Generally, various types of snow shelters exist. The soldiers first got familiar with German, Swiss and French. Erecting snow shelters is actually connected with difficulties, which require various techniques.

First of all, the snow cover should be no less than two meters, as well as the avalanche-related risks and direction of wind should be identified. It is also necessary to hide shelter from enemies.

Participants preferred the French model. First they dug a ditch, made a roof with snow and arranged beds for sleep. It took participants four hours to finalize the Iglu. Skis, equipment and weapons were placed in the separately arranged harbor and soldiers on duty

were stationed near entries.

After that course attendees were the first to test self-made snow shelters.

"Shelters made from snow is not an easy job but it is one of the means for soldiers to protect themselves from freezing and enemies during military operations," Corp. Rati Beridze said.

Towards the end of the course, participants performed qualification shootings on 100, 200 and 300 meters from M4 type firearms. Each military serviceman performed shootings from three different positions. The Military Skiing Course ended with tactical marching involving the crossing of mountains by means of skis. Participants were required to cover 18 kilometer area in three hours equipped with 14 kg luggage.

The difference between start and finish was equal to 1,600 meters. Most attendees did their best to improve the time set for performing a tactical marching.

The Sachkhere Mountain Training School has already organized the 14th course in military skiing but this was the first time when women militaries took part in it. For the present time 4 women military servants have undergone the military course. One of the successful graduates, Sergeant Marekhi Abesadze spoke about the nature of the course and difficulties emerged during the training process.

"First I found the course too difficult both physically and psychologically, involving adoption of technical skills of skiing, maneuvering with skis across a complex relief, as well as crossing obstacle lines and setting up of snow shelters along with other types of trainings. Mountain School instructors stood ready to help us, raising our motivation all the time. With their help we managed to mobilize all our forces, facilitating overall training process. I am very glad that I was one of the attendees among two others, successfully completing the course. It is an impetus for me to do bet-

ter in future," he said.

The skiing course lasted for three months and finished with a closing ceremony organized in Bakuriani on Feb. 7. Trainings and Military Education Command headship congratulated the course attendees with the successful completion of the course and awarded them with relevant certificates. In the course of the ceremony state anthem was specially performed and a minute of silence was held in memory of the Georgian soldiers fallen in the 2008 August Georgia-Russia war.

Major Malkhaz Merlani, Chief of the Sachkhere Mountain Training School positively evaluated execution of the training program stating that "the whole Course turned out to be rather difficult covering not only the technical side of trainings but the practical lessons in obstacles course exercised in a mountainous environment. What I can say for sure is that the number of armed forces increased for now by 20 more servicemen, who are fully capable to perform any kind of combat operation with the help of skis regardless of hard climate conditions of the highlands".

*Eka Gakhokidze*



## Feb.25, day of Georgia's occupation

On every Feb. 23-25 Georgian people commemorate the Georgian cadets who died in the struggle for the independence of Georgia in 1921 and the occupation of Tbilisi by the Soviet Red Army at the Memorial in Kojori and Tabakhmela.

Exactly 89 years have passed since the Russian invasion of Georgia by the Soviet Red Army. In January 1921, the leadership of the Soviet Russia decided to invade Georgia by force. According to the plan, the army had to enter the territory of the democratic republic and was going to take Georgia under control of the soviet rule. The hottest points of the battle were in Tabakhmela and Kojori settlements bordering Tbilisi.

Freezing... Water in the trenches is frozen... Hands of warriors are black and blue with chillness but they are still kidding... Everyone is here, at the battle field... This is the picture of the frosty days of February, 1921, when the Eleventh Red Army invaded Tbilisi and announced the soviet rule in the country...

Russian Ambassador in Georgia Sergei Kirov and the Communist Party Chairman of the Caucasian Bureau Sergo Orjonikidze, constantly requested from Moscow to officially carry out appropriate activities in order to take Georgia under the soviet rule.

On Feb. 12, 1921, under the coordination of the 11th Army Command, local communists conducted armed revolts in different towns and regions and occupied more of them as well. The next day, the armed forces of Bolshevik Russia crossed the Georgian border and without any resistance, they managed to

occupy Shulaveri, the Red Bridge over the river Khrami and started attack in the direction of Tbilisi. General Giorgi Kvinitadze was appointed as a commander-in-chief of the Georgian army. He divided the front line into the sectors. The general gave the Tabakhmela-Kojori sector to Gen. Andronikashvili.

On Feb. 16, at sunrise the entire Cadets Institute was on toe and ready, as they heard hooters voice. Everybody was arranged at the place of destination.

Colonel Chkheidze received a report, thoroughly checked the units, ordered to fill out defects and started to Tabakhmela at about 10 o'clock.

The real combat force for General Andronikashvili was only 150 cadets and 300 recruits. The cadets had no appropriate clothes to weather either. They were dressed in thin, waterproof artificial Italian coats. The cadets were strengthened by the artillery and two companies. General Andronikashvili was in charge to at-

tack Kojori highland at sunset. Under the instructions of Colonel Chkheidze they started to take positions and arrange immediately. On Feb. 17, in the morning, the Bolshevik army appeared. At this time the cadets had already prepared trenches and mashing guns.

From this moment the fighting against the Red Army was going on non-stop. According to the decision made by the Command, on the night of Feb. 25, the cadets had to leave. Tabakhmela

positions and relocate in Mtsketa via Tbilisi. The situation on Feb. 25 was quite crucial: the last reserves were exhausted; the Russian 11th army outnumbered the Georgian counterpart several times over and they were able to lay siege to the enemy. In this circumstance the commander-in-chief managed to make the correct decision and retreated from Tbilisi in an effort to avoid casualties. A week of heroic age and city protection concluded. On Feb. 25 the Russian Bolshevik Army occupied Tbilisi.

Georgia movie director Gia Chubabria filmed the documentary, "Tarnished February Shadows," which is dedicated to the memory of Maro Makhashvili, the only woman among the cadets.

Three years ago the Soviet Occupation Museum was opened in Tbilisi, in regard to Georgia's 1921 occupations by Russia and its following period. The first photo in the museum depicts one of the cadets' family fallen against the Red Army in 1921. Entering the big hall all photos portray the entire 20th century of Georgian history.

The photos and subjects followed one another chronologically, until the last period when Georgia was released from the Soviet rule. The chronology starts with the 1918 Independence Act of Georgia, along with the photo of the first Georgian Prime Minister Noe Zhordania, under which there is written his words: "Sometimes freedom comes itself silently and calmly. Georgia doesn't often have such heart and soul. When it comes easily, it goes around easily."

*Tea Kerdzvadze*

