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VLADIKAVKAZ, August 21 [Regnum] – **UN High Commissioner for Refugees arrives in North Ossetia.** Director of the Federal Migration Service Konstantin Romodanovsky and UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres arrived in North Ossetia. As the Press Service of the North Ossetian Government reported to IA Regnum correspondent, the FMS Director and the UN High Commissioner will visit the memorial cemetery in Beslan and will then proceed to the settlements of forced migrants.

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### **UN High Commissioner for Refugees arrived in North Ossetia**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) supports the Russian authorities on the issue of protecting the rights of refugees from South Ossetia. This was reported today at the airport in Vladikavkaz by UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres that arrived today to North Ossetia in order to familiarize himself with the situation related to assistance to residents of South Ossetia.

"We shall continue to support the Russian authorities on the issue of protecting the rights of refugees from South Ossetia. Both the government of Russia and EMERCOM in particular are doing a lot to help this category of the population", - he said.

Guterres noted that since the start of the conflict, UNHCR received information about huge numbers of people leaving South Ossetia. "I had an opportunity to offer our assistance to the government of the Russian Federation. I must say that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has made efforts to support residents of South Ossetia", - UN High Commissioner said.

He underlined that UNHCR role related only to humanitarian issues. "Our only goal is to stop the sufferings of people irrespective of adopted political decisions", - Guterres said.

In his turn, K. Romodanovsky, Director of RF Federal Migration Service, stated that Russia is open for help, primarily – for international organizations. He reminded that UNHCR already helped to residents of South

Ossetia back in 1992, during liquidation of the aftermaths of the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict, ITAR-Tass says.

*Translated by PI*

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Publication: [Prime-TASS Business Newswire](#)

Provider: [Prime-TASS](#)

Date: August 20, 2008 (20:31)

## **Russia and UN will coordinate the contribution of the world community to Russia efforts to stabilize the situation in the Caucasus**

Moscow, 20 August. - Russia and UN will coordinate the contribution of the world community to Russia efforts to stabilize the situation in the Caucasus, as was announced today in RF MFA after the meeting between Sergey Lavrov and Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for [Refugees](#), says ITAR-TASS.

Discussin the cooperation between Russia and UNHCR towards overcoming humanitarian consequences of the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict, the parties "agreed on the necessity to coordinate the contribution of the world community to comprehensive efforts made by Russia in order to stabilize the situation in this region".

Lavrov thanked UN High Commissioner for delivering to Vladikavkaz the first batch of humanitarian help for victims of the conflict, includin refugees.

For his part, Guterres highlighted the readiness of UNHCR together with EMERCOM and FMS of Russia, together with relevant authorities to continue providing humanitarian assistance and promoting all their rights, including voluntary and safe return to the former places of residence.

UN High Commissioner plans to visit the region and meet the victims of Georgian armed action in order to determine the scope of UNHCR assistance in solving humanitarian problems. Guterres plans to meet heads of EMERCOM and FMS of Russia, leadership of North Ossetia-Alania.

"The parties agreed on maintaining tight contacts on further humanitarian activities in the region and ensuring its maximum effectiveness", - they stated at Smolenskaya Square.

*Translated by PI*

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Publication: [RIAN - CIS and the Baltics](#)

Provider: [RIA Novosti](#)

Date: August 20, 2008 (20:43)

## **UN High Commissioner for [Refugees](#) will visit North Ossetia**

Vladikavkaz/Moscow, 20 Aug. - RIAN. Delegation from UNHCR will comwe on Thursday to North Ossetia to familiarize with the situation related to assistance to refugees from South Ossetia, Press Seervice of North Ossetia shared with RIAN.

According to the program, UNHCR delegation headed by Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for [Refugees](#), will attend TACs and meet people that have fled from South Ossetia, in Beslan and Alagir.

On Friday, UN High Commissioner will meet Head of North Ossetia Teimuraz Mamsurov.

FMS Director O.Romodanovsky will visit North Ossetia together with UNHCR delegation.

As stated to RIAN in the Information Department of EMERCOM of Russia, UNHCR representativers also plan to meet representatives from FMS of the republic, Ministry of Interior of North Ossetia, EMERCOM Head S.Shoigu and Mamsurov. "The delegation may visit Tskhinvali", - the interlocutor said to RIAN.

**(Further – summary of meeting between Lavrov and Guterres in MFA – same as above – PI)**

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Publication: [Kommersant Russia's Daily Online](#)  
Provider: [Kommersant PH](#)  
Date: August 20, 2008 (14:26)

## **News // Georgians Reject Russian Aid**

Georgian authorities stated yesterday that Russia is not honoring the terms of its agreement to withdraw its forces from Georgia. Russian Defense Ministry representatives say that Russia will withdraw "at the pace dictated by the situation." Meanwhile, Georgia and South **Ossetia** are trying to solve humanitarian problems. Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for **Refugees**, arrived in Tbilisi yesterday and promised Georgia aid from the UN High Commission for **Refugees**. Georgian Minister for **Refugee** Affairs Koba Subeliani says there are 200,000 **refugees** from the conflict zone in Georgia, but Kommersant's information indicates that the figure is significantly inflated with residents of Gori, most of whom returned to their homes yesterday. About 100,000 people lived in Gori before the war.

An equally serious problem, one that recalls the Georgian civil war, is a shortage of electricity in Tbilisi. Georgian authorities say the cause of the problem is that Russian forces have occupied the Inguri hydroelectric plant on the Georgian-Abkhazian border. Even a short interruption in the Inguri plant's service leads to outages throughout the country. The presence of Russian forces is the biggest problem for Georgians. Kommersant's information indicates that only several armored vehicles have come through the Roki Tunnel into Russia from South **Ossetia**, while an entire military column passed in the other direction.

Gori city authorities refused Russian humanitarian aid yesterday. The city's mayor, Vladimir Vardzelashvili, and local priests met the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations convoy carrying 56 tons of food and informed them that the city of Gori does not need Russian aid. The convoy returned to Tskhinvali. Russian Minister of Emergency Situations Sergey Shoigu later that day complained to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin of Georgian authorities' "disruption" of the humanitarian mission to Gori. The PM replied "Let them take care of themselves."

Humanitarian problems are not yet solved in Tskhinvali. There is no electricity, gas or water in the city, although residents are returning in large numbers from North **Ossetia**. Many of them have no homes to return to and are staying with neighbors or in tents provided by the Russian Emergencies Ministry. Not all residents of the city who need the tents have received them yet, however. Returning **refugees** say they are concerned about their possessions and have heard that compensation for losses in the war will be given out in Tskhinvali first. They say Russian authorities have promised 50,000 rubles in compensation for every destroyed home.

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Publication: [Agence France-Presse](#)  
Provider: [Agence France-Presse](#)  
Date: August 20, 2008 (14:03)

## **15,000 refugees return to South Ossetia: Russian ministry**

MOSCOW, Aug 20, 2008 (AFP) - Over 15,000 **refugees** displaced by fighting in South **Ossetia** have returned to the disputed Georgian region, Russia's emergency situations ministry said Wednesday. Out of 37,355 people who left the region during the offensive, 15,334 have returned since Russia signed a ceasefire on August 12, the ministry said in a statement. The pre-war population of the region was around 70,000.

South **Ossetia** was ravaged by fighting after Georgia attacked the breakaway region on August 7 in an attempt to retake it and Russia responded by pouring troops and armour into Georgia in support of the separatists.

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Publication: [RIAN - Events in Russia](#)  
Provider: [RIA Novosti](#)

Date: August 20, 2008 (14:45)

## Red Cross envoys to visit **S.Ossetia**

GENEVA, August 20 (RIA Novosti) - Envoys of the International Committee of the Red Cross have been given access to Georgia's breakaway republic of South **Ossetia**, the organization's president said on Wednesday.

Jakob Kellenberger told a RIA Novosti news conference that the envoys were expected to arrive in the violence-torn province later on Wednesday afternoon.

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Publication: [RIAN - Events in Russia](#)

Provider: [RIA Novosti](#)

Date: August 20, 2008 (21:05)

## State of emergency lifted in **S.Ossetia**

VLADIKAVKAZ, August 20 (RIA Novosti) - South **Ossetian** leader Eduard Kokoity lifted Wednesday the state of emergency in the Georgian separatist republic.

"The state of emergency in South **Ossetia** and the curfew in Tskhinvali are lifted from 21:00 [local time, 17:00 GMT] August 20 due to the stabilizing of conditions, an improvement in the crime rate and a lack of threats to health and lives of civilians," the presidential decree read.

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Publication: [Agence France-Presse](#)

Provider: [Agence France-Presse](#)

Date: August 20, 2008 (16:43)

## Prosecutor says confirmed **S. Ossetia** civilian toll 133: reports

MOSCOW, Aug 20, 2008 (AFP) - Investigators have confirmed 133 deaths among civilians in Georgia's breakaway South **Ossetia** region from the fighting there, Russian news agencies quoted a senior prosecutor as saying on Wednesday.

The confirmed toll was much lower than figures previously claimed by Russian officials, including a claim by President Dmitry Medvedev on August 9 that the death toll as a result of Georgian military action was "in the thousands." "One hundred-and-thirty-three victims have been recorded, but we have numerous burials we can't verify," a senior prosecutor for southern Russia, Boris Salmaksov, was quoted by Interfax as saying.

He said the real toll would be higher as many people had hastily buried relatives in garden plots before fleeing into southern Russia.

"With many of these burials, no one can provide an explanation because there hasn't been questioning of all **refugees**.... They carried out the burials and fled," he said.

"With these graves in the hills, we can't say at the moment if they contain one person or three," he was quoted by RIA Novosti as saying.

Salmaksov also said investigators had discovered the bodies of 51 Georgian soldiers who succumbed to injuries incurred in the fighting.

The New York-based group Human Rights Watch has questioned Russian claims that thousands of South **Ossetians** were killed in Georgia's attack on the Moscow-backed region that began the night of August 7-8.

Russia has accused Georgia of waging a genocidal campaign against ethnic **Ossetians**, and its foreign ministry has put the toll at 1,600.

On Monday a Human Rights Watch researcher in Georgia told AFP there was evidence of "dozens rather than thousands" of civilian deaths in South **Ossetia**.

The Georgian attack spurred Russia to pour troops and armour into its southern neighbour in a massive counterattack that led to international condemnation of Moscow.

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Publication: [Agence France-Presse](#)

Provider: [Agence France-Presse](#)

Date: August 20, 2008 (12:24)

## Red Cross says its experts heading for S. Ossetia

ATTENTION - ADDS quotes from press conference, more information /// GENEVA, Aug 20, 2008 (AFP) - Experts from the International Committee for the Red Cross are heading into South Ossetia and should arrive by the early afternoon, said ICRC president Jakob Kellenberger Wednesday.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had approved the presence of the Red Cross in the disputed Georgian territory, which is currently occupied by Russia troops, Kellenberger told reporters in Geneva. In addition, the aid group also had approval from the South Ossetian authorities to enter, he added.

"At long last, we have also green light from the new prime minister of South Ossetia. It means that ICRC convoys are on the way to South Ossetia, if it all works well, they should arrive early afternoon," said Kellenberger on his return from a visit to Georgia and Russia.

He added that there were "indications" that there are significant needs in the region that still needs to be dealt with.

The first ICRC teams into South Ossetia will assess the needs of displaced people, the state of the medical facilities there and will try to restore contact between family members separated by the conflict, he added.

"Finally, we want to visit all those captured or detained in connection with the conflict to assess their treatment and living conditions," he added.

Kellenberger spent three days in the region, during which he travelled to Moscow where he met Lavrov, as well as visited the Russian territory of North Ossetia, to where some South Ossetians fled when the fighting broke out.

He was also in Georgia itself, including Tbilisi, Gori, which lies just south of South Ossetia, and the west of the country, but was not able to visit South Ossetia for security reasons.

The separatist region at the heart of the recent conflict is still occupied by Russian troops, as is the city of Gori. Kellenberger assessed that in Georgia proper, there are about 80,000 displaced people, including Georgians from South Ossetia as well as Gori and other Georgian cities hit by the conflict.

In Georgian hospitals that he had visited, there were around 1,000 war wounded "of different degrees".

In North Ossetia, the ICRC assessed that war wounded in hospitals numbered over 220, while there remained around 8,000 displaced people who had fled the conflict. But Kellenberger stressed that this was difficult to determine as some were staying with families, while others have also started to return to South Ossetia.

The ICRC has already begun distributing food aid to Georgia, bringing in 430 tonnes of food and relief items over the past week and supporting the local medical services.

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Publication: [RIAN - CIS and the Baltics](#)

Provider: [RIA Novosti](#)

Date: August 20, 2008 (12:47)

## UNICEF to help children from South Ossetia

Moscow, 20 August, RIAN. - UNICEF will help children and families that suffered during the armed conflict in South Ossetia, UNICEF Office in the North Caucasus reported. "UNICEF is expanding partnership programs with the government of North Ossetia to help children and families", - the official message read on Wednesday.

By official data, there are nearly 30 thousand IDPs, most of them women and children", added UNICEF. "UNICEF is expanding educational programs in this region and will provide children with school stationery: pens, notebooks, etc.", and (...) will help improve the situation with children staying in TACs in North Ossetia (...). UNICEF will provide furniture, mattresses and linen, and in several cases will help repair the premises", - the message reads. (...)

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Publication: [Agence France-Presse](#)

Provider: [Agence France-Presse](#)

Date: August 20, 2008 (16:27)

## ICC probing Georgian conflict for rights abuses: prosecutor

THE HAGUE, Aug 15, 2008 (AFP) - The International Criminal Court (ICC) is investigating possible rights abuses and war crimes in Georgia following the conflict between Moscow and Tbilisi, its prosecutor said on Wednesday.

Luis Moreno Ocampo said in a statement that "the situation in Georgia is under analysis," by the court, which is based in The Hague.

"The Office of the Prosecutor has been closely monitoring all information on the situation in Georgia since the outbreak of violence in South **Ossetia** in early August, including information from public sources," he said.

An official from the Georgian government had met with one of its officers, he added. "The Russian Federation has formally delivered information to the Office of the Prosecutor and is continuing to do so." On August 12, four days after Georgian troops launched an offensive in the separatist region of South **Ossetia** backed by Russia, the ICC said it could open a preliminary investigation into the conflict between Moscow and Tbilisi.

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Publication: [Agence France-Presse](#)

Provider: [Agence France-Presse](#)

Date: August 20, 2008 (13:01)

## Aid situation improving in Georgia but not S **Ossetia**: EU

BRUSSELS, Aug 20, 2008 (AFP) - Security is improving in Georgia, allowing humanitarian groups to work more effectively, but aid is still not getting into the flashpoint area of South **Ossetia**, the EU Commission said Wednesday.

"The security situation is improving day by day," a spokeswoman for the European Union's executive arm told reporters.

However "in South **Ossetia** there is no access," she added, referring to the Georgian breakaway region where the fighting started and which Russia, which already had peacekeepers there, now fully controls. "We hope that the aid or civil protection agencies will all be able to work as soon as possible in South **Ossetia** as well," the spokeswoman said.

There are now some 124,000 **refugees** and displaced persons from the Russia-Georgia conflict as a whole and 672 tent camps set up in Georgia to deal with some of the most vulnerable, according to the commission, the EU's executive arm.

Early Wednesday more Swedish and Austrian aid reached Tbilisi while France provided an aircraft to help with the distribution of aid.

International Committee for the Red Cross president Jakob Kellenberger said in Geneva Wednesday that ICRC experts were heading into South **Ossetia** to assess the needs there and should arrive later in the day.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had approved the presence of the Red Cross in the disputed Georgian territory, said Kellenberger.

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Publication: [Agence France-Presse](#)

Provider: [Agence France-Presse](#)

Date: August 20, 2008 (13:01)

## French-funded army training centre in Georgia threatened: official

TBILISI, Aug 20, 2008 (AFP) - A top Georgian official said Wednesday that Russian forces were threatening a French-funded military training centre in the mountains of northern Georgia.

"We are concerned over the movements of Russian forces towards Sachkhere. There is a training centre for our mountain troops set up due to the support of France," Interior Ministry Spokesman Shota Utiashvili told AFP. "We worry that the Russians have decided to destroy this centre." France's ambassador to Georgia, Eric Fournier, called on Russian forces not to enter the site. "We have asked the Russian authorities to respect the ceasefire," he told AFP. "France has taken numerous steps to inform the

Russian authorities of the importance that we put on the security of this training centre." Tbilisi has accused Russian forces of systematically destroying Georgian military bases and Georgian military equipment since they were sent in to the country on August 8 to repel Georgia's attempt to retake control of the breakaway region of South **Ossetia**.

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## **OSCE chief to Tbilisi to talk on S Ossetia humanitarian situation**

HELSINKI, **August 21 (Itar-Tass)** - The humanitarian situation in the South Ossetian conflict zone will be one of the most important issues at talks that Chairman-in-Office of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Finnish Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb will hold in Georgia on Thursday. Sources in the Finnish Foreign Ministry reported that the OSCE chief is going to Tbilisi on a one-day visit during which he will meet Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili. He also intends to find out how the ceasefire agreements are fulfilled. Stubb will meet in Georgia with officials and military observers of the OSCE mission.

At present Finland as the country presiding in the OSCE is preparing the deployment of a mission of military observers in Georgia. Ten of them will be from Finland. According to Finnish press reports, the first observers will depart for Georgia together with Stubb and in the coming days will start the fulfilment of the preliminary duties before the arrival of the main contingent.

The observers the number of which is increasing under a decision of the OSCE Standing Council from eight to 100 people will be checking the fulfilment by all the sides of the ceasefire agreement and will control the humanitarian situation in South Ossetia. The decision in the soonest deployment of the mission was made based on a proposal submitted by the OSCE leadership and France that is currently presiding in the European Union.

The OSCE has managed to lean on the Georgian side in order not to frustrate the adoption of the document on the non-use of force, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said earlier commenting on the forthcoming dispatch by the OSCE of the first 20 observers to Georgian areas adjacent to South Ossetia. Lavrov said that OSCE Chairman-in-Office Alexander Stubb called him to inform about the agreement reached with the Georgian side.

"Russia is little interested in which decisions NATO can make on the conflict zone, because the conflict zone is regulated by agreements between the sides and OSCE decisions," the Russian foreign minister said at a meeting with the editors-in-chief of the leading Russian mass media at Itar-Tass on Tuesday. "Owing to the readiness of the sides within the negotiation process the OSCE has coordinated the text – to assist the fulfilment of the six principles offered by the Russian and French presidents," Lavrov noted.

"The OSCE group that was working in Tskhinval is not returning there, because their office was destroyed by bombing," the minister recalled. "Finland that is presiding in the OSCE has proposed to send additionally 100 observers to Georgia. Their function is to watch what is happening from the security viewpoint," according to Lavrov.

"Russia believes that 100-150 observers will be useful," the Russian foreign minister noted. "Now it is very important to ensure international watch over the zone around South Ossetia," he added.

In the words of Lavrov, "Out of the 100 observers the first 20 will be accommodated in areas adjacent to South Ossetia." "This serves the cause," the minister said. "The modalities of the deployment of other observers will be determined additionally," according to Lavrov.

On Sunday, Russian permanent representative to the OSCE Anvar Azimov said in Vladikavkaz that the group of OSCE military observers in South Ossetia can be enlarged, since Russia is interested "in building up cooperation with the OSCE in the South Ossetian direction."

According to the representative, there are nine OSCE military observers in South Ossetia. The group can be beefed up to 100. "But initially, it is necessary to determine a mandate of the mission, direction of activities, functions and a sphere of responsibility," Azimov said. "The OSCE potential should be used more effectively to ensure stability and security in the region."

Azimov expressed hope that the OSCE would take a constructive position on resuming activities of the Joint Control Commission to settle the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict as well as to revitalise social and economic programmes which the mission was implementing in South Ossetia.

OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut noted that the mission's military observers continue their work in the Gori district of Georgia outside the conflict zone, but would return to Tskhinval when it is possible. He noted that the mission's building in South Ossetia was destroyed, but he managed to meet staff members of the Tskhinval office in Vladikavkaz.

De Brichambaut also said he hoped for greater aid to South Ossetia from the international community. He expressed this idea in Vladikavkaz on Sunday where he arrived on instructions from the operating OSCE chairman so as to "collect personally facts and to display sympathy with those who suffered."

"Hope that we shall see greater support from the international community in the near future on rendering aid to refugees. I hope that all necessary aid will be rendered," he said. According to the OSCE secretary general, "all that will contribute to a peaceful solution of the conflict and restoration, will be welcomed." "I believe that the international community will make its contribution," he said.

The secretary general expressed confidence that the OSCE mission would be able to continue its work under programme of social and economic rehabilitation in South Ossetia.

The destiny of South Ossetia will be decided by South Ossetian people themselves, de Brichambaut said.

"The destiny of South Ossetia will be decided by South Ossetian people, taking into account history and present actualities of life," he said. "It is also necessary to take into account close cooperation and relations with North Ossetia," the OSCE Secretary-General emphasised.

According to de Brichambaut who visited in North Ossetia a centre for South Ossetian refugees and the wounded in the zone of combat operations, "people are deeply shocked." "We saw that refugees suffered a shock, and this will be examined, and discussions will continue."

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Finnish President Tarja Halonen discussed the OSCE further actions in the zone of the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict in a telephone conversation on Saturday. Finland is holding the OSCE rotating presidency, and the conversation took place on the initiative of the Finnish side, the Kremlin press service reports.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev supported the work of the OSCE mission in the conflict zone and stressed the need to strengthen its role. He also said that Russia was ready for close cooperation.

Medvedev said the OSCE activities in the conflict zone should be focused on implementing a six-point settlement plan that has been drawn up by the presidents of France and Russia. All the parties concerned have signed the plan, the Kremlin press service says.

On Monday, the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Russia supports the deployment of additional OSCE observers in the security zone in South Ossetia. "Moscow believes such deployment is extremely important, taking into account the need for impartial monitoring of activities of Georgia that continues to undertake provocative actions in violation of the Moscow principles," the ministry said.

The OSCE said in a press release on Tuesday that OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Finnish Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb, issued the following statement on today's decision by the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna to increase the number of unarmed military monitoring officers to the Mission to Georgia by up to 100: "I am pleased to announce that as a result of intensive diplomatic efforts by all parties concerned, the 56 participating States of the OSCE have today agreed at a special Permanent Council meeting to increase the number of military monitoring officers in the OSCE Mission to Georgia by up to 100."

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## **Russian troops continue Georgia pull out - General Staff**

MOSCOW, **August 20 (RIA Novosti)** - Russia continues to withdraw its troops from Georgia despite the tense situation in the South Ossetian conflict zone, a senior Russian military official said Wednesday.

"The Russian armed forces act strictly in accordance with the international agreements and continue the withdrawal of troops to places of previous deployment," said Col. Gen. Anatoly Nogovitsyn, deputy chief of the Russian General Staff.

Russia began pulling back troops from Georgia on Monday in accordance with a six-point plan drawn up by the Russian and French presidents. It has criticized Georgian troops for not following orders to leave the [South Ossetia conflict zone](#).

Nogovitsyn said tensions in the area were being exacerbated by NATO's role in rebuilding the Georgian army.

"We consider such 'peacemaking' [on the part of NATO], when the aggressor, which was earlier abundantly armed, is being restored, a clear factor provoking a new blitzkrieg," Nogovitsyn said.

He warned that the Russian military would take "appropriate measures" to neutralize such a threat.

Russia will also insist on creating no-fly zones for Georgian aircraft and giving its peacekeepers the right to carry out reconnaissance missions, Nogovitsyn said.

"If the zone is under peacekeepers' control, nobody else should fly there," he said, adding that another Georgian unmanned aircraft was downed in South Ossetia on Tuesday.

Asked about Russian military losses in South Ossetia, Nogovitsyn said 64 service personnel had been killed and another 323 injured.

"The number of those killed has been revised downward - from 74, as announced on August 10, to 64," he said, without elaborating.

Georgia lost 215 of its nationals in the conflict, including 13 policemen, 133 military personnel and 69 civilians, said Givi Targamadze, who heads the Georgian parliament's defense and security committee.

Targamadze said 1,469 Georgians had been wounded and 70 servicemen were currently missing. The number of missing Georgian civilians has not so far been disclosed.

Authorities in Georgia's breakaway republic of South Ossetia said Wednesday that 1,492 of the province's residents were killed in Georgia's August 8 military offensive, according to revised data.

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Publication: [RIAN - Events in Russia](#)

Provider: [RIA Novosti](#)

Date: August 20, 2008 (18:00)

## **President Medvedev's popularity high among Russians - survey**

MOSCOW, August 20 (RIA Novosti) - Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's popularity among Russians has increased during the last month, mainly due to his actions in regard to the recent South **Ossetian** conflict, a survey said on Wednesday.

Georgia's major ground and air offensive to seize control of South **Ossetia** prompted Russia to send several hundred tanks and thousands of troops into the region, and later into parts of Tbilisi-controlled Georgia.

Valery Fyodorov, the head of the All-Russia Center for the Study of Public Opinion on Social and Economic Issues (VTsIOM), which conducted the survey, said "August's events, and in the first place the war, have increased the [popularity] rating of the president."

He said according to the survey, 76% of those polled in Russia now trust and approve of President Medvedev, while this figure stood at 65% in July.

The poll was based on interviews conducted under the direction of VTsIOM, using a nationwide sample of 1,600 adults during the period of August 16-17. The statistical margin of error was 3.4%.

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Provider: [Agence France-Presse](#)

Date: August 21, 2008 (03:53)

## **Controversial passport policy led Russians into Georgia: analysts**

by Alexander Osipovich MOSCOW, Aug 21, 2008 (AFP) - When Russia attacked Georgia this month, Moscow could say simply it was protecting its citizens -- but how did so many people in a neighbouring

country come to hold Russian passports? "I am obliged to protect the lives and dignity of Russian citizens, no matter where they are located," said President Dmitry Medvedev the day Russian troops went to repel a Georgian attempt at recapturing the separatist region of South **Ossetia**.

Moscow began handing citizenship years ago to residents of South **Ossetia** and another separatist region, Abkhazia.

Russia says this was part of a legal process. Critics say that Moscow sought to weaken Georgia's sovereignty.

Before 2002, Russian law let residents of ex-Soviet republics apply for citizenship if they had not become citizens of their newly independent states.

But the process was complex and involved repeated trips to Russian consulates or moving to Russia altogether.

Yevgeny Volk, a political analyst with the US-based Heritage Foundation think tank, says people in Abkhazia and South **Ossetia** got passports without the usual "colossal problems." "This undoubtedly indicates a double standard in Russian policy and a determined effort to weaken the (separatist regions') ties with Georgia," Volk told AFP.

Supporters of Moscow's policy say the open doors approach was justified because the separatist governments in Abkhazia and South **Ossetia** could not issue valid travel documents or give state benefits, like pensions.

"Since Russia is the legal heir of the Soviet Union, it is obliged to give these people its citizenship," Andrei Vashchenko, a Caucasus expert, told AFP.

"People had a right to choose. Some got Georgian passports, but the larger part of the population got Russian ones," he said.

Vashchenko helped Russian lawmakers prepare a 2002 bill on easing citizenship applications from the two regions.

The bill set off a flood of applications in Abkhazia, where some 150,000 residents became Russian citizens in June of that year alone, according to media reports.

They joined a significant part of the province's population that already had Russian citizenship, estimated at 50,000.

Many people in Abkhazia could even apply without leaving home. The Congress of Russian Communities, a nationalist non-governmental organisation with close ties to Russian officialdom, simply took their papers to the nearby Russian city of Sochi for processing.

A similar process unfolded in South **Ossetia**.

Georgia's foreign ministry decried an "unprecedented illegal campaign" and then-president Eduard Shevardnadze claimed there had been "covert annexation and violation of Georgia's sovereignty." By the time pro-Western reformer Mikheil Saakashvili became Georgia's president after the 2004 "Rose Revolution," most residents of the two separatist zones were Russian citizens.

Russia's passport campaign led to many cases of "sham" citizenship, casting doubt on Moscow's rationale for attacking Georgia, said Christopher Waters, a law professor and Eastern Europe expert at the University of Windsor in Canada.

"Given the sham-like nature of the granting of passports in so many cases, Russia's basing its forceful actions on protection of nationals abroad... is invalid," Waters told AFP in a written answer to questions. Whether or not Russia sought an excuse to charge into Georgia, the passport policy may have made conflict more likely.

"I doubt very much that this policy was started" to provide a pretext for war with Georgia over the separatist regions, Fyodor Lukyanov, editor of the journal *Russia in Global Affairs*, told AFP. But once Georgia attacked, Lukyanov said, "Russia was undoubtedly bound to defend them."

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## **Documents // Russian MPs Start Struggle for Independence // of Abkhazia and South **Ossetia****

Russian State Duma MPs and Federation Council members are virtually ready to recognize Abkhazia and South **Ossetia**. They will be able to do it on August 25. Yesterday Federation Council Chairman Sergey Mironov stated that "these breakaway republics' remaining Georgia's parts is out of the question".

Mr Mironov made his statement about recognizing the breakaway republics yesterday in Vladikavkaz,

where he arrived as head of the Federation Council's delegation to hand over humanitarian aid to the South **Ossetian** parliament.

There is 255 tons of humanitarian aid in the stores of Russia's EMERCOM in total. Yesterday the first consignment of 30.7 tons was delivered by plane to Vladikavkaz.

"If the peoples of Abkhazia and South **Ossetia** want it, and if President Dmitry Medvedev wants it, the Federation Council and the Duma will take the corresponding decision" about recognizing these republics, Sergey Mironov explained. South **Ossetian** MPs have already demonstrated their wish: they adopted an appeal to the President and the two Federal Assembly chambers asking to recognize the independence of South **Ossetia**. Mr Mironov reminded that South **Ossetians** had voted for their independence at a republican referendum a year and a half ago. Besides, the day before the Abkhaz parliament sent a similar appeal to the Russian government, and today the council of the Abkhaz people also made it the point.

Mr Mironov stated that "these breakaway republics' remaining Georgia's parts is out of the question". Moreover, in his view, "**Ossetians** should not be two separated peoples any longer". "All in all, the status of the breakaway republics will be changed soon," he opines. Answering Kommersant question whether it can happen during the Federation Council's emergency session planned for August 25 or 26, Mr Mironov was evasive: he said that the agenda hasn't been approved yet. But, according to him, on August 23 an expanded meeting of all ministries and departments interested in settling the Georgia-**Ossetian** dispute will be held in Moscow.

Yesterday it was decided that the State Duma will open its autumn session with a plenary session on August 25. Representatives of all the Duma parties confirmed it to Kommersant. It need be said, however, that the Duma statute requires that the Duma council should gather first – it will determine the agenda. The meeting is planned for the morning of August 25. After it the Duma will be able to open the plenary session at 1 p.m. Given that now only the International Affairs Committee works in the Duma, the Georgia-**Ossetian** conflict will be the key issue on the agenda.

"Russia's recognition of the breakaway republics will provide for establishing bilateral relations with Abkhazia and South **Ossetia**, concluding treaties on military cooperation without taking account of third-party countries, and develop economic contacts basing on the legitimate law," stated Abkhaz Foreign Minister Sergey Shamba.

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## **Alexander Lukashenko: Russia acted in line with unanimous CIS decision**

While in Sochi (the Russian Federation) President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko met with the presidents of South **Ossetia** and Abkhazia on August 20. The meeting was arranged following the initiative of South **Ossetia** and Abkhazia, the press service of the President of Belarus told BelTA.

The Belarusian head of state was informed about the previous history of the August conflict in South **Ossetia** in detail. "About seven years ago the President of Georgia made a suggestion (to the CIS heads of state) that Abkhazia should be blocked in the 'ravine' virtually pushing the nation, the government, and the emerging state on the brink of a catastrophe. Who was the first to say that if something happened we would be the first to supply food to the nation? It was Belarus. I emphatically refused to sign the document Georgia suggested and the session of the CIS heads of state didn't approve it. It is part of the history. As far as the response of Russian bureaucrats is concerned, there was no need to offer excuses. Although I am not the oldest president, but I am an old timer among the Commonwealth presidents. I saw the whole affair".

The President of Belarus underscored it had not been Russia that created the conflict in **Ossetia** and Abkhazia. It was a problem of Georgia, a dispute of nations.

Alexander Lukashenko remarked, "Both the people of South **Ossetia** and the people of Abkhazia knew they cannot live as part of Georgia. A conflict emerged. I remember the session of the CIS heads of state when South **Ossetia** and Abkhazia expressed indignation on behalf of their nations. The President of Georgia asked the international community to interfere and bring peacemaking troops. The USSR was collapsing at that time. Every one was overjoyed. The international community didn't need these conflicts. Things were coming apart here and there: nobody cared for Abkhazia, **Ossetia** or Transdniestria. Back then representatives of the international community didn't take turns protecting **Ossetia**, Georgia or Abkhazia. On request of the President of Georgia (I remember it well) we made a decision. I was the first to say: I will not send troops there, our constitution disallows it. Russia had a lot of internal problems, it was torn apart by conflicts, and it had other things to see to. Russia wondered what should be done. We, the CIS heads of state, decided to convince the President of Russia to send Russian peacemakers to South **Ossetia** and Abkhazia, I mean peacemakers were sent following a request of the President of Georgia. That is the truth. What happened now? Russia fulfilled its duty. As time passed, not a single time did Georgia say that the Russian peacemakers should leave **Ossetia** and some other peacemaking troops should be brought in. You should read verbatim records, Russia has them. Every time the President of Georgia thanked Russia for its peacemaking efforts in South **Ossetia** and Abkhazia. Every single time. He has never said, never raised the issue (although he could) of removing the peacemaking troops. He only thanked Russia for keeping peace. And Russia had no other way out. First, it had to fulfil its peacemaking mission. Second, did it have to accept the slap in the face calmly? I also strongly object to claims that Russia waged a war. There was no war."

Addressing the presidents of South **Ossetia** and Abkhazia, the Belarusian head of state underscored, "There was an excellent operation carried out by Russia and your people. People protected their land, the peacemakers fulfilled their mission. The issue was dealt with within 2-3 days and peace was established. What would have happened if peace hadn't been established like the USA and the West demand now? There would have been war and bloodshed. When I saw West figures come here to make publicity and make some statements I emphatically said we are not participating in it. Because they are telling totally different things, they have forgotten the prehistory of the conflict, they have forgotten everything. You shouldn't kick Abkhazia, **Ossetia**, or Russia for behaving the way they did. They did it on request of the President of Georgia as I have reminded already. I told Dmitry Medvedev yesterday: I am not going to make my presence in all the hubbub saying that I support somebody or don't approve of somebody. Here is our view. Russia acted in the right way. And it acted like that because it was our decision, the decision made by the CIS heads of state. Only one more thing might have been done: the day after Russia should have gathered the CIS heads of state and tell them that it had acted on their own request".

In turn, South **Ossetia** President Eduard Kokoity thanked Alexander Lukashenko, "We highly appreciate your support, your condolence with our nation. South **Ossetia** knows of your views and we understand the pressure put on Belarus by the forces that organised the aggression. I should express words of gratitude to the Belarusian nation and Belarus nationals, who live in South **Ossetia**". Eduard Kokoity informed that with support of Western military specialists Georgia developed a purposeful military programme designed to eliminate the **Ossetia** and Abkhazia nations. The operation's codename Bare Field is self-explanatory, he remarked.

Abkhazia President Sergei Bagapsh also thanked the Belarusian head of state for the support and for the solid and clear outlooks of the Belarusian side on this issue. He also stated, "Neither Abkhazia nor South **Ossetia** will be part of Georgia and nobody will make us stay there". According to the Abkhazian president, further relations with Georgia should be built like "relations between two independent nations".

The leaders of South **Ossetia** and Abkhazia informed Alexander Lukashenko about the course of the conflict and Georgia's preparations for it. In particular, they informed about the involvements of mercenaries in military actions, including mercenaries from some CIS states. They asked the President of Belarus to put the situation in South **Ossetia** and Abkhazia for discussion at the next session of the Supreme State Council of Belarus-Russia Union State. Alexander Lukashenko said the topic should also be discussed within the CIS framework. Once again he reminded that the decision to bring the peacemaking forces had been signed by all the members of the organisation without exclusions.

After the meeting with the heads of South **Ossetia** and Abkhazia the President of Belarus gave instructions to send teams of Belarusian specialists into these regions. They should get familiar with the situation

on the spot and determine what humanitarian aid the region needs yet. Besides, the specialists should work out specific proposals for expanding economic cooperation of Belarus with South **Ossetia** and Abkhazia.

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## **Russia freezes military cooperation with NATO: Norway**

ATTENTION - ADDS background /// OSLO, Aug 20, 2008 (AFP) - Russia has decided to freeze its military cooperation with NATO and allied countries until further notice, the Norwegian defence ministry said Wednesday.

"Norway has received information that Russia has decided to 'freeze' all military cooperation with NATO and allied countries until further notice," the ministry said in a statement.

A ministry spokeswoman, Heidi Langvik-Hansen, told AFP "the Russian defence ministry has telephoned the Norwegian embassy in Moscow" informing Norway of the development.

"The Russian ministry called to say that Moscow was going to send a letter to the embassy with this information," she said.

NATO foreign ministers on Tuesday declared that "business as usual" with Moscow was no longer possible following Russia's invasion of Georgian territory in a fierce conflict over the South **Ossetia** separatist region.

They urged Russia to respect its pledge to withdraw its troops from Georgia.

NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer accused Russia of failing to respect a French-brokered peace plan requiring both sides to move troops back to their positions before Georgia launched an offensive on the separatist region of South **Ossetia**.

The Russian navy meanwhile announced it had cancelled its participation in naval manoeuvres planned in the Baltic Sea as part of its partnership with NATO, and said it was currently "not considered possible" to host the US naval frigate Ford.

Georgia on August 8 launched a military offensive against its pro-Russian breakaway republic South **Ossetia** -- which unilaterally declared its independence after the fall of the Soviet Union -- in order to regain control.

The Georgian operation failed after Moscow intervened, sending troops, tanks and warplanes into South **Ossetia** to defend Russian citizens in the breakaway republic.

A ceasefire agreement has been signed, calling for the withdrawal of Russian troops, but no significant withdrawal had been observed by Wednesday.

The White House on Wednesday urged Russia to speed up its withdrawal from Georgia and reiterated its support for Tbilisi.

Russia and Norway were due to hold a meeting on Thursday on the freezing of military cooperation, Langvik-Hansen said. She was unable to say at what level the meeting would be held.

BBC News, Washington

21 August, 2008

### **'Fraud' halts US refugee scheme**

*By Jonathan Beale*

#### **The United States has suspended a programme aimed at reuniting refugees in Africa with relatives in the US because of widespread fraud.**

The US state department said DNA tests showed the majority of those applying had no family relationships in the US.

Thousands of Africans have been allowed to settle in the US under its P3 family reunification programme. The scheme offers close family members the chance to join loved ones who have already made America their home.

But DNA tests on applicants in seven African countries showed that only around 20% of those trying to enter the US actually had a family relationship.

The DNA tests were first mostly carried out on refugees from Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya.

After the evidence of rampant fraud was uncovered the tests were widened, and then, after proof of more fraud, the decision was made to suspend the scheme.

The applicants were not tested with the DNA of a relative in the US, but with each other - for example a woman with children who claimed to be joining a husband in the US.

It was found that people claiming to be related often had no link.  
The Priority Three (P3) programme to reunite families had been running since 1990.

A US state department spokesman said that it would now be examining the future of the scheme.