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THE INTERNATIONAL DEBUT OF THE GEORGIAN WEAPONS

By Irakli Aladashvili

The October 26-30 international exhibition "EXPOMIL 99" in Romania was the first to present Georgia-made armaments. To this end, the Romanian MoD granted Georgia free exposition space. A Georgian delegation led by Grigol Katamadze, deputy defence minister, included Givi Lekishvili, the director general of the state scientific centre "Delta" and the constructor general of the military equipment; Gocha Gogvadze, the chief engineer of the TAW; Colonel Gogi Tavadze, the head of the department of strategic planning and scientific-technical research of the General Staff; Capt. Avtandil Khvadagiani, an officer of the same department; an Irakli Aladashvili, an independent military expert.

On the whole, 67 Romanian and 36 foreign companies from 13 countries took part in the exhibition. Among other weaponry, the Georgian exposition presented Su-25K and Su-25 TK ground-attack fighters (produced by the TAW), and a flexible rubber fuel tank for the MiG-21 fighter. This last attracted great interest of Romanian and Israeli specialists. Just recently, in co-operation with Romania, Israel has began modernisation of the MiG-21

fighter to make it comparable with "LANGER - III". The project made Moscow rather uneasy as Russia, too, has started production of modernised

MiG-21-93. At present, there are at least 5,000 MiG-21 fighters throughout the world and their modernisation may transform them into the fourth-generation fighters.

However, it were Georgia-designed recoilless launchers (RCL) that aroused the greatest interest. A 82mm RCL is 11 sm shorter and more portable than its ex-Soviet "colleague", a 50mm model can be used by a soldier laying on the ground, while a 60mm one is rather efficient and compatible with NATO standards. These last two models have no Soviet analogues. It must be mentioned that all the three launchers are quite light, portable and extremely suitable for small mobile units.

An anti-personnel grenade "Kodori" was exhibited along with an anti-tank grenade launcher (analogue of the Soviet-built RPG-7). The "Kodori" can be launched by the latter at a distance of 300-400 metres and hits manpower within a six-metre radius. As it has no jet engine, the grenade is quite cheap and easy to produce.

Apart from the above weapons, Georgia also presented more sophisticated radio-electronic equipment, such as four types of detonators (designed by the "Delta") for artillery shells and aviation bombs, a rotary detonator (it makes a shell explode at a pre-set altitude) and an engineer-electronic one with suspended action being the most interesting of them. The latter is rather useful for commando units acting in an enemy's rear.

The "Toritex Ltd." presented its heavy and light flak-jackets. A second-class flak-jacket provides effective protection against almost any pistol or revolver at a distance of 5-10 metres. An elegant "Elita" model can be worn under a suit and resists fire of the 7.62mm TT pistol. One should pay especial attention to a third-class flak-jacket made of composite ceramic. The 7.62mm sniper rifle SVD fails to shot a hole in it even from a distance of 10 metres. Its ceramic material won a 1998 state award of Georgia in the field of science and technique. Besides, there was a special armoured jacket for mine-sweepers with effective protection against anti-personnel mines. It weighs 23-27 kg dependent on size, i.e. twice less than its Russian analogue.

The Georgian exposition included also an antiseptic "Nargosept", anti-rust liquid "Narcout", anti-flame liquid "Antipirin", anti-wound ointment "Kolkhuri", "Immunity modulator" and artificial skin.

Georgia's exhibits attracted great interest. As a result, the Georgian delegation made three of four preliminary deals with foreign countries. Georgia may certainly benefit from exports of its armaments. For instance,

the TAW recently sold four Su-25K fighters abroad and thus substantially improved its financial situation. At the same time, however, the Georgian armed forces obviously lack Georgia-made armaments. It seems that certain Georgian circles are interested in imports of armaments rather than in the development of the domestic military industry.

## RUSSIAN MILITARY BASES IN SOUTH CAUCASUS

By Irakli Aladashvili

The CFE (Conventional Forces in Europe) "southern flank" quotas include armaments of the Russian Troops in Transcaucasus (GRVZ) deployed in Armenia and Georgia. The only Russian military object in Azerbaijan - the Gabalin long-range early-warning phased-array radar station - belongs to the warning system of Russia (ICBM/SLBM launch-detection) and thus is not subject to the CFE requirements. The number of Russian armaments deployed in Armenia and Georgia is quite large, though the Russian military personnel in these countries are not so numerous.

At present, there are 10,663 servicemen in the Russian Troops in Transcaucasus, i.e. less than one motorifle division. As to the equipment, there are 215 MBT (only T-72); 517 AIFV/APC (BMP and BTR); 397 armoured military vehicles (command and radio stations, etc.); 239 towed artillery (over 100mm calibre) and RCL; 11 pontoon-bridging vehicles (MTU-20 and MT-55A produced on the basis of T-55 MBT); 5 attack helicopters Mi-24 and 5 transport helicopters Mi-8MT. In addition, by November the Russian Air Force deployed 18 MiG-29 fighters in Armenia (the Guymri military airfield) which must defend the Russian military bases in Southern Caucasus. The HQ of the Russian Troops in Transcaucasus is located in Tbilisi in large premises, including underground bomb shelters and command stations. Its personnel totals 2,357 men.

The Tbilisi-based 142nd Tank Repair Works - once one of the main tank repair facilities (by the way, during the war in Nagorny Karabakh Armenian tanks were repaired just there):

- personnel - 20 servicemen;
- equipment - 28 MBT (T-72), 103 AIFV/APC and two self-propelled howitzers 2C3 "Acatsia".

The Vaziani-based 137th military base:

- 405th motorifle regiment - 773 servicemen; 31 MBT; 70 AIFV/APC; 16 artillery systems; and one pontoon-bridging vehicle;
- 566th communication battalion - 193 servicemen; 5 mobile radio stations P-145BM;
- 311th helicopter wing - 161 servicemen, 5 attack helicopters Mi-24 and 5 transport helicopters Mi-8MT. Half of these helicopters were repaired not

long ago and are maintained in full readiness. At the same time, the Vaziani airfield has strategic importance as its concrete landing-strip is suitable for middle - Il-76M - and heavy - An-124 ("Ruslan") - transport aircraft.

The Khelvachauri-based (Adjara) military depot employs 56 servicemen. Besides, 29 AIFV - 5 BMP-1 and 24 BMP-2 - are stored there.

The Batumi-based 12th military base:

- personnel - 1,790 servicemen;
- equipment - 41 MBT; 71 AIFV/APC (BMP and BTR); 203 various military vehicles; 76 artillery systems; and 4 pontoon-bridging vehicles.

The base includes the 35th (Batumi) and the 90th (Khelvachauri) motorifle regiments; the 809th artillery regiment (Batumi); the 122nd communications battalion (Medjinstzqali); the 61st artillery detachment (Batumi); and the 773rd reconnaissance battalion (Medjinstzqali). This last counts 69 servicemen and several armoured vehicles BRM-1K.

The Akhalkalaki-based 62nd military base:

- personnel - 1,964 servicemen
- equipment - 41 MBT, 114 AIFV/APC (BMP and BTR); 46 various military vehicles; 61 artillery systems; and 2 pontoon-bridging vehicles.

The base includes the 409th and 412th motorifle regiments; the 817th artillery regiment; the 889th communication battalion; and the 65th artillery detachment.

Apart from three Georgia-deployed bases, Russia has also one (102nd) military base in Armenia situated in Guymri. The 102nd base:

- personnel - 2,941 servicemen;
- equipment - 74 MBT; 53 AIFV/APC (BMP and BTR); 125 various military vehicles; 84 artillery systems; and 4 pontoon-bridging vehicles.

The base includes the 123rd (Erevan), the 124th and the 128th motorifle regiments; the 116th tank battalion (35 T-72 MBT); the 992nd artillery regiment; the 772nd reconnaissance battalion; the 628th communications battalion; and the 66th artillery detachment. There is also a military depot in the base with 56 servicemen and 95 AIFV (various types of BMP). However, these are not all the Russian armaments in South Caucasus. One should count also Russian peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the Gudauta-based (Abkhazia) 50th military base. It must be mentioned that the latter does not belong to the Russian Troops in Transcaucasus and is subordinated directly to the Russian General Staff (earlier it used to be under the HQ of the Russian Airborne Forces).

The 50th base was created on the basis of the notorious 345th airborne regiment (it took active part in the wars in Afghanistan and Abkhazia, and in the April 9, 1989, brutal crack-down on peaceful demonstrators in the centre of Tbilisi). The regiment is deployed in the Bombora military

airfield. Its equipment includes 142 AIFV/APC (among them - 62 BMD-1 and 11 BMD-2); and 11 self-propelled artillery systems 2S9 "Nona-S".

The above data show that the Russian armaments in South Caucasus cover a good deal of the Armenian and Georgian CFE quotas. But unlike Armenia which has allowed 25-year stay of the Russian military on its territory, Georgia objects to the Russian military presence and demands to withdraw the Russian bases, first of all from Vaziani and Gudauta.

Military Chronicle

Georgian press reports

Conflict zones

The October 3 presidential elections in Abkhazia were carried out only in five out of 12 polling stations of the Gali district constituency.

According to the commander of one of the Georgian guerrilla units, the Abkhaz authorities preferred to abstain from elections in the villages with entirely Georgian population. "It was a reasonable decision as otherwise it could have ended in bloodshed", he said.

"7 Dge" No. 116, October 4-5, p. 3

Due to the escalation of conflict in Chechnya, Russia re-imposed restrictions on the cross-border traffic at the Abkhaz sector of the Russian-Georgian border that had been abolished some time earlier. Particularly, conscription-age male citizens of Abkhazia cannot trespass the border without special permission (it must be mentioned, however, that these restrictions were finally abolished in November).

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 240-241, October 5, p. 2

According to Tamaz Nadareishvili, the chairman of the Tbilisi-based Supreme Council of Abkhazia, weapons from Turkey and some Arab countries are smuggled into Qarachai-Circussia (Russia) and further into Chechnya via Abkhazia. Russian peacekeepers are allegedly involved in the smuggling operations.

"Resonance" No. 275, October 7, p. 2

Five officers and two civil personnel of the UNOMIG were taken hostage in the Kodori Gorge (a part of Abkhazia still controlled by the Georgian government) on October 13, when attempting to carry out a regular inspection (once a week) in the area. The kidnapers demanded a ransom of \$200 thousand for each of the hostages. David Tevzadze, the defence minister, had to cut short his visit to Ukraine as he was authorised by the president to negotiate with kidnapers. General Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili, the chief of the General Staff of the Georgian Armed Forces, and Iveri Tchelidze, the state commissioner of the Gorge, were also actively involved in the negotiations. Four hostages were released on October 14, while the

other three on the next day. As to the kidnappers (their identity is still unknown), they managed to hide. Officials claim that the ransom was not paid and the hostages were released unconditionally. In Tevzadze's words, the kidnapping was organised by "external forces" which aim to break stability in the region. According to some informal sources, the so-called "Free Swaneti" paramilitary unit is to blame for the incident. Just this unit is allegedly responsible for the July 9 kidnapping of some high ranking Georgian officials in the Gorge.

"Resonance" No. 282, October 14, pp. 1, 2

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 276, October 14, p. 1

In his interview with the "Rustavi-2" TV channel General Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili suggested that the UNOMIG officers might have been kidnapped because they were gathering intelligence about "secret" Georgian military objects in the Gorge. In his opinion, this intelligence information might be then passed to the RPF Command. However, Revaz Adamia, the chairman of the parliamentary defence and security committee, claimed this version to be completely groundless.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 237, October 16, p. 2

"7 Dge" No. 122, October 18-19, p. 2

"Akhali Taoba" No. 295, October 26, p. 2

#### State security

Georgian law-enforcement authorities revealed 30 kg of explosives, 700 mechanical and 400 electro-detonators, and one F-1 grenade in Vaziani. The ammunition reportedly belonged to Gela Imedashvili, a 44-year-old former sergeant of the Vaziani-stationed Russian military base. The case is being investigated by the MIA of Georgia. By preliminary information, Imedashvili purchased the explosives when serving in the base.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 226, October 4, p. 2

"7 Dge" No. 118, October 8-10, p. 4

"Resonance" No. 277, October 9, p. 1

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 271, October 9, p. 1

The Georgian police revealed and confiscated one Kalashnikov submachine gun, 8 grenades, one Makarov pistol, one Parabellum pistol, and a lot of ammunition in a bus bound from Tbilisi for the Akhmeta district of Georgia (neighbouring to Chechnya). The MSS is investigating the case.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 243, October 23, p. 5

According to the Georgian security services, Russian military bases in Vaziani and Akhalkalaki are involved in illegal weapon trafficking. In the opinion of Revaz Adamia, Russian armaments from these bases may be smuggled into Chechnya. However, Hizri Aldamov, Chechnya's official representative in Georgia, claims that Chechen troops are able to purchase armaments in

Russia much more easily than in Georgia.  
"Resonance" No. 293, October 25, p. 2

According to David Tchelidze, deputy chairman of the SDFD, due to the escalation of conflict in North Caucasus, the SDFD reinforced frontier control at the whole length of the Russian-Georgian border (906 km) beginning on October 1.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 225, October 2, p. 5

Because of the complicated situation at the Chechen sector of the Russian-Georgian border, Valeri Chkheidze, the SDFD chairman, cancelled his visits to Ukraine and Hungary initially scheduled for October. "I had better stay at home", he said.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 226, October 4, p. 5

According to Irakli Tchintcharauli, the commander of the Shatili frontier base (it controls 49 km of the 85-km Chechen sector of the Russian-Georgian border) and the head of the Shatili administration, when carrying out air strikes at Chechnya, Russian fighters often violate the Georgian air space, at times penetrating 20 km into Georgia. In his words, Georgian frontier troops are able only to register such violations but not to check them. According to the SDFD, 1,757 Chechen refugees entered Georgia from September 15 to October 25, including 662 women, 448 children and 647 men; 689 refugees emigrated from Georgia to other countries (Azerbaijan denied asylum to 200 Chechen refugees who in protest declared a hunger-strike at the Red Bridge border check-point on the Georgian-Azerbaijani border). The others were granted the refugee status in Georgia. Most of them are Georgian citizens - Kisti (a Veinakh ethnic group) residents of the Pankisi Gorge (Akhmeta district) - who had left Georgia looking for jobs in Chechnya. Refugees are provided with humanitarian aid - foods and clothes - and a monthly allowance of 12 GEL (about \$6). At the same time, Valeri Chkheidze refuted recent statement of Tengiz Kitovani, former defence minister of Georgia, who claimed that about 450 Chechen gunmen had crossed the Russian-Georgian border and made camp in the Akhmeta district. In Kitovani's words, the Georgian frontier troops are unable to control all the mountainous cross-border routes at the Russian-Georgian border.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 240-241, October 5, p. 6

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 270, October 8, p. 1

"7 Dge" No. 124, October 22, p. 1

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 245, 247; October 26, 28; pp. 2, 3, 5

"Resonance" No. 297, October 29, p. 2

Five men were detained by Georgian frontier guards at the Chechen sector of the Russian-Georgian border on October 5, when trespassing on the Georgian territory. Four of them appeared to have been Georgian citizens (Kisti residents of the Duisi village, the Akhmeta district), while the fifth was

a citizen of Chechnya. One of them was armed with a submachine gun.

"Resonance" No. 273, 275; October 5, 7; p. 2

Simon Nozadze, deputy security minister, took part in a meeting of the Russian, Azeri and Georgian security chiefs in Moscow. Besides, he held talks with Vladimir Putin, the Russian prime minister, and the leadership of the Russian security service on the prospects of Georgian-Russian co-operation in counter-terrorism and counter-smuggling operations.

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 269, October 7, p. 1

## Army building

At the October 1 official ceremony in the State Chancellery, the president passed flags of the Armed Forces to David Tevzadze, Valeri Chkheidze, and George Shervashidze, the commander of the Internal Troops. Each arm and brigade, as well as the Joint Military Academy, has now its own flag.

"Kviris Palitra" No. 40, October 1-4, p. 9

The youth section of the Citizens' Union of Georgia presented the Kodjori training centre of the MoD with about 330 books, some maps of medieval Georgia, and 25 video-tapes with Georgian movies.

"Droni" No. 116, October 9, p. 8

The October 8 sitting of the NSC examined problems of cosmic engineering in Georgia, including the Georgian section of the common telecommunication system of the Great Silk Road project. Georgia's industrial potential may play a key role in this project, Eduard Shevardnadze said in his October 11 interview with the Georgian radio, praising the Institute of Cosmic Engineering of Georgia directed by Dr. Elgudzha Medzmariashvili for great achievements in the field. In Shevardnadze's words, a state engineer centre of Georgia will be created soon on the basis of the Institute of Cosmic Engineering and Military Engineer Institute. Mr Medzmariashvili, who was recently awarded the rank of Major General, has been nominated as director general of the centre.

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 274, October 12, pp. 1, 2

Having successfully completed a special training course under Turkish instructors (the respective Georgian-Turkish agreement was signed on June 24, while the course began on July 1), 24 Georgian servicemen of the Kodjori training centre of the MoD were certified as commandos. It is the first group of commandos in the Georgian army.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 249-250, October 12, p. 5

"Kavkasioni" No. 39, October 13-19, p. 9

According to Badri Bitzadze, the chief military procurator, there are about 4,000 deserters in the Georgian army at present. In his words, only two cases of homosexual harassment have been registered in the army so far but



this number hardly reflects the reality.  
"7 Dge" No. 120, October 13-14, p. 4

According to Nodar Beridze, deputy director of the TAW, the works is able to produce modified MiG-21 fighters for the Georgian Air Force, provided the MoD allocates necessary funds.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 234, October 13, p. 7

According to the presidential Decree 594 (October 19), 6,135 conscripts shall be drafted into the Georgian Armed Forces during the autumn 1999 draft, including:

- the MoD - 3,700;
- Internal Troops - 1,235;
- SDFD - 1,000;
- State Safeguard Service - 200.

The draft will last from November 1 till December 30. Able-bodied male Georgian citizens between the ages of 18 and 27 years, provided they are not deferred from the military service by law, are liable to conscription. The Decree ordered to create ad hoc district and city drafting commissions under respective military commissars which shall began to operate on October 25. The central drafting office is to co-ordinate activities of the district and city commissions, while the MoD is in charge of the whole drafting process. The Ministry of Health Care is ordered to assign specialists to drafting medical commissions. Expenses of medical examination shall be covered at the expense of the state health care program.

"Sakartvelos Sakanonmdeblo Matsne" No. 53, pp. 15, 16

In his interview with the "Sakartvelos Aghordzineba" newspaper (published in Batumi) Capt. Gennady Haidarov, the head of the Batumi-based naval faculty of the Joint Military Academy (by some forces, he is the Adjarian leader Aslan Abashidze's relative), said the MoD had made nothing for the navy building in Georgia. It was the Adjarian leadership, he claims, that played a decisive role in the process - first naval units were created just in Adjaria, and just the Adjarian leadership paid the October-July salary to the Adjaria-deployed naval forces. Koba Liklikadze, the head of the MoD press centre, denounced Haidarov's interview, emphasising that the navy-building began not in Adjaria. The Adjarian leadership, in his words, is able to pay servicemen their salaries only because Adjaria pays nothing into the central budget.

"Alia" No. 169, October 26-27, p. 13

"Kavkasioni" No. 41, October 27-November 2, pp. 9, 10

Visits, negotiations, co-operation

According to Vazha Tordia, the director general of the TAW, the works has

already repaired four Turkmen Su-25 fighters, and two others will be completed in the near future. These six fighters constitute the first part of a Georgian-Turkmen contract for the repair of 46 Su-25 fighters. However, prospects of the deal were called into question in October. The TAW was not paid for already repaired fighters and may not get the money at all (the repair of each fighter cost about \$1 mln), unless Georgia's debt to Turkmenistan for the supply of natural gas is restructured. The problem will be discussed at the coming negotiations between the Georgian government and the IMF. Tordia also denied some mass media reports about the TAW's plans to sell Su-25 fighters to Iran and Iraq. In his words, the TAW abstains from contacts with such countries as Iran and Iraq.

"Akhali Taoba" No. 271, October 2, p. 3, 4

A group of nine American military physicians took part in the October 5-8 conference in Tbilisi on the prospects of a joint Georgian-American medical military exercise "Medcur 2000" which is supposed to take place next June in Tzqaltubo with participation of 60 American experts. According to Irakli Batkuashvili, the chief of the PFP staff of the General Staff, the exercise will simulate a joint rescue operation during an earthquake.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 227, 228; October 5, 6; pp. 2, 7

The French warship "Q.M.Anquetil" (F-786) visited Poti on October 5-8 in the framework of the Georgian-French military co-operation. She delivered books and gifts for Georgian children and computer equipment for the Georgian naval academy. French marines also examined several sunk ships in the Poti sea port. Georgia hopes to lift two of them with French assistance.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 240-241, October 5, p. 6

"Kavkasioni" No. 38, October 6-12, p. 9

"Droni" No. 115, October 7, p. 4

"Akhali Taoba" No. 276, October 7, p. 4

"7 Dge" No. 118, October 8-10, p. 10

A German military training ship visited Poti on October 12. She delivered a gift for the Poti military hospital - medical equipment and medicines. It is the second German military-training ship to visit Georgia after World War II.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 234, October 13, p. 7

David Tevzadze visited Great Britain on October 7-9 for talks on the prospects of the Georgian-British military co-operation. On October 7 the two countries' defence ministers signed a memorandum on co-operation in the field of defence. UK is ready to assist Georgia in personnel training (Lasha Grigolia, a Georgian cadet, is already learning in one of the prestigious British military colleges). Tevzadze's talks with British military leadership were also focused on the situation in North Caucasus and on the problem of the Russian military bases in Georgia.

"Resonance" No. 273, October 5, p. 4

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 230, October 8, p. 2

"Kavkasioni" No. 39, October 13-19, p. 9

Two Georgian officers participated in the PFP air force exercise

"Co-operative Zenith" in Canada, October 8-17.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 230, October 8, p. 2

According to Revaz Adamia, due to the escalation of conflict in the North Caucasus, Russia has almost doubled its armaments in the region and thus violated its CFE "southern flank" quotas. The problem, in his opinion, may have some implications for the Russian bases in Georgia. Particularly, if Russia withdraws its bases from Georgia and cedes its Georgia-deployed military equipment to the Georgian army, it will be able to additionally deploy 400 military vehicles in Chechnya. Adamia feels sure that this will not aggravate the Georgian-Chechen relations but quite the contrary, Grozny, in his opinion, will welcome the withdrawal of the Russian bases from Georgia. In Adamia's words, Moscow provides the CFE headquarters in Vienna with incorrect information about its Georgia-based equipment. Georgian intelligence services have revealed that the real type and the number of Russian military equipment deployed in the Gudauta base (Abkhazia) rather differ from Russian official reports to Vienna.

"Resonance" No. 281, 290; October 13, 22; p. 1, 3

"7 Dge" No. 120, October 13-14, p. 3

An international seminar on the security of the Baku-Supsa oil pipeline took place in the Krtzanisi governmental residence on October 15-16 with participation of officials of the Georgian International Oil Company, State Oil Company of Azerbaijan and the Amoco oil company. The seminar was organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Environmental Security and Natural Resources of Georgia under the aegis of the NATO PFP program.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 237, October 16, p. 5

Russia completely withdrew its frontier troops from Georgia, bringing the 75-year Russian control over the Georgian borders to an end. On October 27 the last group of the Russian frontier troops left the country. Only a small group of Russian frontier officers remain in Tbilisi at present to co-ordinate the two countries' joint activities in the field of frontier defence. However, the event was marked with an incident - an antipersonnel mine was revealed in former HQ of the Russian frontier troops after their withdrawal. In Valeri Chkheidze's words, those Russian military who cannot put up with the loss of Georgia as Russia's colony are to blame for the incident. The Military Procurator's Office began investigation of the case.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 266, October 28, p. 2

"Resonance" No. 296, October 28, p. 3

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 248, October 29, p. 5

"7 Dge" No. 122, October 18-19, p. 2

A mission of U.S. liaison officers began to function in the MoD this year in the framework of the program developed by the U.S. military command in Europe. It began in 1993 in Hungary, Poland and Czech republic. Georgia became the 17th member of the program in January 1999. It provides servicemen with a possibility to visit foreign countries in order to learn their experience in national military planning, civil control over the military, budget planning, development of defence structure, officer education, etc. Next year the MoD will take part in 45 activities in the framework of this program.

"Droni" No. 122, October 19, p. 5

A delegation of NATO investment security experts visited Tbilisi on October 16-21 for talks with the Georgian military leadership. The delegation examined technical aspects of several investment programs proposed by Georgia: modernisation of the computer equipment and radio communication systems of the MoD, and repair of one of the military airfields (Shiraki or Marneuli).

"Resonance" No. 287, October 19, p. 1

"Kavkasioni" No. 40, October 20-26, p. 1

An American delegation led by Stephen Sestanovich, U.S. Envoy to the CIS, visited Georgia on October 18-19. His closed-door talks with Eduard Shevardnadze, Vazha Lortkipanidze, the state minister, and Zurab Zhvania, the chairman of the parliament, were focused on the aspects of the CFE (Conventional Forces in Europe) agreement in the light of the coming Istanbul summit of the OSCE this November. Prospects of the American-Georgian military co-operation were also on the table. Particularly, this year the Georgian army will get 16 thousand uniforms and 30 thousand pairs of boots (\$1.8 mln altogether) in the framework of the U.S. FMF (Foreign Military Financing) program. Mr. Sestanovic met also representatives of some opposition parties.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 240, 243; October 20, 23; p. 2

"Resonance" No. 289, October 21, p. 2, 3

According to General Valeri Naqopia, commander of the Air Force of Georgia, 34 engineer-mechanics, 12 helicopter pilots and 4 air command/control officers will be trained in the USA in the framework of the Georgian-American military co-operation agreement. After the Georgian aviators complete the training course in America, the USA will grant 10 UH-1H helicopters (4 of them will be used as spare parts for the others) to Georgia. The whole program cost \$3 mln and is supposed to end in 2001. Three of these helicopters were delivered to Georgia from Germany at the end of October for presentation show-flights after which they were transported back. At present, the Georgian Air Force lacks helicopters.

After withdrawal of the former Soviet troops from Georgia, only 12 out-of-order helicopters remain in the country.

"Resonance" No. 290, October 22, p. 2

"Droni" No. 126, October 26, p. 1

A delegation of the Israeli MoD paid its first-ever visit to Georgia on October 19 for talks with David Tevzadze and Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili on the prospects of military co-operation between the two countries.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 240, October 20, p. 5

Kakha Chitaia, the chairman of the parliamentary foreign relations committee, launched a press-conference on October 25, denouncing the commander of the 12th Russian base (Batumi) General Vyacheslav Borisov's recent statement. The latter told the "Rustavi-2" TV channel that if the opposition bloc "Revival of Georgia" won the parliamentary elections, the Georgian parliament would ratify the agreement on 25-year stay of Russian military bases in Georgia. Chitaia emphasised that Russia suspended the Russian-Georgian consultations on the CFE quotas till November. Moscow, in his opinion, seems waiting for results of the October 31 parliamentary elections in Georgia in the hope that new political forces will take power in the country.

"Resonance" No. 294, October 26, pp. 1, 2

"Sakartvelos Respublika" No. 290, October 29, p. 2

"Akhali Taoba" No. 295, October 26, p. 9

Aspects of the Georgia-NATO co-operation were examined at the October 28 sitting of the MoD Board. According to Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili, the Georgian Armed Forces have participated in 67 PfP activities in 1999, including 9 multi-national peacekeeping exercises. Georgia has also joined one more NATO program - "Planning and Review Process" (PARP) - which is mainly focused on the problem of compatibility with NATO. A joint NATO-Georgia expert group will organise seminars in the framework of this program in the near future.

"Svobodnaya Gruzia" No. 267-268, October 29, p. 2

16 cadets completed a six-week training course in the Lilo training centre of the SDFD. The graduation ceremony (it is already the third one) took place in the centre on October 28. On November 1 they will leave for Turkey to continue training there. The training program is based on the 1998 Georgian-Turkish agreement. It provides for eight-week training of Georgian frontier guards (six-week theoretical course in Georgia and two-week practical training in Turkey) and will last till 2001.

"Dilis Gazeti" No. 248, October 29, p. 2

#### Miscellany

About 12,000 Georgian servicemen cast votes in polling stations operating

in the military sites at the October 31 parliamentary elections - 75% of them voted for the ruling party, the CUG, while 100% of the 25th MRB of the MoD (deployed in Batumi) favoured the opposition bloc "Revival of Georgia". The ballot in military sites was monitored by authorised officers of the MoD, while the election process was supervised by an ad hoc election staff of the MoD under General Omar Lekveishvili, deputy defence minister. According to preliminary results of the elections, the Georgian military will have their own representative in the parliament. General Robert Tavazadze, former deputy defence minister, won a parliamentary seat. "Kavkasioni" No. 42, November 3-9, p. 1

## Press Digest

Analysing the October 13 kidnapping of UNOMIG observers in the Kodori Gorge, the Meridiani 44 (No. 120) underlines that the Gorge is a strategically important part of Abkhazia. That is why, Sukhumi has been always eager to gain control over this region. So far, however, all such attempts have been successfully resisted by local Swan (a Georgian sub-ethnic group) population. It seems now that the Abkhaz authorities have opted for other ways. Of late, they began to popularise the idea of "independent Swaneti" among local leaders. In the newspaper's opinion, the origins of the idea must be found in the minds of Russian strategists who want to break stability in Georgia by raising the issue of the "self-determination of the Swan people". The kidnapping may be a part of this Russian plan, the Meridiani 44 concludes.

Among the most important aspects of the incident, the Kavkasioni (No. 40) points to the fact that the Georgian security services seem to have been tipped off about the coming kidnapping. The Georgian security minister said this in his October 16 interview with the Dilis Gazeti newspaper. The president's press-secretary Vakhtang Abashidze also confirmed that the authorities had got respective information in advance. However, responsible state structures failed to prevent the kidnapping. Obviously, in the newspaper's opinion, only one state agency can hardly handle such a situation. It should co-ordinate its activities with other structures. Just the lack of co-ordination marks the Kodori incident, the newspaper remarks, emphasising that having cut short his visit to Ukraine, David Tevzadze, the defence minister, said he would have stayed in Georgia, had he been informed about the coming kidnapping in time. Although counter-terrorism, including counter-kidnapping, operations are within the competence of the MIA, negotiations with the kidnappers were carried out by the MoD, while Kakha Targamadze, the interior minister, actually refused to deal with the incident. Moreover, in his televised interview he hinted that the crime situation in the Gorge aggravated after units of the Internal Troops (subordinated to the MIA) were replaced by the MoD units there. For his part, Emzar Kvitsiani, the commander of the Kodori Direction Troops of the

MoD, claimed that the situation in the Gorge was worse just while under control of the MIA - in his words, 52 murders were committed there at that time. These statements, the Kavkasioni argues, indicate "hidden" confrontation between the two structures. It is noteworthy that, according to the Resonance (No. 289), just the MoD managed to gather all uncontrolled paramilitary groups operating in the region into one unit - the battalion "Monadire" (Hunter). This battalion is currently under double command - it is subordinated simultaneously to the MoD and Iveri Tchelidze, the state commissioner in the Gorge. At the same time, the newspaper points to the July kidnapping of a delegation of the Tbilisi-based Supreme Council of Abkhazia (members of the delegation were severely beaten and then released, while kidnappers managed to hide). This incident, in the Resonance's opinion, reflects confrontation between Tchelidze and the above specified Council as both are vying for power in the Gorge.

Another aspect of the kidnapping, according to the Kavkasioni, is connected with the chief of the General Staff of the Georgian Armed Forces General Johnny Pirtskhalaishvili's sensational statement, blaming the UNOMIG observers for gathering intelligence about Georgian military facilities in the Gorge and submitting it to the Russian peacekeepers. In this respect, one should note that David Tevzadze refused to testify before the Tbilisi-based procurator's office of Abkhazia as one of the participants of negotiations with the kidnappers. So did the released UNOMIG observers. The case, in the newspaper's opinion, may be connected with state secret. According to one of the informal versions, the UNOMIG observers might have accidentally come across deployment of Georgian heavy armaments in the Gorge (such deployment is banned by cease-fire provisions). Another version, the Resonance reports, suggests that they might have got some evidence for weapon-smuggling from the Gorge to Qarachai-Circassia (Russia). Finally, according to the 7 Dge (No. 121), the kidnapping of the UNOMIG observers strangely coincided with Shevardnadze's visit to Germany. In the newspaper's opinion, it might have been aimed to damage the international image of the country.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

UNOMIG - UN Observer Mission in Georgia

TAW - Tbilisi Aircraft Works

SDFD - State Department of Frontier Defence

MBT - main battle tank

MSS - Ministry of State Security

MFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MIA - Ministry of Internal Affairs

ICBM - intercontinental ballistic missile

SLBM - submarine-launched ballistic missile

AIFV - armoured infantry fighting vehicle

APC - armoured personnel carrier

RCL - recoilless launcher

RPF - Russian Peacekeeping Force in Abkhazia