

20

20



MILITARY BASES

OF THE RUSSIAN
FEDERATION
IN ABKHAZIA
AND THE
TSKHINVALI
REGION/SOUTH
OSSETIA AND
**THEIR IMPACT ON
HUMAN RIGHTS**

DEMOCRACY
RESEARCH
INSTITUTE



EUROPEAN
ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY

Contributors to the Publication: Manon
Bokuchava,
Mariam Chitishvili and Ucha Nanuashvili
Editor: Teona Gogolashvili

This report is developed by the Democracy Research Institute (DRI), within the project Supporting Human Rights Protection at Front Line, with the financial support of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED).

The project aims at protecting human rights in conflict-affected territories which, among others, implies monitoring of the situation in terms of human rights protection to fill information lacunae.

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the position of the EED.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01	INTRODUCTION
05	METHODOLOGY
06	ABKHAZIA AND RUSSIA'S POLICY
08	THE TSKHINVALI REGION/SOUTH OSSETIA AND RUSSIA'S POLICY
10	DATA ON THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S INFORMATION PLATFORMS ABOUT RUSSIAN OCCUPATION BASES
17	MURDERS OF ETHNIC GEORGIANS ON THE TERRITORIES UNDER THE DE FACTO CONTROL OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
21	ATTITUDES OF ETHNIC GEORGIAN, OSSETIAN AND ABKHAZIAN POPULATION TOWARDS THE MILITARY POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
23	ANALYSTS' VIEWS ON THE OCCUPATION MILITARY BASES OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
25	SATELLITE IMAGES
27	CONCLUSIONS
30	RECOMMENDATIONS



Introduction

In the aftermath of the Russia-Georgia war of 2008, the military policy of the Russian Federation regarding occupied Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia entered a new phase. Within a few weeks after the end of hostilities, Russia declared both the regions as "independent republics"¹ and embarked on an essentially different military strategy.

After the "recognition," Russia proceeded to conclude Alliance and Strategic Partnership Agreements with the *de facto* governments of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In 2010, the governments of the Russian Federation and breakaway Abkhazia signed a military agreement, which is valid for 49 years² and renewed automatically every five years.

The stated objectives of the agreement concluded with the *de facto* government of Abkhazia are as follows:

- Strengthening Abkhazian sovereignty and transition to a new stage of regional security;
- Creation of a common area of defence and security;

- Maintaining coordinated internal policy;
- Promoting recognition of the independence of Abkhazia by other states;
- Joint protection of the border between Abkhazia and Georgia; and
- Protection of the maritime border of Abkhazia.

The major part of the agreement concerns military cooperation, viz., increase in the number of Russian troops in Abkhazia to 4000-5000, which includes both land, air and naval forces. Russia took up a commitment to construct a military

¹ The official website of the President of the Russian Federation 26.08.2008, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/1223>.

² Russia Gains Military Base in Abkhazia, rferl.org, 17.02.2010.

naval base in Ochamchire.³ It is also noteworthy that Moscow gained full control over the airport and railway in Abkhazia. In 2014, the agreements with both occupied regions were renewed. This news was published on the official website of the President of the Russian Federation.⁴

Article 5 of the agreement is particularly noteworthy. It envisages the creation of “joint units of the United Armed Forces of the Republic of Abkhazia and the Russian Federation”.⁵ These joint units are intended to provide protection for Abkhazia’s land/maritime borders and repel armed attacks. Article 6 is construed as follows: an attack on one ally is considered to be an attack on the other. Based on the agreement, the parties are obliged to provide military support to each other.

³ Russia Gains Military Base in Abkhazia, a Russian edition of the Radio Liberty, 17.02.2010. https://www.rferl.org/a/Russia_Gains_Military_Base_In_Abkhazia/1960545.html.

⁴ The Agreement between the Russian Federation and Abkhazia on Alliance and Strategic Partnership (Договор между Российской Федерацией и Республикой Абхазия

The most bizarre aspect of this document is that the Russian Federation invokes Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations which reads as follows: “Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.”⁶ This wording is indeed very

о союзничестве и стратегическом партнерстве, official website of the President of the Russian Federation, 24.10.2014, <http://kremlin.ru/supplement/4783>.

⁵ Russia plans to re-equip the Abkhaz army – details and context, jam-news.net, 27.09.2019, <https://jam-news.net/russia-plans-to-re-equip-the-abkhaz-army-details-and-context/>.

⁶ The Charter of the United Nations, 1993.

different from that of Article 6. There are stark differences in the description of the course of action during military operations. During aggression and military actions, the united armed forces are led by a commander appointed by the Russian Federation and the deputy commander is nominated by the so-called government of Abkhazia.

Article 8 obliges the Russian Federation to provide armed forces of Abkhazia with modern weapons. Several provisions of the agreement particularly highlight the protection of the so-called border between Abkhazia and Georgia. This issue is further elaborated by Article 9, which envisages the assistance of the Russian Federation in carrying out engineering works on the so-called border and providing technical equipment to the facilities.

Furthermore, the Russian Federation takes up commitments to provide logistical support to the internal forces of Abkhazia, give them monetary assistance and give social benefits to the employees. The agreement also covers the obligation of bringing the budget legislation (highlighting the customs legislation) in harmony with the legislation of the Russian Federation.

In terms of social affairs, the agreement provides for the cooperation on the part of the Russian Federation in the areas of health care and education and a gradual increase in the salaries of essential workers.

Similar to Abkhazia, the Russian Federation concluded the Agreement on Alliance and Strategic Partnership also with South Ossetia. While both agreements are similar at a glance, there are significant differences.

Russia is openly attempting to have full control over the so-called ministry of internal affairs of South Ossetia. Official communication between the so-called state agencies of South Ossetia and the Russian Federation must be maintained in Russian. The Russian Federation will take additional measures to make it easier for citizens of South Ossetia to obtain Russian citizenship. With regard to the agreement concluded with South Ossetia, Article 1 thereof is noteworthy. Under

this provision, “the signatory states agree to maintain mutually agreed internal policy”.⁷

The Major Points Of The Agreement:

1. “The agreement is based on deep historical and spiritual roots and meets the interests of both countries”;
2. “Conditions need to be created for South Ossetia to become a member of international organisations”;
3. “A common space for the defence and security of the region needs to be formed”;
4. “The Russian Federation shall guarantee the defence and security of the state borders of the Republic of South Ossetia. To this end, the Armed Forces of South Ossetia and certain units of the security forces shall be part of the armed forces and security forces of the Russian Federation”;
5. “In the event of armed aggression, an attack on one signatory to the agreement shall be construed as aggression against the other”;

⁷ The Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of South Ossetia on Alliance and Integration (Договор между Российской

6. “The Allies shall establish an information co-ordination centre to fight organised crime”;
7. The Parties to the Agreement shall gradually provide logistical support to the internal forces of the Republic of South Ossetia, increase monetary income and social guarantees for the personnel of the internal forces”;
8. “Through the use of the customs legislation of the Russian Federation, the customs authorities of South Ossetia shall be integrated with the customs authorities of the Russian Federation”;
9. “The Republic of South Ossetia, with the support of the Russian Federation, will increase the average salary for persons employed in state and municipal agencies”;
10. “The Russian Federation will increase pension allowance for citizens of the Russian Federation permanently residing in the Republic of South Ossetia;” and
11. “Education standards and programs will be developed together with the Russian Federation to increase the level of education in South Ossetia”.

Федерацией и Республикой Южная Осетия о союзнничестве и интеграции), 18.03.2015, <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/4819>.

Methodology

The report was developed based on various methods involving gathering and processing information. Given the specific nature of the topic, it was impossible to study the attitudes of the local population towards the growing military influence of the Russian Federation in the regions. Considering these difficulties, the report is based on the analysis of the data obtained through the following sources:

1. Documents of alliance agreements concluded between the Russian Federation and the occupied regions;
2. Data disseminated by the Russian Federation's information platforms;
3. The information posted on the *de facto* agencies' websites;
4. Statements made by the *de facto* agencies' representatives;
5. Statements made by Georgian and Russian officials;
6. In-depth interviews with military analysts;
7. Obtaining and processing information from contact persons (regarding the population's attitudes, to identify major trends);
8. Processing satellite data about major occupation military bases and the so-called frontier bases along the Administrative Boundary Line (hereinafter the ABL);
9. Data disseminated by international media; Data disseminated by Georgian media;
10. Assessment by international organisations; and
11. Other reports on the issue at stake.

Abkhazia and Russia's Policy

The conclusion of alliance agreements was followed by a boost in the military influence of the Russian Federation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

For the research, information about military bases was requested from both the State Security Service of Georgia and the Administration of the Southern Military Region of the Defence Ministry of the Russian Federation. The Georgian party refused to impart this information whereas the occupying country did not respond to our letter.

At the time of developing the present report,⁸ the so-called border bases of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation are gradually added to Tskhinvali military bases nos. 4 and 7.⁹ Illegal military exercises of various scales and planned rotations are constantly conducted on these military

bases, and armaments and military-technical equipment are constantly updated.¹⁰

Military Bases

Currently, the following bases are set up in Abkhazia: Bombora Military Base, Ochamchire Military Base, Okhurei Military Base and Sokhumi Military Base.

It is noteworthy that, under the Istanbul Agreement, which envisages the termination of Russian military bases on Georgian territory, the Russian Federation is responsible to terminate Gudauta military base, one of the largest military bases in Abkhazia.¹¹

⁸ March 2020.

⁹ Military Bases on the Territory of Georgia, the Parliament of Georgia.

¹⁰ A letter from the State Security Service of Georgia, dated 30.12.2019

¹¹ A resolution of the Parliament of Georgia on the military bases of the Russian Federation on the territory of Georgia, dated 5 March 2005, available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/42862?publication=0>

However, in violation of this agreement, Russia renewed three large barrack-type settlements at Bombora base and built the infrastructure for receiving military aircraft and various equipment.

In the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, construction of the large part of military bases, especially the military bases in Tskhinvali and Ugardanta (Java District), has started since 2008.

Official data about the number of military personnel on these bases is unavailable. Based on various sources, as of 2019, about 4000-4500 service members are deployed in each base. Furthermore, according to available information, there is a gradual increase in the number of military personnel. “Conducting 130 military exercise annually, rendered the occupied territories, especially South Ossetia, into a large military base. Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region become more and more isolated and militarised and the number of Russian military

personnel is increased up to 10,000.” This statement was made by the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality at the session of the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs in Brussels.¹²

¹² Ketevan Tsikhelashvili – Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region Become more and more Isolated and Militarised, the military personnel of the Russian Federation is increased up to 10 000, 21.01.2020.

The Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and Russia's Policy

From a military standpoint, the situation in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia is different from Abkhazia. In 2017, the so-called Parliament of South Ossetia ratified an agreement introducing regulations for local army units to join Russian armed forces. The agreement was signed in Moscow, in 2017. The document is now an annexe to the agreement between the Russian Federation and South Ossetia on alliance and integration.

This agreement was construed by the so-called acting minister of defence, Ibragim Gaseev: "From now on, citizens of South Ossetia, under the contract of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, will be able to apply for military service. In case of approval, they will serve at the Russian military base in Tskhinvali and will be subject to the legislation of the Russian Federation."¹³ This decision was not met with the unanimous approval of the Tskhinvali population. A journalist of Radio Liberty in Tskhinvali, Murat Gukemukhov, is critical of such cooperation and

voices the negative attitudes of a part of the local population.

According to Murat Gukemukhov, "Bibilov passed the exam with flying colours when putting the interests of the metropolis before the interests of his native territory. He voiced the integration of South Ossetia within the Russian Federation as a national idea and before that the objective of maintaining closest cooperation possible with Russia. This course implies renouncing his own political will. Under the Kremlin's instructions, he abolished the army, an

¹³ The South Ossetia's Army is Now Officially Partially within the Russian Army, jam-news.net, 30.07.2019.

idea actively opposed by Kokoity, and secretly undermined by Tibilov. As a result, almost 15% of the male population became unemployed. By creating the Coordination Centre of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, all operations conducted by the Russian police are virtually legalised on the territory of South Ossetia.”¹⁴

Military Exercises

Abkhazian and Ossetian military units merged with the military forces of the Russian Federation periodically conduct large-scale exercises. To perform military tasks and demonstrate their military potential, training is conducted not only at military bases nos. 4 and 7, but the so-called border bases are also actively involved in this process as well. The sounds of gunfire and explosions often reach the

population living beyond the ABL on the territory of Georgia.

In August 2019, the Southern Military Region of the Russian Federation conducted large-scale exercises involving the 4th Air and Air Defence Forces of the region, the Black Sea Fleet Land Forces, the Naval Aviation and various units in the Southern Military Region. Exercises were conducted in North Caucasus and occupied Crimea (Ukraine), occupied Abkhazia (Georgia) and the regions of Astrakhan and Rostov. The website of the Defence Ministry of the Russian Federation notes especially the participation of the anti-aircraft missile system S-300, which is permanently deployed on the territory of Abkhazia.¹⁵

One of the recent exercises conducted in Abkhazia was on 13 January 2020. It was aimed at training air-mobile groups of motorised subdivisions of the Russian military base.¹⁶

¹⁴ Political Crisis of Tskhinvali, Netgazeti, <https://netgazeti.ge/news/416541/>, 24.12.2019.

¹⁵ Davit Batashvili, Overview of the Russian Military Forces: Issue no.1, 5-11, August 2019.

¹⁶ Russia Began Military Exercises in Occupied Abkhazia, Radio Tavisupleba, 13.01.2020.

Data on the Russian Federation's Information Platforms About Russian Occupation Bases

Information about the number of military forces in Abkhazia and South Ossetia is only available on Russian media outlets. Informational and propagandist platforms of the Russian Federation write periodically about finances spent by the Russian Federation on maintaining the military bases in various countries. Breakaway Abkhazia and South Ossetia are also on the list of these countries.

According to Sputnik-Ossetia, a news propaganda outlet of the Russian Federation: "In 2015, Russia allocated 5 billion Roubles (USD 73.5 million) for a planned three-year modernisation of the Abkhazian army. The amount of Russian financial assistance to South Ossetia in 2008-2018 reached 60 billion Roubles (more than USD 880 million). A significant part of this amount is aimed at enhancing the security of a friendly state and Russia's southern borders."¹⁷

There is also news about public procurement by the Russian Federation for supplying its military bases. In a partially closed auction announced on 27 September 2019,¹⁸ we learn that the Russian Ministry of Defence has procured "provision of complex services in 2019-2020 for its military bases in Abkhazia."

¹⁷ The Russian Military Base in South Ossetia: Price of the Issue (Российская военная база в Южной Осетии: цена вопроса), Sputnik-Ossetia, 01.09.2018.

¹⁸ Purchase no. 0173100004519001883 by the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, 27.08.2019.

Затраты на военные объекты РФ в ближнем зарубежье



Армения:

Арендная плата за базу в Гюмри с России не взимается, но за лояльность приходится платить оружием

На сегодняшний день полностью завершены поставки вооружений по армяно-российскому кредитному соглашению

В соответствии с межправительственным соглашением от 24 октября 2017 года РФ предоставит армянской стороне государственный экспортный кредит еще

на
\$200
миллионов



на
\$100
миллионов



По данным Иностранные Службы

11

Абхазия:

Безвозмездное размещение

На плановую трехлетнюю модернизацию абхазской армии в 2015 году Россия выделила

\$73,5
миллиона



По данным Иностранные Службы

Беларусь:

Минск не берет плату с Москвы за ее военные объекты



По данным Иностранные Службы

Казахстан:

За размещение испытательных баз и транспортного полка авиации России

платит

\$170-200
миллионов



По данным Иностранные Службы

19 Российская военная база в Южной Осетии:
цена вопроса, sputnik-ossetia, 01.09.2018

Кыргызстан:

Москва списала Бишкеку

31 ежегодно платит

\$240 + \$4,5
миллионов долга миллиона



По данным Иностранные Службы

Молдова:

Российские части и подразделения на территории ПМР дислоцируются бесплатно

находятся
на самообеспечении

более
\$2,2
миллиона



По данным Иностранные Службы

Таджикистан:

Официальные данные о финансовых условиях содержания 201-й российской военной базы не разглашаются



Южная Осетия:

Безвозмездное размещение

в 2008 – 2018 годах объем российской финансовой помощи составил

более
\$880
миллионов



значительная часть этой суммы инвестирована в безопасность

По данным Иностранные Службы

From time to time, information platforms controlled by Russian authorities cover the military potential of Abkhazia.

According to Sputnik-Ossetia: “Military formations in Abkhazia unite the central governing bodies, land forces, air forces, navy and special task units (more than 2,000 people). Abkhazian military service members are ready to take up complex tasks on the land, in the air and at the sea. The aviation is capable of bombarding a potential adversary and a country’s territory, and to advance deep into an adversary’s territory. The navy can gain control over the republic’s waters.”²⁰

Sputnik-Abkhazia writes in a similar spirit about the technical capabilities of the Russian military base in Abkhazia. “The military base located in Abkhazia has modern equipment: T-90 and T-72BZ category tanks, BTR-82AM category armoured personnel carriers, 152-mm self-propelled howitzer 2S3 Akatsiya (2C3) and 300 mm anti-aircraft missile

system. This list certainly does not reflect all the existing capacities on the spot as military base no. 7 and the Abkhazian army can receive any weapon from Russia.”²¹



²⁰ Putin Instructed to Sign an Agreement on Financing the Modernisation of the Abkhazian Army (Путин поручил подписать соглашение по финансированию модернизации армии Абхазии), Sputnik-Ossetia, 23.09.2019

²¹ Deterrence Factor: Kishmaria and Shoygu Signed another Agreement (Фактор сдерживания: Кишмария и Шойгу подписали очередное соглашение), Sputnik-Abkhazia, 27.08.2019.

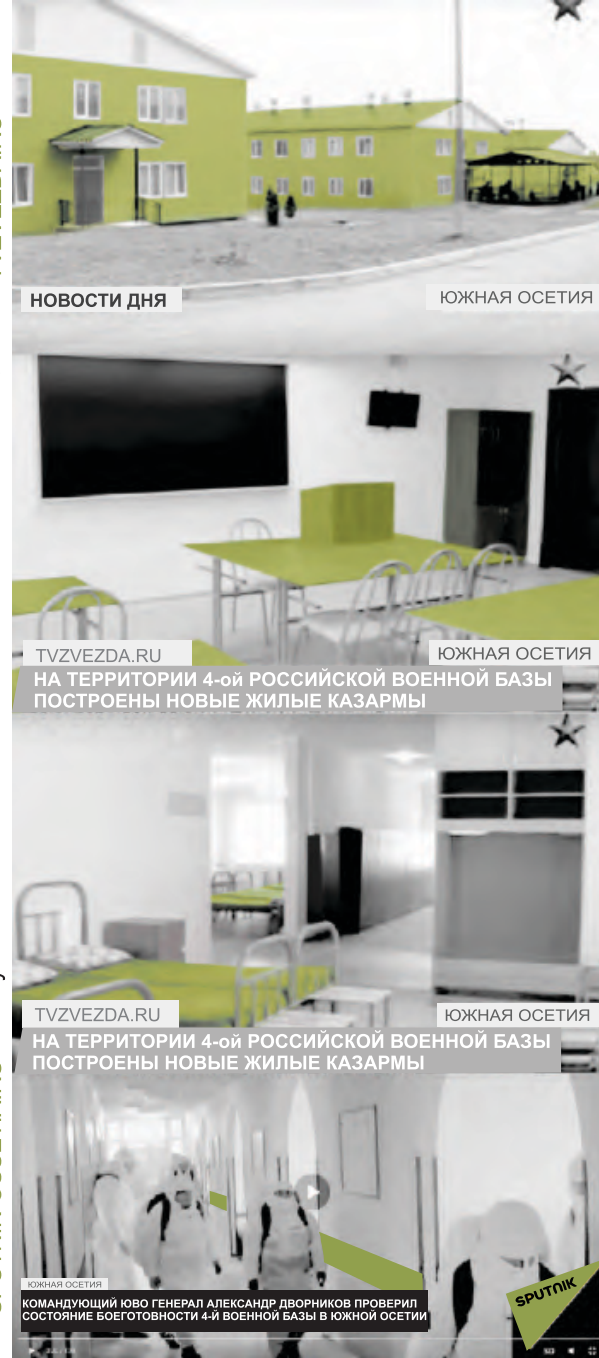
In July 2019, according to the news marking the inauguration of the military base of the Russian Federation in Abkhazia, the following military equipment was exhibited: T-72BZ category tanks, BTR-82AM category military armoured personnel carriers, the multiple rocket launcher system Grad, the *anti-aircraft* missile system OSA and armoured vehicles Tigr.

There is less information available about the military bases and equipment in Tskhinvali. According to an information platform of the Russian Federation, TVZVEZDA.RU,²² there were new residential complexes opened on military base no. 4 of the Russian Federation in Tskhinvali. According to the same source, there are in total 6 residential complexes at the military base, each to house 600 military service members.

²² The Russian Military Base in Tskhinvali is under Development, TVZVEZDA.RU, 2014.

²³ *Idem*.

²⁴ Sub-units of the Russian Military Base in South Ossetia are Made Combat-Ready (Подразделения российской военной базы в Южной Осетии привели в боеготовность), Sputnik-Ossetia, 02.02.2017.



Construction of military bases was conducted in 2014 as well. It was also reported by vesti.ru. It shows the construction of various facilities, multifunctional training ground, playground, sports complex and residential buildings, on military base no. 4 in Tskhinvali.²⁵



Military Base no. 4 of the Russian Federation in Tskhinvali. Source: vesti.ru

²⁵ The Russian military base decorated Tskhinvali (Российская военная база украсила Цхинвал), vesti.ru, 28.11.2014.

Military Base no. 7 of the Russian Federation in Abkhazia. Source: The Parliamentary Gazette of the Russian Federation Council, pnp.ru²⁶



²⁶ The military of Russia and Abkhazia will act as a united front (Военные России и Абхазии будут действовать единым фронтом), 02.11.2016.

Military Base no. 7 of the Russian Federation in Abkhazia. Source: Apsnypress.Info²⁷



²⁷ Today, Russian military base no. 7 in Abkhazia (Gudauta) celebrates its 93rd anniversary (Сегодня 7-ая российская военная база, дислоцированная в Абхазии (г. Гудаута) отмечает 93-ю годовщину со дня формирования части), 20.11.2011.

Murders of Ethnic Georgians on the Territories under the *De Facto* Control of the Russian Federation

Since 2014, four Georgian citizens have been brutally murdered on the territories occupied by Russia: in 2014, 18-year old **Davit Basharuli**; in 2016, 31-year old **Giga Otkhozoria**; in 2018, 35-year old **Archil Tatunashvili**; and in 2019, 29-year old **Irakli Kvaratskhelia**.

17

The Public Defender of Georgia stated that representatives of the occupation regime were directly involved in all four murders.²⁸

In 2014, 18-year old **Davit Basharuli** disappeared in the Tskhinvali region after being arrested by the occupation regime and was found dead in unknown circumstances.²⁹ On 22 February 2018, representatives of the so-called law-enforcement bodies of Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia arrested **Archil**

Tatunashvili in the settlement Akhmagori and took him to Tskhinvali. Archil Tatunashvili was an internally displaced person from this region and he would visit Akhmagori periodically where he had a small business. On 23 February, the *de facto* security committee stated that Archil Tatunashvili had resisted a guard, took away his weapon and when using force to neutralise him he stumbled down the stairs and later died in Tskhinvali hospital, allegedly

²⁸ The Public Defender's Statement Concerning the 11th Anniversary of the August War, the official website of the Public Defender of Georgia, 08.08.2019.

²⁹ A Meeting Held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Co-Chairs of Geneva International Negotiations, the Official Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 06.03.2018.

due to heart failure. This version of the *de facto* authorities was confirmed by a forensic examination conducted in Russia. The body of Archil Tatumashvili was handed to his family on 20 March 2018. The forensic examination conducted in Tbilisi established multiple injuries on the body of the deceased and that internal organs had been removed.

In June 2018, the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia brought charges *in absentia* against two employees of the *de facto* law-enforcement agencies of the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia – the so-called assistant prosecutor Davit Gurtsiev and the head of the so-called Akhalkalaki unit of the security committee, Alik Taboev – were charged with illegal deprivation of Archil Tatumashvili's liberty and accessory to torture committed by a group. Since then they have been wanted by an Interpol Red Notice.

According to the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia, Archil Tatumashvili was tortured by the so-called law-enforcement officers in a building of the *de facto* Tskhinvali prosecutor's office for taking part in

the August War of 2008 and in doing so more than 100 injuries of various nature were inflicted to his body.

In June 2018, the Government of Georgia, based on a parliamentary resolution, adopted the resolution on approving the list of accused and convicted persons – the Otkhozoria-Tatumashvili List – for murder, kidnapping, torture and inhuman treatment and inflicting serious damage to the health of Georgian citizens as well as covering up these crimes on occupied territories and on corresponding measures to be taken by the Government of Georgia.³⁰

There are 33 individuals on the above-mentioned list who are identified as responsible for the murder, torture and kidnapping of Georgian citizens on the occupied territories or covering up these crimes.

In December 2018, the European Court of Human Rights received an application *Archil Tatumashvili v.*

³⁰ Resolution of the Government of Georgia, the Legislative Herald, 26.06.2018.

the Russian Federation which will be treated as a priority case.³¹

On 19 May 2016, 30-year old **Giga Otkhazor** was shot and killed at the ABL of Abkhazia, near Nabakevi checkpoint. The investigation established that the so-called border guards had wounded Otkhazor with several shots in limbs and abdominal area after which one of the border guards, Rashid Kanji Ogi, executed the fallen Giga Otkhazor with a shot to his head. The *de facto* republic's court applied home arrest as a preventive measure to Kanji Ogi. However, on 31 May 2017, the Georgian authorities learned that the *de facto* military prosecutor's office of Abkhazia, due to absence of evidence, had discontinued investigation and terminated criminal prosecution in the case of Giga Otkhazor. On behalf of the family of Giga Otkhazor, the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) lodged an application with the European Court of Human Rights.

³¹ One Year Has Passed since the Murder of Archil Tatunashvili, Radio Tavisupleba, 22.02.2019.

GYLA alleges the violation of Article 2 (right to life) and Article 13 (right to effective legal remedy) of the European Convention on Human Rights by the Russian Federation.³²

Information about the death of **Irakli Kvaratskhelia** in Gali was disseminated on 12 March 2019. The EUMM hotline was informed from Abkhazia that Irakli Kvaratskhelia had committed suicide.

On 13 March, the so-called security service of the *de facto* Republic of Abkhazia made a statement that a Georgian citizen, Irakli Kvaratskhelia, born in 1990, had been arrested for "illegal crossing of the border". For drawing up the documentation, he was taken to a building of the Border Division of the Russian Federal Security Service in Abkhazia where Kvaratskhelia hanged himself.

According to Psycho-Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Torture, Violence and Pronounced Stress Impact – Empathy, Irakli Kvaratskhelia's death most

³² Russia's Role in Otkhazor's Murder, One Year Has Passed since the Murder of Archil Tatunashvili, Radio Tavisupleba, 12.01.2018.

probably resulted from inhuman treatment at the Russian military base.³³

According to the existing data, it is clear that, along with the expansion of Russian influence, there are more and more incidents involving inhuman treatment against ethnic Georgians. Accordingly, each victim is a victim of the *de facto* control of the Russian Federation.

³³ The Empathy Centre: Russia Should Pay Dearly for Irakli Kvaratskhelia's Death, 15.03.2019.

Attitudes of Ethnic Georgian, Ossetian and Abkhazian Population towards the Military Policy of the Russian Federation

The Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia

Tskhinvali residents do not have a positive attitude towards Russian military officers due to the behaviour of the latter. Russian military officers, usually treat women very badly; they often make vulgar propositions to them and make demeaning comments.

The situation is different in Akhalkori. Russian military officers, unlike Ossetian armed authorities, have good relations with locals. They often help the village population with food, play football with local youths; they also try to learn a few sentences in Georgian and speak to locals in their native tongue.

According to the local population, there are approximately 4,000 military service members in South Ossetia.³⁴

³⁴ Information supplied by a contact person, December 2019.

Abkhazia

“Everything near the so-called border of Abkhazia is controlled by Russians. They are the ones taking bribes from locals for crossing checkpoints. The so-called internal checkpoints are also fully controlled by Russian soldiers. Locals need ‘Abkhazian Papers’ for internal movement.

The residents without Abkhazian papers tried to move by circumventing the internal checkpoints but they were stopped by Russian soldiers, taken to nearest bases and later to Gali militia. There are numerous incidents of beating in those military bases. Most importantly, arrestees are released only after paying a bribe.”³⁵

“In Abkhazia, Georgians and Abkhazians have different attitudes towards Russian soldiers. Presumably, for the majority of Abkhazians, Russians safeguard peace and security. They are also

³⁵ Information supplied by a contact person, December 2019.

convinced that Russia is the strongest and most developed country. There are also other Abkhazians who are aggressively disposed against Russians due to their privileged position. Russians are appropriating land, building hotels, run businesses and buying properties whereas it is prohibited by law to sell immovable property to a foreigner. An aggressive attitude can also be attributed to the fact that Russians ignore Abkhazian traditions. For example, in one incident, Russian military service members appeared in the city in bathing suits. This was followed by great tension between them and the locals. There is also an opinion floating in the society that young people are being Russified, which should attract the government's attention.

Local Abkhazians are dissatisfied with the deployment of Russian military bases in other parts of Abkhazia besides the Gali district. Abkhazians believe that there should be a base in the "border" zone as they think that this is how they should protect themselves from attacks by Georgia. They, however, think that there is no need for bases in Sokhumi, Ochamchire and other districts.

Russian military service members are the greatest problem for Georgians living in the Gali district. They installed surveillance cameras at many places

and minimised the chances of Georgians sneaking across the "border". They catch locals through these control mechanisms and detain them in the bunkers of military bases for several hours.

In the so-called border zone, the occupiers put fences around houses and gardens and people cannot move freely anymore. When travelling by transport, there are Russian military service members at every 3 kilometres checking documents and vehicles. There are checkpoints everywhere along Enguri. They maintain less communication with locals.

There are very frequent incidents where Gali residents go close to the River Enguri looking for their cattle and are caught by militaries and subjected to inhuman treatment. There was an incident where a seriously ill person was refused permission to cross the Enguri Bridge.

Russians were previously employed mainly in military bases. Now the field of their work is diverse and they work almost everywhere, including government agencies."³⁶

³⁶ Information supplied by a contact person, December 2019.

Analysts' Views on the Occupation Military Bases of the Russian Federation

Irakli Aladashvili - Editor-in-Chief of Journal Arsenal, Military Expert:

If Russia strengthens significantly or, *a fortiori*, doubles the number of personnel and military equipment of its 7th and 4th occupation military bases, it will give rise to the threat that Russian occupation military bases will be able to conduct tactical military operations against Georgia without deploying large forces from Russia, be it occupying the Poti Port, blocking roads, railways and airports or occupying Georgian military bases.

We should also not forget about the secret operational plans of the doubled Russian military base in Gyumri, Armenia, about invading the Georgian border and advancing towards Tbilisi (capturing the Marneuli airbase of the Georgian Army on the way). We, moreover, remember that they were ready for this operation during the August

War and several dozens of this base's military vehicles even approached the Georgian border.”

Vakhtang Maisaia - Doctor of Politics and Military Science, professor, Military Analyst of the Centre for Strategic Studies of Central Europe:

“The gist of the military reforms launched by the Russian Army in 2008 is to transform the traditional mobilisation system to constant standby mode. The foundation of the military reforms is to participate in the limited conflicts of the overhauled Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, similar to the five-day Russia-Georgia War of 2008. For accomplishing these very goals, a new structure of the Russian army is being set up – the armed forces are supposed to be more flexible, mobile and constantly on stand-by. They must be capable of providing a prompt response and, first and foremost,

engage in small-scale conflicts on the territory of the Russian Federation, former Soviet republics and adjacent territories. This was the objective of the frequent and sudden alarms in the Central and Eastern military districts in 2016-2017.

During the Soviet era, the Transcaucasian Military District provided geostrategic balance, and this approach has not changed since. There are three bases of the Russian Federation situated in South Caucasus: Military Base no. 7 in occupied Abkhazia, Military Base no. 4 in the Occupied Tskhinvali and Military Base no. 102 in Armenia. Accordingly, the Russian military strategic-operational "triangular line" is being established in the entire region. This implies localising a military threat emanating from one direction, i.e., conducting a single concentrated war campaign in time and space; the principle of military-strategic distribution of the "concentrated fist"; maintaining a V-shaped and penetrating military offensive type strategy against the adversary

and the coalition of the latter's allies; taking a strategic initiative and using all categories of armed components, including weapons of mass destruction."

Satellite Images

01 Military base no. 4 of the Russian Federation in Tskhinvali

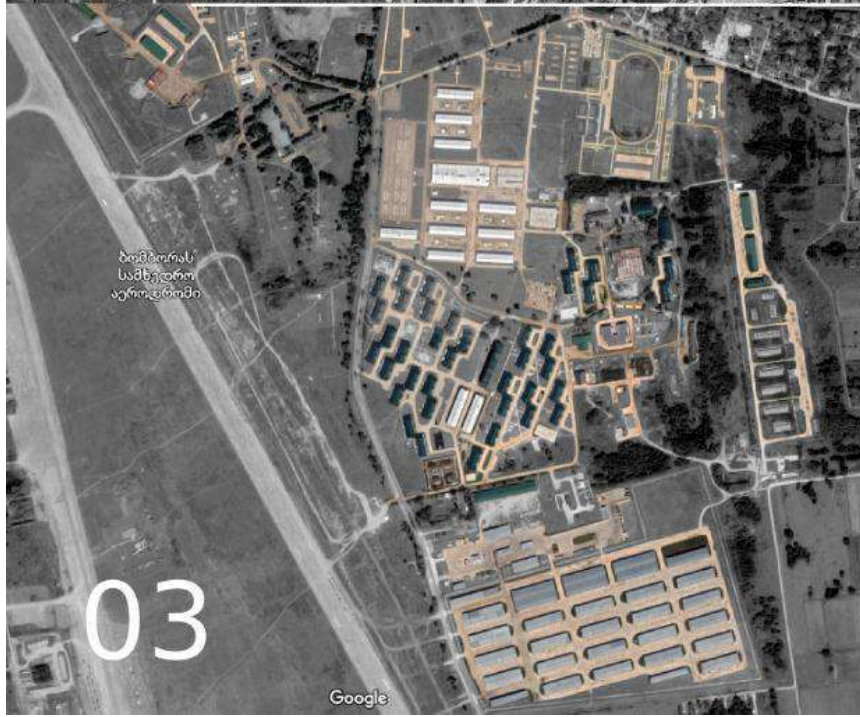
02 The So-Called Border Military Base of the Russian Federation in the Occupied Village of Ortchosani.

The Distance between the military base and the main Tbilisi-Senaki-Leselidze highway is about 400 meters.

25

03 Military Base no. 7 of the Russian Federation in Abkhazia - Bombora Airport

04 The So-Called Border Military Base Located between the Village of Khurcha of Zugdidi Municipality and Occupied Nabakevi



Conclusions

The deployment of Russian FSB units along the entire perimeter of the ABL, in literal and figurative terms, serves the purpose of controlling any possibility of direct contact between Georgians and Abkhazians/Georgians and Ossetians.

The Russian Federation certainly did not fulfil the agreement reached at the 1999 Istanbul Summit of the OSCE about withdrawing military bases from the territory of Georgia. Instead, Russia has strengthened the bases already existing on the occupied territories and continued the construction of new ones.³⁷

The same fate was shared by the Six-Point Ceasefire Agreement of 2008, concluded after the Russia-Georgia War, which implied ending hostilities and returning the situation to the *status quo* before the war. Instead of its implementation, the process of borderisation is being actively carried out.

“According to the available data, more than 10 thousand soldiers are deployed on the territory of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. Before the start of the hostilities, the Russian Federation was not supposed to have military bases in either the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia or Abkhazia. A 500-strong peacekeeping force (plus 300-strong reservists) was to be deployed in South Ossetia, whereas in Abkhazia only a 2,500-3,000-strong peacekeeping unit of the Commonwealth of Independent States was to be deployed.

Currently, the number of military units of the Russian Federation on the territory of Georgia significantly exceeds the limit allowed under the ceasefire agreement. In order to comply with the

³⁷ The Resolution of the Parliament of Georgia on the Military Units of the Russian Federation on the Territory of Georgia. 10.03.2005.

terms of this agreement, the Russian Federation must fully withdraw its military (non-peacekeeping) contingent from the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and Abkhazia and immediately withdraw all military units from the rest of the Georgian territory. According to the statement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, the establishment of military bases by the Russian Federation in these regions also contradicts the terms of the ceasefire agreement.”³⁸

International community makes continuous calls upon the Russian Federation to honour its commitments. On the 11th anniversary of the August War, the U.S. Department of State made another statement in support to Georgia: “We call upon the Russian Federation to implement in full the EU-mediated August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement, to withdraw its forces from the occupied territories of

Georgia.”³⁹ Similar to the United States, the European Union has also adopted a number of resolutions calling upon Russia to withdraw its military forces from the occupied territories of Georgia.⁴⁰

The resolution of the European Parliament adopted in 2018 addresses point by point all the challenges of military nature that Georgia currently faces as a result of Russia’s actions.

“Russia constantly reinforces its illegal military presence in Georgia’s occupied territories by constructing new bases, bringing in new troops and equipment, and conducting military exercises; Russia continues to be in breach of its international obligations and refuses to fully implement the EU-mediated ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008. This line is slowly but steadily being moved deeper

³⁸ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Violations of the Six-Point Ceasefire Agreement by the Russian Federation.

³⁹ The 11th anniversary of the Russia’s Invasion of Georgia, the website of the US Embassy, 2019.

⁴⁰ 1. The European Parliament Adopted by the Majority of Votes a Resolution on Russia and EU

Summit, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia 2. Statements Made in Support to Georgia at a session of the Council of Europe’s Committee of Deputy Ministers on Behalf of the EU Countries, the Public Broadcaster, 2018.

into Tbilisi-controlled territory in a process known as a ‘borderisation’, in some places coming very close to critical infrastructures such as motorways and gas pipelines” (Resolution no. 2741 of the European Parliament).⁴¹

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office of Great Britain in its annual report on human rights protection⁴² stated that “in Georgia’s breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, increased Russian interference led to a sharp deterioration in the human rights situation.”

According to the 2019 Human Rights & Democracy Report, published on 16 July 2020, “continued closure of the majority of crossing points along the Administrative Boundary Line raised tensions and resulted in frequent detentions and severe restrictions on freedom of movement, affecting livelihoods, education, and access to healthcare.”

According to the report, “discrimination against ethnic Georgians and intimidation of members of civil society continued” in both occupied regions.

⁴¹ The official website of the Parliament of Georgia, 2018.

⁴² Human Rights & Democracy, the 2019 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report,

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/901090/Human_Rights_and_Democracy_the_2019_Foreign_and_Commonwealth_Office_report.pdf.

Recommendations

To the Government of Georgia

1. To pay particular attention to the incidents of human rights violations in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia through international mechanisms to contribute to the protection of fundamental rights on the occupied territories;
2. To actively use the possibility of applying to the European Court of Human Rights against the Russian Federation, among others, with regard to individual human rights violations;
3. To raise the issue at the international level about the responsibility of the Russian Federation for human rights violations as the state wielding *de facto* control in both regions;
4. To elaborate an action plan for human rights protection in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia;
5. To work actively to enable international human rights organisations to work in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia; and

6. When working with international institutions and the country's partners, to put permanently on the agenda as the main topic the issue of strengthening Russian expansionist policy and illegal military activity endangering the safety of both regions.

To International Organisations

7. To pay particular attention to the difficult situation in terms of violations of human rights in the occupied regions;
8. To employ all means at their disposal to ensure that the Russian Federation enables international human rights organisations to work in these regions; and
9. To elaborate effective mechanisms against the military policy of the Russian Federation in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia endangering peaceful and safe development of the regions.