

# **The Bear Went Through the Mountain: Russia Appraises its Five-Day War in South Ossetia**

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*The August 2008 Russian-Georgia conflict was the first Russian full-scale use of force against a former member of the Soviet Union. This paper looks at the August conflict solely from the vantage point of the Russian press, in particular the views of military officers or military journalists. The findings offer insights into the information war conducted in the Russian press, the continued suspicion of Russia about US actions in the area, and the strengths and weaknesses of Russia's armed forces. Russia's rationale for supporting South Ossetia, that "if Georgia can break away from the Soviet Union, why can't South Ossetia break away from Georgia?" indicates that this may not be the last development of its kind that Russia supports. The Crimea and Transdniestier come immediately to mind.*

## INTRODUCTION

From 8–12 August 2008 Georgia engaged in open conflict with Russian and South Ossetian forces. Provocations on both sides in July and early August had driven the potential combatants to the verge of war over the status of

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The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.

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South Ossetia. Georgia initiated combat activities in South Ossetia, according to the Russian press, and in the process killed fifty or so Russian peacekeepers. Perhaps Georgia's leaders may have felt that under the cover of the Olympic Games there existed a chance to move more aggressively to regain control over its territory (South Ossetia), viewing the situation as a now or never proposition. Or perhaps, as the Georgian press states, they had intercepted South Ossetian communications indicating that the Russians were about to move in and thwart any future plans of the Georgians.<sup>1</sup> In any event, the Georgian attempt failed.

This article looks at the August conflict solely from the vantage point of the Russian press.<sup>2</sup> The findings are instructive especially for how the Russians used the media. The press served as a signaling or warning device, as a medium for official pronouncements, and as a forum for criticism and praise among other issues. Russia clearly warned Georgia not to act. When Georgia did, Russia moved in and succeeded in avenging the deaths of their peacekeepers and in fixing control over South Ossetia, an activity it had surreptitiously carried on for the past ten years (passing out Russian passports to residents of South Ossetia, etc.). Russia's leaders later decided to recognize the areas of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Some outside sources supported Russia's interpretation of who caused the conflict. For example, the President of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Klaus, placed blame on the Georgians for the conflict. He added that presenting Russia in too negative a light would again divide the world in two. Russia is not the Soviet Union, he noted.<sup>3</sup> That is the good news for Russia.

The bad news is that Russia's military performance was marred by inadequate equipment and organization. This point was underscored many times in the press to include by some prominent military figures. Electronic warfare systems did not work well, command and control was hampered by radios that performed poorly, and operations were disjointed due to an inadequate Global Satellite Navigation System (GLONASS). Night operations remained weak. In short, many of the same problems affecting the Russian armed forces in Chechnya were once again evident. Further, Russia's heavy-handed approach both during and after the conflict ended did not endear it to the international community.

Russia claimed that it used Western rules to intervene in South Ossetia. Does this imply that Russia will now utilize a new intervention model to fight for territory it decides it properly owns and that it will act more aggressively beyond its borders than ever before? Is the Russian recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia part of a larger geo-political gambit? There is

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<sup>1</sup> There are several references to this incident in the international media but none in the Russian press.

<sup>2</sup> Background material on the initial 1992 peace agreement between Georgia and Russia is not from a Russian source.

<sup>3</sup> ITAR-TASS, 0653 GMT 8 September 2008 CEP2008082095020908950082.

much to consider in these and other issues related to Russia's handling of this crisis.

This review of the Russian press provides insights into some of these issues. Specific areas highlighted are:

- Russia's clear warnings to Georgia that it was practicing a peace enforcement operation in July due to the evolving conflict in South Ossetia
- Russia's criticism of its military operations, especially in regard to its lack of a unified command and control system, its poor communications equipment, its misdirected subordination of army aviation to the air force, and its current lack of responsibility among all of the agencies responsible for the defense industry
- Russia's lack of a single information directorate on a state scale that enables the entire direction of state policy
- Russia's reasons for supporting South Ossetia (expressed most factually as "if Georgia can break away from the Soviet Union, why can't South Ossetia break away from Georgia?")

Other issues discussed include the 1992 agreement establishing peacekeepers in the area; Russia's use of Western rules for intervening; accusations against the United States; Russian cyber operations; consequences of the fighting for the region and the world; and conclusions.

## BACKGROUND

### A Pro-Russian Look at the Conflict

As the situation worsened in June and July 2008 between Georgia and its independence-minded region known as South Ossetia, the Russians could not have been more frank and forward about their potential plans. Georgia and the "rest of the West" just couldn't read the tea leaves or did and ignored them.

As early as 10 July Russian authorities stated that Russia's armed forces were prepared to help peacekeepers in South Ossetia. Then, in a 17 July 2008 *Red Star* article on Kavkaz-2008, an exercise run in Russia at the same time that, across the border, the Georgian-American exercise Immediate Response 2008 was being conducted at the Vaziani Military Base, author Aleksandr Tikhonov wrote:

According to Colonel Konashenkov, in connection with the deterioration of the situation in the zones of the Georgia-Abkhazia and Georgia-Ossetia conflicts, the Kavkaz-2008 exercise will *rehearse the issues of participation in special peace enforcement operations in armed conflict zones*. Incidentally, the inclusion in the combat training program for

North Caucasus Military District separate formations and military units of issues associated with the performance of peacekeeping missions is one of the distinctive features of the district troops' training in the new instruction period.<sup>4</sup>

Two days earlier, on 15 July, Moscow's *Agentstvo Voyennoykh Novostey* had also stated that a special peace enforcement operation would be practiced.<sup>5</sup> When Russian military units entered Georgia, a Russian embassy spokesperson in London stated that "there is no Russian attack. There is peace enforcement in South Ossetia."<sup>6</sup> Such prior planning and warnings nullify completely Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's statement in September that the Georgian attack on South Ossetia was Russia's 9/11. There is no basis in fact or circumstances for his comparison since Russia had monitored the situation and prepared a response.

In Georgia on 15 July, US, Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Ukrainian forces gathered to open exercise "Immediate Response 2008." Its goals were, according to Georgian deputy defense chief LTC Alexander Osepaishvili, to strengthen friendship and cooperation and to share experiences among participating states. The exercise is an annual bilateral security cooperation exercise conducted by the United States with its coalition partners that focuses on interoperability and is designed to promote understanding and cooperation.<sup>7</sup> Thus the US announcement of its exercise's goals was quite different than the goals of the Russian exercise on the other side of the border.

However, Russia's leaders believe that US intelligence knew about Georgian plans to attack South Ossetia and for good reason. US Ambassador to Russia John Beyrle reportedly noted in September, nearly a month after the conflict ended, that the United States tried unsuccessfully to talk Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili out of conducting the operation.

Russian operations to "enforce the peace" require United Nations (UN) authorization. Sergey Karaganov, deputy director of the European Institute of the Academy of Sciences in Russia, thinks that Georgia knew this and that they provoked Russia to send in its troops and to put Russia in an awkward international legal position. From Russia's (and the West's)

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<sup>4</sup> Aleksandr Tikhonov, 'Kavkaz-2008: Barrier to Terror', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 17 July 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080718548001.

<sup>5</sup> *Agentstvo Voyennoykh Novostey* (Internet version-www), 0602 GMT 15 July 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080715950416.

<sup>6</sup> Tom Espiner, 'Security Threats: Georgia Accuses Russia of Coordinated Cyberattack', ZDNet.co.uk, 11 August 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Bryan Woods, "Security Cooperation Exercise 'Immediate Response 2008' Begins with Official Ceremony in Republic of Georgia," <http://www.army.mil/-news/2008/07/17/10953-security-cooperation-exercise-immediate-re...>

point of view, of course, killing Russian peacekeepers goes well beyond a provocation.

Retired Colonel-General Leonid Ivashov, former chief of the Main Directorate for International Military Cooperation of the Russian Defense Ministry, noted that the Russian leadership did not need UN authorization but instead utilized Article 51 of the UN Charter as the grounds for its decision to send the 58<sup>th</sup> Army to South Ossetia. The article notes that nothing in the charter shall impair an individual or group to the right of collective self defense if an attack occurs against a member of the United Nations until the UN has time to step in and restore peace and security. The peacekeeping contingent in South Ossetia, Ivashov noted, was unable to defend itself against the Georgian onslaught.<sup>8</sup>

When up to 50 of these soldiers, according to the Russian press, were killed in early August 2008 the Russians went in—in full battle armor—to conduct peace enforcement. Russia has had peacekeepers in Georgia since 1992<sup>9</sup> and they were not as impartial as one would expect a peacekeeper to be. Georgia has tried to unilaterally denounce the 1992 resolutions and accuse the Russians of being occupiers. Russian politicians noted that Georgia cannot legally denounce these resolutions by itself.<sup>10</sup> Efforts to bring all sides to the negotiating table by the UN, the European Union (EU), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) yielded no results.

### An Anti-Russian Look at the Conflict by a Russian

While a pro-Russian look at the conflict is quite convincing that a warning was given and Russia had reason to enter South Ossetia, another Russian journalist leads the reader to a different conclusion, at least initially. Russian opposition journalist Yuliya Latynina posted an article to this end on the anti-Kremlin current affairs website *Yezhbednevnyy Zhurnal* on 8 August. She noted that South Ossetia is neither a country, a territory, nor a regime but a joint venture of KGB generals and Ossetian bandits trying to make money from fighting Georgia. Moscow has no strategic goal except perhaps to extend its gas pipeline through the mountains to provide gas for citizens

<sup>8</sup> . . . And Why Did Our Army Go into South Ossetia?, *Izvestiya* (Moscow Edition), 11 August 2008, p. 4 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080811025021.

<sup>9</sup> On 11 August, Russia's newspaper *Izvestiya* reported that Russia's peacekeepers had been in South Ossetia based on the Sochi, June 1992 Agreement on Principles for the Resolution of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict and the December 1994 Resolution of the Combined Regulatory Commission for the Resolution of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict.

<sup>10</sup> No United Nations (UN) intervention was required in 1992 based on then President Edward Shevardnadze's goodwill gesture of signing the Sochi agreement.

of South Ossetia in case Georgia cuts off its supply. The citizens of South Ossetia are nothing more than militarized refugees that form a quasi-state.<sup>11</sup>

Once militants in Tskhinvali began to shell Georgian villages, South Ossetia and Russia accused Georgia of aggression. Latynina believed Georgia would win the conflict because it had a strategic goal whereas, she wrote, Russia believed that war is won by the one who lies the most. The latest events show that Russia is not even in control of South Ossetian President Eduard Kokoity. When Georgian Minister of State for Reintegration Temur Lakobashvili arrived in Tskhinvali for negotiations and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs did all it could to set the meeting up, Kokoity simply left Tskhinvali for Abkhazia.<sup>12</sup>

Latynina wrote that Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili announced a unilateral ceasefire at 10:00 in the evening (date not provided) when the deployment of Georgian equipment was almost complete. In response South Ossetia started shelling the Georgian villages of Prisi and Tamarasheni. This provided Saakashvili with a future agenda free of constraints. Georgian troops razed Tskhinvali while Kokoity called the retaliatory strike a provocation. So at that time the local population was stuck between Saakashvili and Kokoity and the situation in the Caucasus had become destabilized.<sup>13</sup>

Writing on 16 August, after combat actions had ceased, Latynina changed her tune. She stated that even though Georgia had been provoked many times, Saakashvili must bear responsibility for starting the conflict. The fact that he launched an attack is, in her words, “a big problem for me and a great tragedy for Georgia.” She went on to add that Saakashvili is a man who wants to solve problems while Putin is a man who wants to create them, and here she sees a huge difference between the two. Finally, she noted that Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Poland responded almost immediately to Georgia’s troubles and supported Saakashvili. Thus the latter did achieve something: he has created a circle of young democracies around Russia and partially isolated it.<sup>14</sup>

## THE 1992 PEACEKEEPING AGREEMENT AND THE 2008 INCREASE IN TENSIONS

There are two issues that defined the geographical and legal background to this conflict. The first issue is the disintegration of the Union of Soviet

<sup>11</sup> Yuliya Latynina, *The Forced Bankruptcy of the South Ossetian Open Joint Stock Company*, *Yezhbednevnyy Zhurnal*, 8 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080809950078.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Yuliya Latynina, ‘Quadripartite Aggression’, *Novaya Gazeta* 11 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080811025002.

<sup>14</sup> Yuliya Latynina, ‘Access Code’, *Ekho Moskvyy*, 1508 GMT 16 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080818950213.

Socialist Republics (USSR) and the development of the legal status of peacekeepers in the area, which began in 1992. The second issue is the development of increasing tension between South Ossetian and Georgian forces in July 2008 over both of these issues.

When the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991 and Georgia broke away from the USSR, Russian interest in Georgia remained high. Georgia has strategic borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan, key infrastructure roads (and now pipelines!), access to the Black Sea, and economic interests such as access to resorts on the Black Sea and plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. However, Georgian nationalism ran high at the time and President Zviad Gamsakhurdia wanted a “Georgia for the Georgians.” Unfortunately, his regime discriminated against ethnic minorities. Relations between South Ossetia, an area incorporated into Georgia in the 1930s, and Georgia’s capital of Tbilisi broke down when the Georgian Parliament decided to make Georgian the national language in 1989 and thus “confronted the people’s sense of nationality” in South Ossetia.

In August 1990 South Ossetia proclaimed its independence. In December 1990 Gamsakhurdia’s coalition won the parliamentary election and “abolished South Ossetia’s status as an autonomous oblast,” thereby blocking its independence bid. This buildup in tension eventually led to a conflict in January 1991 when Georgian forces entered South Ossetia’s capital of Tskhinvali. That led to a civil war with Georgian government forces and militias on one side and South Ossetian secessionists and North Ossetian (that is, Russian since North Ossetia is in Russia) volunteers on the other.<sup>15</sup>

In June 1992, the Head of the State Council of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze and Russian President Boris Yeltsin met and agreed to a ceasefire. On 24 June 1992 the Sochi Agreement on the Settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict was signed. Both parties were to withdraw their forces and form a corridor separating the two sides. As a result of the Sochi process the Joint Control Commission (JCC) was formed to guarantee the cease-fire, withdraw armed forces, disband self-defense units, and ensure a security regime in the conflict zone. The JCC became the political mechanism to supervise the peacekeeping forces.<sup>16</sup> Thus, there had been trouble brewing between the two sides for over 15 years.

Following the 1992 conflict South Ossetia created a president and parliament but the international community did not recognize them. The JCC was the body that led the peace process and attempted to solve the political and economic problems of the area. Russian, Georgian, South Ossetian, and OSCE representatives participated. While the Sochi Agreement defined the

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<sup>15</sup> Georgia vs. South Ossetia: from Conflict to Major War, Pravda.Ru, 13 August 2008, downloaded from [http://english.pravda.ru/opinion/columnists/106081\\_South-Ossetia-0](http://english.pravda.ru/opinion/columnists/106081_South-Ossetia-0).

<sup>16</sup> John Mackinlay and Peter Cross, eds., *Regional Peacekeepers*. Tokyo, New York, Paris: United Nations University Press 2003) p. 77.

principles of the conflict resolution process the “Regulations in Joint Forces on Safeguarding Peace and Maintenance of Law and Order in the Area of Conflict” set out the structure of the subordination of the peacekeeping forces, to include their financing and powers.<sup>17</sup> The commander of the joint peacekeeping forces (JPKF) was responsible for: planning for peace and stability; organizing JPKF activities; keeping in touch with local legal bodies; coordinating between battalions; liaising with local forces; and organizing training for JPKF battalions.<sup>18</sup>

For several years the peacekeepers kept events under control. However, as time progressed, tensions continued to increase and some would say Russia’s impartiality began to evaporate to the favor of South Ossetia, leading to the second issue defining the conflict. The size of the South Ossetian and Georgian peacekeeping contingents dwindled but the Russian contingent of 500 or so peacekeepers remained intact. The number of random attacks did not decrease, however, and the situation finally reached the breaking point after a series of events in July 2008. Russia’s press eventually reported that the reason for Georgia’s aggression was their leaders desire to enter NATO, for which there is a mandatory condition to resolve all territorial problems.<sup>19</sup>

The following lengthy list provides some headlines demonstrating the rise in tension in the last month before the fighting:

- 3 July—Georgia criticizes Russian peacekeepers after an attack on a pro-Tbilisi leader.
- 4 July—Two people are killed and up to 10 wounded after intensive shelling of Tkshinvali and some other villages in the conflict zone. South Ossetia accuses Georgia of launching a planned military operation while Georgia says it was responding to Ossetian provocations.
- 7 July—Russian President Dmitry Medvedev says Russia is ready to normalize relations with Georgia; Georgia’s Foreign Minister says no concrete peace proposals received from Medvedev.
- 8 July—Detained Georgian officers were accused of organizing artillery observers; Georgia decides to take “unilateral steps” unless Russian peacekeepers are replaced.
- 9 July—Georgia’s Foreign Minister accuses Moscow of provocations in the conflict zone and accuses Russian warplanes of breaching airspace over South Ossetia; Russia calls Georgia a “threat to peace and security” in the South Caucasus.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 78, 79.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>19</sup> ITAR-TASS, 1417 GMT 9 September 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080909950342.



- 10 July—Russia says its warplanes flew “briefly” over South Ossetia on 9 July to prevent a Georgian invasion threat; Russian troops stand ready to help peacekeepers in Georgia’s breakaway republics; Russia’s OSCE envoy urges Georgia to stop provocations against South Ossetia.
- 11 July—Georgia recalls its ambassador to Russia after Russia admits that four of its planes had flown over South Ossetia on 8 July; Georgia threatens to shoot down planes if they enter Georgian territory again; the EU calls for international mediation.
- 12 July—Georgia’s Parliament calls for international support in its standoff with Russia; Russia says Georgia’s appeal to the UN is “pure propaganda.”
- 14 July—a Russian paper views prospects for a Russo-Georgian war; the US embassy in Georgia blames Russia for provocations; Moscow tells Tbilisi to stop “undermining” JCC mechanism over South Ossetia.
- 15 July—Russia says NATO expansion in Georgia, Ukraine unacceptable; US, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine begin exercise “Immediate Response” at the Vaziani training area.
- 16 July—South Ossetian official accuses Georgia of rejecting peace talks; Tbilisi protests Russia’s military exercises.
- 19 July—South Ossetia rejects EU-proposed talks with Georgia in Brussels.
- 21 July—UN Security Council holds closed session to review the situation in Georgia; South Ossetian authorities accuse Georgian police of taking four Ossetian men hostage.
- 22 July—Georgian envoy says UN Condemns Russia’s “military aggression” (concerning the 9 July over flights by Russia of South Ossetia); Russian UN envoy slams “pro-Georgian bias” of West at UNSC session.
- 23 July—Georgia’s Foreign Ministry “seriously concerned” at Russian military exercises.
- 29 July—South Ossetia accuses Georgia of shelling and firing on villages of Andisi and Sarabuki near Tskhinvali and of firing on a Joint Peacekeeping Force monitoring group that arrived on the scene. Georgia accuses South Ossetia of attacking the monitoring groups and of trying to seize the strategic Sarabuki heights under control of Georgian peacekeepers where the Georgian flag was hoisted on 28 July; Georgia to take radical measures if separatists repeat shooting; attack on peacekeepers in South Ossetia “preplanned” according to the JPF command.
- 31 July—South Ossetia confirms setting up military fortifications in the conflict zone.
- 1 August—Georgian official says remote-controlled bombs that injured Georgian policemen involved an Ossetian peacekeeping checkpoint.
- 2–4 August—Six people are killed and more than 20 injured in one of the most serious clashes in the conflict zone in many years and both sides blame the other; Georgia says Russian peacekeepers involved which Russia terms a “dirty provocation;” President Kokoity of South Ossetia says he is ready to announce mobilization and threatens to strike Georgian cities.

- 7 August—South Ossetia accuses Georgia of attacking Tskhinvali and Georgian President Saakashvili calls for an immediate end to the “frenzy.”
- 8 August—The Georgian-South Ossetian conflict begins.<sup>20</sup>

From 8–12 August the conflict spread, with Russia quickly restoring its control over South Ossetia and then driving south into Georgian territory beyond South Ossetia’s borders. By 13 August Russian President Dmitry Medvedev had halted the peace enforcement operation once it reached its objectives. In his opinion, Russia had produced a prompt and efficient response to Georgia’s aggression.<sup>21</sup>

### PLAYING BY WESTERN RULES

Vladislav Inozemtsev, director of the Center for the Study of Post-Industrial Society, was one of the first Russians to describe his country’s rationale for intervening in the South Ossetian conflict. He noted that Russia learned several lessons from watching Western powers intervene in conflicts around the world and applied many of these lessons to the conflict in Georgia.

First, Inozemtsev notes, the Kremlin recognized that the world is tolerant of defending minorities oppressed by the majority, a situation resembling that in regard to South Ossetia and Georgia. Second, Moscow officials practiced humanitarian intervention for the first time, using this “Western doctrine” to their advantage. Third, Russia acted within the confines of the doctrine of preemptive action which is so revered by Americans, attacking those targets that might have attacked Russian forces. The United States, Inozemtsev added, will now have to look again at its favorite assertion that democratic countries are never the aggressor.<sup>22</sup>

An ITAR-TASS report noted that Western rules also take into account a proportional use of force and the desires of the people in the region. Russia played on both of these themes as well, stating that Russia was on the right side of both issues while Georgia was not. Russia’s permanent representative to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, stated that Russia had used force in a manner more proportionately during its peace enforcement operation than NATO did in the former Yugoslavia (the reference must be to Kosovo).<sup>23</sup> Russian

<sup>20</sup> All of these headlines were taken from ‘Georgia-Russia Relations Timeline’, OSC Feature, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number FEA20080430654787.

<sup>21</sup> Moscow ITAR-TASS, 1516 GMT 12 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080812950325.

<sup>22</sup> Vladislav Inozemtsev, ‘Peace Enforcement Is a Legitimate Undertaking’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 13 August 2008, p. 3 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080813025002.

<sup>23</sup> ITAR-TASS, 1826 GMT, 15 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080815950338.

President Dmitry Medvedev supported the theme of going along with the desires of the people in the region. He stated that Russia is not against the insertion of international peacekeepers in the zones of the Georgian-South Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhazian conflicts as long as one takes into consideration the views of the affected parties. Whereas Georgia wants international peacekeepers, the people of South Ossetia and Abkhazia believe only Russian peacekeepers can properly reflect their interests.<sup>24</sup>

## RUSSIA'S ARMED FORCES: WHAT WENT WRONG

Not surprisingly, discussions of the conflict by active military and government officials and by retired or non-government officials differed in their views on the armed forces role and performance. The former were much more positive in their assessments and conclusions than the latter. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, for example, has appropriately covered the positive aspects of the conflict. He awarded Russian soldiers for their achievements in semi-private ceremonies and praised troop actions during the conflict. Medvedev noted in somewhat of an overstatement that this operation would be written about as one of the most glorious chapters in the history of the armed forces.

It is the latter (retired or non-government journalists) that will receive the focus of this section and includes some of the Russian armed forces greatest critics. One person, retired Colonel Anatoliy Tsyganok, listed both strengths and weaknesses of the armed forces actions. Strength-wise, he wrote that the armed forces solved three problems: the Roki Pass Tunnel, the limited throughput capacity of the Vladikavkaz (the capital of North Ossetia in Russia, where movement began) to Tskhinvali (the capital of South Ossetia) road, some 167 kilometers, and the mustering of various forces throughout Russia. Within 24 hours the number of Russian troops in South Ossetia had doubled. Tsyganok stated that troop actions deserved "all possible praise."<sup>25</sup>

However, Tsyganok was quite adamant that there were operational and combat support issues that left room for improvement. First, a lack of satellite support left the troops in an information deficit. The main problem was noted as "the lack of the requisite space grouping and GLONASS receivers."<sup>26</sup> Electronic warfare systems were not used to suppress Georgia's air defense systems and there was an absence of aircraft controllers. This caused

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<sup>24</sup> ITAR-TASS, 1400 GMT 15 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080815950374.

<sup>25</sup> Anatoliy Tsyganok, 'The Lessons of the 5-Day War in the Transcaucasus', *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, 29 August 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080902548010.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

armored columns to advance without the proper cover. Second, traditionally weak areas for the Russian army, such as nighttime actions, reconnaissance, communications, and logistical support, remain weaknesses. Night sighting devices are blinded by gunfire flashes and old tanks did not have global navigation systems or friend or foe systems. Third, it was rare to see vehicles fitted with shields or additional armor and, as a result, soldiers still prefer to ride on the outside of these vehicles where, if thrown off, they have a chance of surviving. There was poor interaction between tanks and motorized infantry units and, on occasion, units sometimes fired on one another. Fourth, there was a shortage of modern precision weapons in the Russian air force and virtually a total lack of drones. Pchela drones used in Chechnya are practically worn out. Finally, a 1998 decision to remove helicopters from the ground force has turned out to be a problem. There are no experts in army air aviation in the air force that know how to support ground troops.<sup>27</sup>

Recommendations by Tsyganok included creating information troops that take into account state and military media, modernizing forces by the end of 2015, reconstituting army aviation in the combined-arms armies and corps, and equipping aircraft and helicopter gunships with modern systems. It is also necessary to put more satellites in orbit (24 are needed but only 13 are in orbit) and procure more GLONASS receivers, to develop friend or foe systems, and to develop new radar stations.<sup>28</sup>

Journalist Mikhail Lukanin wrote that insufficient use was made of ground attack and tactical aviation. Other errors on the part of Russia's armed forces were a lack of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) use, inadequate organization of communications, inadequate personal gear and equipment, and the absence of precision weapons.<sup>29</sup>

On 19 August the Presidium of the Globalization Problems Institute talked about South Ossetia and the question of information. They concluded that the Russian political and military leadership experienced indescribable panic and confusion when they realized Georgia was actually invading South Ossetia. They also wrote that the Russian military command acted with incompetence. Soldiers in many cases had no knowledge of how to counter Georgian guidance systems which were searching for Russian signals from radios and mobile telephones. They concluded that the main goal of the war was to draw the Russian army into military operations.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Mikhail Lukanin, 'Price of Victory: Military Experts on Mistakes of the Campaign in South Ossetia', *Trud*, 18 August 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080818349001.

<sup>30</sup> 'The Presidium of the Globalization Problems Institute (IPROG) Has Clarified Some of the Information on the War in South Ossetia', FORUM/Moscow/Russia, 19 August, 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080819004013.

Olga Bozhevyva, a writer for *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, used many of the same arguments as Tsyganok. She noted that the West is accusing Russia of the use of excessive force. She fixed blame for the accusation on the lack of modern precision systems in the Russian armed forces. Without the proper digital systems, how can fires be precise? Thus high-tech satellite reconnaissance systems and precision weaponry did not win the conflict for Russia. Rather, it took the heroism and blood of the common soldiers who relied on weapons of the 1960s. Russian forces were not able to fight in a non-contact style as the United States does but rather only in contact style.

Russia was able to obtain several “trophies” from the conflict (Osa air-defense systems, BMP-2s, Czech-made self-propelled artillery, US Hummer vehicles). Further, Bozhevyva quotes the reliable and intelligent Vitaliy Shlykov, a member of the Foreign and Defense Policy Council and Chairman of the Commission for Security Policy and Expert Appraisal of Military Legislation of the Ministry of Defense Public Council, who believes a major problem in the Russian armed forces is its lack of unified commands. Shlykov stated that “With the current system of leadership it could not have been otherwise not only for the armed forces but for the country’s defense as a whole.”<sup>31</sup> Perhaps Georgian President Saakashvili knew this in advance and planned the operation to demonstrate Russia’s resort to blood spilling among peaceful people, Bozhevyva added. Finally she asks who is responsible for these operations, the military or the politicians who do not provide the armed forces with the equipment it needs?

Author Viktor Baranets, an outspoken critic of the military and former officer who writes often on military affairs, listed eight lessons that the Russians should have learned. They are:

- Underestimating the enemy’s equipping with Israeli and Ukrainian equipment
- The delayed maneuver of the peace keepers after Georgian peacekeepers left their positions
- Sleepy control from Moscow which allowed the Georgians to set up ambushes along the road leading to the tunnel and mining the road.
- Intelligence failures of all types in the first stage of the operation
- Tactical illiteracy on the part of air defense systems
- Old weapons and tank radios didn’t work well

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<sup>31</sup> Olga Bozhyeva, ‘Disarmed Forces of the Russian Federation: Our Army Continues to Win Only Through its Fighting Spirit’, *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, 21 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080821349002.

- Deafness in regard to communications forced troops to use their own cellular phones to contact staffs and command posts (one general reportedly used a satellite phone from a *Komsomolskaya Pravda* correspondent)
- Passiveness of aviation to Georgia's air defense threat resulted in the loss of four aircraft<sup>32</sup>

Baranets also discussed Georgian “myths” such as how many troops they killed, how they set a trap for Russia's forces, and so on.<sup>33</sup>

Reformer journalist Aleksandr Goltz, who has continuously criticized Russia's lack of reform in the armed forces, wrote that Russia intends to leave more tanks and artillery behind once it withdraws to Russia because Georgia now understands that its most important goal is to find a way to block the Roki Tunnel and Russia must be able to counter any such attempt. Goltz also wrote that no one really “won” this conflict, stating that

One can at a minimum claim that Moscow was unable to diplomatically reinforce its “victory.” And this forces one to think about whether this was a victory at all. The winner Russia is in factual isolation. No one supported it: not China, not Venezuela, not Father Lukashenko [the President of Belarus]. Only Fidel remained true. As far as Moscow's Western “partners” go, then the main topic of discussion of the diplomats of the United States and Western Europe is how to force Moscow to “pay” for its actions.<sup>34</sup>

Another criticism was leveled by former chief of the Main Tank-Automotive Directorate of the Russian Defense Ministry, Colonel-General Vladislav Polonskiy, who noted that units went into action without reactive armor and that this shortcoming must be corrected at once in light of improved anti-tank weapons. Some tanks covered in reactive armor, as seen on TV, were actually reactive armor tiles that were empty, he stated.<sup>35</sup> The Commander-in-Chief of Ground Troops, General Vladimir Boldyrev, stated that it will take radical measures to “update the communication equipment of the tank troops and drastically improve their command and control system.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Viktor Baranets, ‘Army Sent to Fight in Old Suit of Armor’, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 26 August 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080826349001.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Aleksandr Goltz, ‘A Respite of Six Points’, *Yezhbednevnyy Zhurnal*, 13 August 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080814025024.

<sup>35</sup> *Agentsvo Voyennykh Novostey*, 0905 GMT 22 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080824950111.

<sup>36</sup> ITAR-TASS, 0654 GMT, 13 September 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080915950028.

With regard to equipment, even the Russian spokesman for this conflict, the deputy chief of the General Staff of Russia Colonel General Anatoliy Nogovitsyn, stated that the General Staff will draw serious conclusions from the use of radio-electronic measures in light of losses from the operation in Georgia. He noted that the Georgians had been armed by Ukraine and that it was difficult to suppress the Tor and Buk systems since Ukraine knows the strong and weak points of Russian fighters. Nogovitsyn added that Russia's radio-electronic systems are also "Soviet made" from which the proper conclusions can be drawn.<sup>37</sup>

With regard to the success of the Georgian Buk surface-to-air missiles, Nogovitsyn stated that these Ukrainian systems were successful against Russian aircraft because they were deployed to Georgia just before the attack and this surprised Russian analysts. Further, the Buk system can change its location rapidly, and the Russian and Georgian units are armed with identical air defense systems from Soviet times. Georgian operators were informed by "foreign colleagues" Nogovitsyn noted, adding that the IFF signal receivers on these missiles are designed to change bands. In this way, when adjustments are made, these systems can be used to fire against Russian aircraft.<sup>38</sup>

Colonel General (retired) Sergey Mayev, head of the Main Armor Directorate from 1996–2004, former Minister of Defense (1992–1996) Pavel Grachev, and former Chief of the General Staff (1988–1991) Mikhail Moiseyev also weighed in on equipment problems. Mayev said a combat vehicle equipped with "nine channels of firepower" (anti-tank missiles, heavy machine guns, automatic grenade launchers, and air defense systems, etc.) was created back during the Afghan war years but has still not been fielded today. Mayev noted that generals also need more unmanned aerial vehicles and that armored vehicles should only advance with information-laden helicopters flying above them. Grachev called for radio-technical reconnaissance and mobile communications systems, and Moiseyev called for combat control systems, starting with army and regional command posts.<sup>39</sup>

Finally, Russia's Ministry of Defense was satisfied overall with the campaign in South Ossetia. Chief of the Russian General Staff, General of the Army Nikolay Makarov stated that shortcomings could be eliminated if more money was allocated for high-precision weapons, an orbital space grouping, air defense, and aviation improvements. All Duma members were not as

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<sup>37</sup> ITAR-TASS, 1050 GMT, 13 August 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080813950361.

<sup>38</sup> Yuriy Gavrilov, interview with Anatoliy Alekseyevich Nogovitsyn, 'At First Hand: Trumped Cards; General Staff and Defense Ministry now Are Studying Experience of the Caucasus Conflict in Detail', *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 9 September 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080910358006.

<sup>39</sup> Viktor Safonov, 'There Is Money but No Weapons, *FK Novosti*', 1 September 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080902349001.

certain that all had gone well. Deputies wanted to know why all types of reconnaissance had failed, why there were serious organizational shortcomings, why there were such tangible losses in heavy equipment (helicopters, jet aircraft, etc.) against such a haphazard army, and why so much equipment broke down while the world was watching. Viktor Ilyukhin, vice-chairman of the Duma's State Construction Committee, went so far as to state, with regard to Minister of Defense Anatoliy Serdyukov, that "after such a war you as an honorable man should submit your resignation."<sup>40</sup>

## ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

The United States waited nearly a month before openly admitting that Georgia had initiated combat operations in South Ossetia, according to the Russian press. One of the first articles on this statement was an ITAR-TASS report devoted to a meeting of the US Senate's Armed Services Committee devoted to the Georgian-Russian conflict. US Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Eric Edelman, stated that Tbilisi's actions were the reason for the movement of Russian troops to Georgia. He noted that "the Georgian leadership's decision to employ force in the conflict zone was unwise."<sup>41</sup> Edelman felt that Georgia's leadership thought they could conduct a limited military operation that would result in the restoration of Georgian sovereignty over South Ossetia, an operation that was hastily planned and implemented. Edelman added that the Bush Administration does not condone the use of artillery and multiple rocket launchers into urban areas and into areas where Russian peacekeepers were stationed. The Bush Administration, however, also does not condone Russia's aggressive response which will not be tolerated and will not be cost free. He also stated that the United States does not seek a new Cold War either.<sup>42</sup>

Another report in the Russian press implied that the United States certainly knew of Georgia's plan ahead of time. Interfax reported that US Ambassador to Russia, John Beyrle, stated that he personally knows how serious the United States tried to deter Georgian authorities from such a move. Beyrle added that just because the US supplied equipment and training to the Georgian military does not imply that it gave a "green light" to the Georgian operation. Georgian soldiers serve with the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan and that was the reason for the trainers and equipment in Georgia.

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<sup>40</sup> Mikhail Vinogradov, 'The State Duma Criticized the Failures of the Military', *Neuskoye Vremya*, 11 September 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080912358006.

<sup>41</sup> ITAR-TASS, 0934 GMT, 10 September 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080910950149.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



Countering Russian claims that the United States was complicit in the attack by airlifting Georgian troops from Iraq back to Georgia, Beyrle stated that when the Georgian side asked for help there was a threat that Russian troops would continue moving to Tbilisi.<sup>43</sup>

However, on 16 September, Russia's permanent representative to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, reenergized the issue of who attacked first. He was responding to a US State Department claim that Russia started the conflict. The *International Herald Tribune*, ITAR-TASS reported, claimed Georgia had made public a transcript of intercepted verbal messages between Ossetian border guards regarding attack plans on the eve of the August 7–8 events. The paper claimed that Russian military forces had entered the Roki tunnel late on the night of August 6 or in the first hours of August 7, or 24 hours before the start of hostilities. The *Tribune* stated that on the evening of 7 August US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matthew Bryza had spoken with Georgia's foreign minister, Eka Tkeshelashvili, who appeared to believe in the content of the recorded Ossetian conversations according to Bryza. Soon thereafter President Saakashvili issued his order to attack. Rogozin claimed that the tapes, if they exist, were manufactured by Georgian or US security services. He demanded space reconnaissance data that would unambiguously prove there were no Russian troops moving through the Roki tunnel before 8 August.<sup>44</sup> On the same day Russia's foreign ministry spokesman Andrei Nesterenko also requested satellite information on the operation.<sup>45</sup> Thus Russia wanted to call the United States on this charge. It appeared, however, that Russia may have over responded to the content of this article.

In an interview with the Spanish press, Rogozin stated that according to information in Russia, the United States, since it gave weapons to Georgia, was a direct participant in the conflict. The United States and not NATO is responsible for the fighting as part of their geopolitical game. In particular, he stated

I think the problem is that Washington is jealous. The United States wants a monopoly and we are applying an anti-monopoly policy. We want to live in a world with many poles, with a balanced system, but the Americans believe that their young democracy is the most important thing. That kind of thinking is very naïve. The US history is shorter than the history of a horse farm near my house in Moscow.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Interfax, 1510 GMT, 11 September 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080908950082.

<sup>44</sup> ITAR-TASS, 1418 GMT 16 September 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080916950364.

<sup>45</sup> ITAR-TASS, 1455 GMT 16 September 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080916950384.

<sup>46</sup> Laia Fores interview with Dmitriy Rogozin, 'The Crisis in the Caucasus Region. Accepting Georgia as a Member of NATO Is Like Accepting Hitler or Pinochet . . .', *La Vanguardia.es*, 9 September 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number EUP20080909210005.

There were many statements in the Russian press that indicated the United States was involved in training and planning the Georgian operation. Marianna Grishina, writing in *Red Star* on 19 August, leveled one of the most poignant attacks. She stated that the US government is as responsible for genocide as Georgia and should be held accountable. She added that even though there is no way to prove US involvement in the invasion, the United States has de facto begun a policy of acting as an advocate of genocide. Grishina then turned her spotlight on all of the incursions involving the United States over the past 15 years, concluding her article with the comment that today US soldiers are “accidentally” shooting subunits of the Afghan police.<sup>47</sup>

Dmitry Shalkov delivered another accusation against the US and its coalition partners. He noted that Russia had found satellite reconnaissance data had been found abandoned by the Georgian staff as they moved away from the fighting. Since Georgia does not have a satellite constellation of its own, Shalkov’s implication was that a Western nation must have supplied the data to the Georgians.<sup>48</sup> Adding his own personal weight to the issue, on 11 September Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin also stated that the United States had pushed Georgia into attacking South Ossetia by training and funding Georgia’s armed forces.<sup>49</sup>

Colonel General Nogovitsyn stated that the United States had trained Georgian officers and men, supplied the Georgian side with weapons, and outfitted the Georgian army with equipment and arms. He said that over 120 Pentagon representatives engaged in this activity for a lengthy time period (Nogovitsyn did not, however, specify how much time was spent on partnership activities nor did he state how much time was spent training Georgian forces for operations in Iraq. His clear implication was that US forces were in Georgia to assist in planning the intervention into South Ossetia). He also stated that the presence of NATO warships in the Black Sea for alleged humanitarian purposes was a ruse to deliver other types of cargo. He stated that “spending enormous resources to convey humanitarian help to Georgia is at the very least not inherent to Americans.”<sup>50</sup> Most Americans, knowledgeable of hundreds of such actions on the part of the United States, would consider that Nogovitsyn had lost much of his credibility with this statement.

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<sup>47</sup> Marina Grishina, ‘Who Are the Judges?’ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 19 August 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080819548003

<sup>48</sup> *Agentstvo Voenyaykh Novostey* (Internet Version-www), 1125 GMT 20 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080820950209.

<sup>49</sup> Interfax, 1252 GMT, 11 September 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP200809119500352.

<sup>50</sup> Interfax, 0944 GMT 21 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080821950164.

Other Russian reports supported Nogovitsyn's view on NATO warships. An RIA-Novosti report, for example, also stated that the US ships in the Black Sea were there on a pseudo-humanitarian mission. The ships were accused of performing reconnaissance functions and were under suspicion of supplying arms to Georgia.<sup>51</sup>

Rossiia TV reported in early September that US weapons "were used to kill Russian citizens." That, quite obviously, is an inflammatory phrase. The TV report itself was designed to be sensational or enticing for its lack of detail. It is unclear which one was the actual goal of the program. After setting the stage by stating that US weapons are "already near our borders," the Russian TV correspondent noted that an automatic Bushmaster rifle, a telephone intercept system "based on" American equipment, a vehicle made in the United States in the 1960s, "American combat stress medicines" in the pockets of dead Georgian soldiers, a high-resolution satellite imaging map and mobile telephone (with a male voice from the US National System for Geospatial Intelligence), and Hummers were captured by Russian forces during the conflict.<sup>52</sup> These are not the type of weapons that would worry Lichtenstein, let alone Russia.

Interfax also reported that the Russian General Staff had accused OSCE observers in the conflict zone of not warning Russian peacekeepers about Georgia's plans. "They were notified by Georgia that there would be an attack but they did not warn the Russian peacekeepers," Colonel General Nogovitsyn stated.<sup>53</sup> He offered no proof to support his accusation, a common Russian press technique that even Russian journalists criticized.

## MEDIA OPERATIONS

Russian media outlets used state run agencies like ITAR-TASS and RIA-Novosti and *Red Star*, the military's newspaper, to deliver a point of view from the President, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Russia's Representative to NATO, the Ministry of Defense's Public Relations representative, and the Prime Minister. Russia used a Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Colonel General Anatoliy Nogovitsyn, to serve as its official public relations spokesman. He eventually gained some notoriety as a calm, level-headed yet firm representative of the opinion of the Ministry of Defense. Criticism of the Russian media was most pronounced by independent journalists and some

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<sup>51</sup> RIA-Novosti, 1116 GMT, 11 September 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080912950033.

<sup>52</sup> Rossiya TV, 1530 GMT 7 September 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080919950493.

<sup>53</sup> Interfax, 0944 GMT 21 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080821950164.

retired military officers who used the national news media, although some positive stories also appeared here.

### Overcoming a Slow IW Start . . .

A media, public relations, or information war (all of these terms were used interchangeably) was reported in the Russian press. Initially Russia appeared to be on the “information defensive” at the beginning of the conflict. On 8 August, just as the fighting started, *Agentura* reported that the Georgians had established a press center in Gori, a city about 30 kilometers from South Ossetia. Operating from the Trialeti regional television company, computers were installed for journalists that provided Internet access. The journalists were instructed how to behave during conflicts. *Agentura* accused the Georgian side of launching the Os-inform.com website, which was close to the South Ossetian news agency site of osinform.ru. The Georgian website reportedly carried a fake message by South Ossetian President Eduard Kokoity.<sup>54</sup>

On 9 August Russia reported the deaths of 12 to 13 peacekeepers in the past 24 hours. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused Georgia of attacking civilians, residential buildings, finishing off the wounded, and violating humanitarian laws. Lavrov said that “Russia’s responsibility as a peacekeeper amounts to a response to this aggression.”<sup>55</sup> Both Russian Defense Ministry spokesmen and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev declared that Russia is not in a state of war with Georgia but was imposing a peace enforcement operation.<sup>56</sup>

On 11 August, Federation Council Speaker Sergei Mironov reproached Western media outlets for not covering Georgia’s bombing of South Ossetia at the start of the conflict. He accused the Western media of biased coverage.<sup>57</sup> A Russian TV presenter stated that Tbilisi (and by implication Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili) was “starting to deny the obvious, trying to conduct an information war and thus provoke the peacekeeping forces.”<sup>58</sup> TV stations quoted the Russian Ministry of Defense as stating that the Georgian military was “killing off wounded Russian peacekeepers and local inhabitants at

<sup>54</sup> ‘Hostilities in South Ossetia’, *Agentura*, 8 August 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080808624001.

<sup>55</sup> Aliya Samigullina, Fefor Rummyantsev, and Aleksandr Artemyev, ‘War and PR’, *Gazeta.ru*, 9 August 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080811015002.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Interfax, 1823 GMT 11 August 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080811950386.

<sup>58</sup> Nayaliya Rostova, ‘Verbal Shootout: The War has Started. And the Information War Is, Unfortunately, at Its Height,’ *Novaya Gazeta*, 11 August 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080811025001.

captured posts”<sup>59</sup> much as Lavrov had done two days earlier. The article ended with the statement that “the war has started, and the information war is, unfortunately, at its height.”<sup>60</sup> On 12 August the state-controlled Russian TV station Channel One showed footage of captured Georgian saboteurs testifying that they were agents of Georgia’s special services caught preparing terrorist acts.<sup>61</sup>

On 13 August Colonel General Nogovitsyn reported that Russia had countered what he termed many of the lies and misrepresentations in the West’s information war. He stated that he considered this a media confrontation while others referred to it as an information war. He also stated that Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili had lied when he said he had been in South Ossetia and had personally witnessed Russia destroying Tskhinvali.<sup>62</sup> Thus Russia appeared to be growing stronger in the IW area and moving toward an “information offensive” mindset.

On 14 August, in a report intended to serve as a summary of information warfare activities to date, journalist Valeriy Vyzhutovich wrote how Georgia was initially more active in the information arena, announcing Georgian successes every hour, describing Russia as the aggressor country, and showing Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili on TV. Georgia blocked all information from Russia, to include TV, radio, print publications, and the Internet, all of which are seen as a Georgian “information expansion” act that poses a threat to Georgia’s national security. A second information front was created by Western press agencies, he adds. Russia’s IW offensive was domestic based. Russian bloggers, for example, suspected Reuters news agency of utilizing faked pictures from in and around Gori and reported this to the Russian public.<sup>63</sup>

On 15 August Russian UN representative Vitaly Churkin expressed regret that the West had launched a “propagandist campaign” in connection with the Caucasus situation. In particular he blamed the *New York Times* and London’s *Financial Times*, waving them in the air and quoting reports about Russian attacks on Gori. Churkin claimed that all Russia had done was to guard an abandoned ammunition dump that contained 15 tanks and some armored personnel carriers, securing them from someone taking them and driving in any direction.<sup>64</sup>

As Russian journalists moved on the information offensive they covered the following points: that firing on civilians is a violation of international law

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Novosti news report, Channel One TV, GMT 12 August 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080812950156.

<sup>62</sup> *Vesti TV*, 0900 GMT 13 August 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080813950171.

<sup>63</sup> Valeriy Vyzhutovich, ‘Telling Broadcast’, Politkom.ru, 14 August 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080814004003.

<sup>64</sup> *ITAR-TASS*, 0612 GMT, 15 August 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080815950068.

and subject to international justice; that a humanitarian crisis was afoot and Russia needed to strengthen its peacekeeping contingent to keep it from spreading; that Russian troops were to protect its citizens in South Ossetia in compliance with the peacekeeping mandate; and that legally Russia's actions were legitimate and just. Valeriy Vyzhutovich recommended that Russia increase its information openness and expand the volume of information it needed. Russia must insure that a lack of information doesn't turn into a lack of support.<sup>65</sup>

On 17 August Colonel General Nogovitsyn stated that Georgia had falsely accused Russia of starting a fire near Borjomi, taking the settlements of Khashuri and Akhagori, blowing up a railway bridge on the approaches to Tbilisi, and sending tanks to Senaki. None of this has taken place, he stated, accusing the Georgians of disinformation in order to erect a smoke screen and cover their planned large scale act of provocation in Gori. The Georgians, he noted, planned to use Georgians, Ukrainians, and Chechen terrorists dressed in Russian uniforms to conduct a raid on the city and blame it on the Russians. However, Russian peacekeepers will not fall for this provocation.<sup>66</sup>

On 23 August Nogovitsyn stated that the Russian military was regularly holding news conferences to provide relevant information as quickly and fully as possible, because Russia understands the importance of media relations. He noted that Georgia had set the tone by appealing to the world community from the beginning of hostilities; and had switched off all Russian broadcasting capabilities in Tbilisi so that only the Georgian position was available to listeners. Russia is learning from this situation, Nogovitsyn added, and will be more adept at information confrontation in the future since information globalization is so prominent today.<sup>67</sup>

A 3 September summary of the information war by the paper *Rossiyskiye Vesti* indicated that initially Russia was very envious of the attention the West gave to Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili. The paper wrote that anti-Russian propaganda dominated the media space until Georgian troops began to suffer a crushing defeat, at which time CNN showed Colonel General Nogovitsyn briefing reporters live for the first time. His presentations over the next few weeks enabled Russia to win the information war because Nogovitsyn had mastered information technologies and because the "truth" was on his side. His style was also an issue, as he appeared to be a lecturing professor who methodically and calmly addressed the media and its questions according to the report.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> *Interfax*, 1907 GMT 17 August 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080817950163.

<sup>67</sup> Vesti TV, 0902 GMT, 23 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080823950069.

<sup>68</sup> Aleksandr Royskiy, Political 'Portrait: General Anatoliy Nogovitsyn, The Country's Chief Military Newsmaker', *Rossiyskiye Vesti*, 3 September 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080904358004.

On 9 September Nogovitsyn stated that “information wars are even more formidable than war itself.” He wrote, somewhat ironically it turns out, that “brainwashing people with propaganda has been given the status of official state policy in that country [Georgia].” He added that groups of people, not local residents, are transported to South Ossetia by bus (most likely Nogovitsyn is talking about the pre-war period) with anti-Russian banners in English. These people insult the Russian peacekeepers and call them occupiers. Western journalists in the bus record all of this.<sup>69</sup>

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin continued bashing the Western press when on 11 September he stated that “the media’s coverage was utterly preposterous, yet they managed to get away with it. This can be possible only in a situation where people are very persuadable, where the man in the street does not keep track of events, and eagerly accepts other’s point of view.”<sup>70</sup> Or perhaps Putin underestimates how much people still distrust the Russian press.

### Some Russian Journalists Think Russia Lost the IW . . .

There were several Russian journalists who stated that Russia had lost the information war and had done things improperly. On 11 August William Dunbar, a Russian correspondent in Georgia for the English-state channel Russia Today, stated that Russia was bombing Georgia. Dunbar did not return to the air. He told *Moscow News* later that his satellite feeds had been cancelled by Russia Today. Unable to tell the “real news” which didn’t conform to what Russia Today wanted, he said he had no choice but to resign.<sup>71</sup>

Other criticisms were slower in appearing. On 22 August journalist Vladimir Shcherbakov criticized the Ministry of Defense for its inept information warfare operations. He stated that IW is generally understood as “a set of measures for preventing the enemy from collecting any information, for influencing his ability to exercise command and control at a state (public) level and on the battlefield, and for totally destroying such capabilities as well as preventing the enemy from doing the same thing.”<sup>72</sup> IW has focused of late, Shcherbakov added, on special-propaganda effects on the mass

<sup>69</sup> Gavrilov.

<sup>70</sup> ITAR-TASS, 1524 GMT 11 September 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080911950470.

<sup>71</sup> *Moscow Times* (electronic version), 2359 GMT, 11 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080813950236.

<sup>72</sup> Vladimir Shcherbakov, ‘Today: Wars and Conflicts’, *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, 22 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080826548002.

consciousness to change the behavior of a wide range of people while imposing on them goals useful to the one using the information weapon. Methods include both constant information noise and an information vacuum. Dissemination “means” range from military special-propaganda teams (that is, psychological operations teams) to the public mass media. Quoting Russian Lieutenant General Aleksandr Burutin, a Russian information operations proponent, Shcherbakov added that the military is currently working on drafting concept designs, elements, and methods of conducting information operations.<sup>73</sup>

Shcherbakov’s criticism focused in particular on the military’s lack of even creating a separate section on the war on South Ossetia on its website. At the same time, he added, the Pentagon’s website was full of news from the “Caucasus Front.” The military and special services also did little in Shcherbakov’s opinion to block the blogs and articles in the mass media with a negative impact and did little to create blogs and articles with a positive direction to counter them. The military made accusations (a black soldier was found in Tskhinvali) but there was never any proof of his existence. Much was made of the fact that foreign equipment was captured from the Georgian forces, but the world knows that for the past several years various arms and equipment had been sent to Georgia. The equipment doesn’t imply that forces were there. And worst of all, much was made of a name badge found on a Georgian soldier that indicated that the person had trained at a center controlled by the Americans. From this simple fact the Russian Federation spokesman concluded direct responsibility of the American military for initiating the war. Such circumstantial evidence isn’t enough, Shcherbakov added. We have to present real proof.<sup>74</sup>

Shcherbakov concluded his article with this admonition of the military for losing the information war:

The answer is rather simple—the military department has practically no professionals with high qualifications capable of competently conducting the information operations which form information warfare. There are specialists in special propaganda but this is not one and the same. But experts in the sphere of information warfare in Russia are nowhere to be gotten: everything the mass media and PR services in our country have worked on was the leaking of damaging information on each other to the press. Such methods do not work in real information warfare—they are ineffective and did not produce the desired effect.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.



In another critical report on information warfare, journalist Ilya Barabanov gave away her point of view with the title “Union of Soviet Socialist Mass Media.” She believes Russia lost the international information war. This was because Georgia allowed interviews with anyone whereas Russia used only the President, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Russia’s United Nations representative, and the First Deputy of the General Staff. Further, Georgia created an international news center in Gori which is something Russia failed to do.

Meanwhile journalists in Russia faced different circumstances. They were not allowed to cross into Georgia via the Roki tunnel and as the war drew closer to a conclusion even Russian journalists were suddenly required to have special accreditation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Federal Security Service. Russia’s only victory, in Barabanov’s opinion, came from Kremlin public relation experts who used the Internet. They produced news from the front and exposed fabricated interviews and photos. Their domestic information victory must now be extended to the international information front in the future.<sup>76</sup>

In mid-September another information warfare deficiency was discussed. Journalist Pavel Gutiontov expressed his sorrow that Russia always laments that “their” propagandists prove to be more effective than “ours” due to the west being more cunning and unprincipled. Gutiontov stated that it is through Russian lies that the west wins and not through cunning. He noted how various explanations were given for the sinking of the Kursk before the truth was known; how Russian generals misinformed the public at the start of the Chechen war; and now how General Nogovitsyn stated that Russian troops “are not, never were, nor will be in Gori” only to have Nogovitsyn state two days later that troops had entered Gori since the Georgian administration had fled from there. He concluded his argument with a throwback reference to how, in Soviet times, the press would state that the Soviet Sputnik razor was better than the American Gillette because its steel was better. The latter produced a smoother shave only because the West coated their blades with a polymer compound of some type. Old traditions die hard.<sup>77</sup>

## CYBER OPERATIONS

There seem to be three separate categories of information operations in Russia and all three were discussed during the conflict. There is the

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<sup>76</sup> Ilya Barabanov, ‘Union of Soviet Socialist Mass Media’, *New Times*, 25 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080826358003.

<sup>77</sup> Pavel Gutiontov, ‘Gillette and Sputnik: To Explain and Propagandize Policy Convincingly, It Must Be Clear and Consistent’, *Delovoy Vornik*, 16 September 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080917358004.

information-psychological aspect which covers the use of the media and press; the information-technological aspect, which handles the equipping of the force with digital products; and the cyber aspect which includes the use of military and surrogate computers to disrupt command and control in countries Russia enters.

Since the first two issues have been addressed, only the cyber issue remains. The cyber issue took on added importance for western analysts due to Russia's 2007 cyber attack on Estonia that still has not faded in the memory of many states bordering Russia. However, the cyber attack employed against Georgia was not as debilitating.

The cyber attacks started slowly. Weeks before the conflict a security researcher in Massachusetts watched an attack against a country in cyberspace. A stream of data was directed at Georgian sites with the message "win+love+in+Rusia." On 20 July other Internet experts in the United States said attacks against Georgia's Internet infrastructure began at that time as DDOS attacks. Shadowserver tracked some attacks. Were these attacks dress rehearsals for the actual intervention?

But these reports came from western sources and there were many more beyond the few reports cited here. For example, much was written in the western press on the Russian Business Network's cyber warfare and the website stopgeorgia.ru which was hosted by AS36351 Softlayer in Plano, Texas.

The Russian press, on the other hand, focused its cyber reporting almost solely on Georgia's use of the Internet and bloggers who supported or attacked Russia. One of the few exceptions to this rule was a mid-September article. In it, Interfax reported that NATO experts would help protect Georgian web pages on the Internet from hacker attacks. Reports said that hacker attacks were organized in Russia.<sup>78</sup>

A set of three articles by Maksim Zharov titled "Russia versus Georgia: War on the Net" provided the best description of Russia's view on cyber issues during the conflict. Journalist Zharov works for the Effective Policy Foundation. He wrote at <http://www.Pravda.ru> that the main topic of 9 August on Runet, the Russian Internet, was the attack on South Ossetia. Particular attention was being paid to shaping public opinion on the Internet. A fierce battle over truth and lies was taking shape. South Ossetian sites such as <http://osinform.ru> and <http://osradio.ru> did excellent work according to Zharov. Georgia attempted to block these sites through DDoS attacks and fake sites which forced South Ossetia to open a new site at [tskhinval.ru](http://tskhinval.ru). Georgia opened a fake site that mimicked South Ossetian site <http://osinform.ru> at <http://www.os-inform.com>.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Interfax, 1027 GMT 23 September 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080923950124.

<sup>79</sup> Maksim Zharov, 'Russia Versus Georgia: War on the Net. Day One', *Pravda.ru*, 9 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080812025005.

Blogging also began immediately, according to Zharov, who stated that Ukrainian Russophobic bloggers defended Georgian fascists. The Ru\_politics community was flooded with Ukrainian and Azerbaijani disinformation. The virtual “boris-kogatov” and the Ukrainian blogger “ultrasun” were other anti-Russian bloggers (capitalization of blogger names is according to their use in Open Source documents). One Russian blogger who said they were not for war (not for Russia or Georgia) was termed a degenerate by other Russians. Russia’s Young Russia movement provided a spark of pro-Russian blogging, even setting up a newsreel on ZhZh (Zhivoy Zhurnal or LiveJournal) that reported about the situation in South Ossetia as did blogger “alexbred.” Zharov ended his critique of Day One by stating that in regard to Russian bloggers this was a war of extremes. As an example, blogger “eriklobakh” stated that Russia had won the Internet war but the military was lagging a little behind the Internet, whereas blogger “Chukcheev” wrote that Georgia, based on the frequency of appearances, was winning the information war.<sup>80</sup>

Day Two reporting by Zharov included more salvos fired back and forth from Russian and Georgian bloggers. Russian S. Stillavin stated that he attempted to upload Beijing Olympic photos at odnoklassniki.ru but instead had to view people with Georgian flags in place of their faces. Lenta.ru, a Russian site, noted that someone had placed Mikhail Saakashvili and Adolf Hitler on the main page of the Georgian foreign ministry’s web site, and morphed the images together. More dastardly, blogger “Gastarbeiter” wrote that one of Russia’s pilots who was captured, Igor Zinov, had the label “occupier” hung on him on the website odnoklassniki. Worse, this link was posted on Zinov’s daughter’s home-page. The Ukrainian blogger involved later removed this posting.<sup>81</sup>

Photo evidence was also presented. Video clips of the Russian bombing of Gori were taken from Western and Georgian TV and disseminated in blogs. Russia, in return, created <http://war.avkhv.net/>, a collection of news reports from Russian TV about South Ossetia. Two pro-Russian bloggers, “plutovstvo007” and “tarlith-history” turned their diaries into mini news agencies. Photos from Reuters News Agency became the focus of attention as well. On “forum.for-ua.com” Russian bloggers “exposed” the fact that several Reuters photos were faked or staged.<sup>82</sup>

Many Russian bloggers became consumed over whether Russia was winning or losing the information war to western public opinion. Russian blogger “3-rome” wrote that too much space was devoted to strip clubs and porno at the expense of real news. Blogger “borko” had a spat with reporters in the conflict zone, noting that Russian reporters were not showing the burning houses, the dead children, and the burning Georgian tanks about

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Maksim Zharov, ‘Russia Versus Georgia: War on the Net. Day Two’, *Pravda.ru* 10 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080812025004.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

which people had read. “Borko” asked to see the reason for the war. “Le9” summed up the discussion, noting that Russia does not have its own CNN and this is felt. Further, “Medvedev needs to give an interview to the foreign media explaining the position and further actions concerning Georgia. It would not be a bad thing if officials from South Ossetia appeared in news and photo agencies, and also on air quickly.”<sup>83</sup>

The impact of Georgia shutting off all access to Russian news was also discussed. Blogger “liza-valieva” wrote that “I have just been called by relatives from Tbilisi. They were totally convinced that South Ossetia had started the war. I managed to dissuade them of this. They were in shock when they found out about the number of dead and wounded in South Ossetia.”<sup>84</sup>

On Day Three Zharov reported that Runet (the Russian Internet) activity had died down. Allegedly the reason for this was that several sources, such as the blogger “pro-kurator,” had reported that monetary support for Georgia on the Internet had been suspended. But this did not mean that there were no attacks at all. Elissa, the leader of RIA Novosti’s Internet projects wrote that a DDoS attack on [www.rian.ru](http://www.rian.ru) had taken place. A commentator for the Net publication [Vebplaneta.ru](http://Vebplaneta.ru) stated that it is evident that Georgia must have others helping them.<sup>85</sup>

Runet users think it is important to explain Russia’s position to foreigners and refute Georgian assertions. Zharov explained how Russian bloggers began to analyze western presentations on the war. VIF forum presented and analysis of CNN video clips, the blogger “liquid-alco” analyzed British press articles on events, and the “luberblog” blog offered foreign bloggers’ opinions about the war. Blogger “merzavec” stated that it is more important to win the information war inside the country than outside it.<sup>86</sup>

Another site covering cyber operations, which Zharov did not mention in his reporting, was the Russian website <http://www.vesti.ru>. It discussed Georgia’s attempts to block all access to Russian TV and Internet assets during the same three day time period as Zharov. The website stated that the motivation behind the information blockade was to instigate an information war with Russia. It was not possible to open a website in Georgia with the ru signature, according to Vesti, unless it contained only non-news content such as “Hunting and Fishing.” This was based on a decision by the Georgian leadership on 9 August.<sup>87</sup>

On 22 August the presidium of the Union of Journalists of Moscow called on the Georgian government to lift the information blockade. It accused Georgia of not allowing its citizens to get truthful “first hand” information. The Union wanted

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Maksim Zharov, ‘Russia Versus Georgia: War on the Net. Day Three’, [Pravda.ru](http://Pravda.ru) 11 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080812025003.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Information obtained from <http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=208318>.

to present to Georgians the impressions of Moscow journalists who were among the first in the zone of hostilities and were fired upon by Georgian troops.<sup>88</sup>

## CONSEQUENCES

There were significant consequences from the fighting. The two major groups that are highlighted here are the changes to the conflict area after the peace enforcement operation; and the changes in the thinking of Russia and the international community in their views of one another. Although the list appears long, these are only a few examples of the many developments and thoughts that countries began to explore. Some of the consequences may turn out to be bluff or bluster while others may turn out to encourage cardinal changes in the geopolitical landscape of the region. Commentators on the crisis ranged from the President of the Czech Republic to the Al-Jazeera news network.

### Changes to the Conflict Area

- On 15 August Russian Defense representative Lieutenant-General Nikolay Uvarov stated that the Russian peacekeeping group in South Ossetia will be increased and include tanks; and that Georgian peacekeepers will not be allowed to return to South Ossetia.<sup>89</sup>
- On 17 August Russian troops took control over a power plant on the Georgian-Abkhaz border. The Ingurskaya power plant provides thousands of Georgians and Abkhazians with power.<sup>90</sup> It is not known how long peacekeeping forces will remain there.
- On 18 August Russian General Staff Deputy Chief Anatoly Nogovitsyn stated that he knows when the New Year will come but he does not know when Russian troops will withdraw from the conflict area.<sup>91</sup> Fears that they will remain in Georgia for a long time begin to take shape.
- On 18 August Federation Council speaker Sergei Mironov said Russia should insist on the demilitarization of Georgia under international control. Further, Mironov advocated the construction of a buffer zone along the border of South Ossetia as in Nagorno-Karabakh. A 10–15-kilometer zone controlled by motorized infantry and air force units would help to stifle the concentration of Georgian troops near the border of South Ossetia and

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<sup>88</sup> ITAR-TASS, 1525 GMT 22 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080822950298.

<sup>89</sup> RIA-Novosti, 1416 GMT 15 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080815950259.

<sup>90</sup> Interfax, 0921 GMT 17 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080817950074.

<sup>91</sup> Interfax, 1307 GMT 18 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080818950196.

- prevent shooting into this territory.<sup>92</sup> Also on 18 August Nogovitsyn noted that Russia's peacekeepers will never leave Abkhazia and South Ossetia.<sup>93</sup>
- On 19 August Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov noted that, unlike what the European Union (EU) intends to do in Kosovo, that is establish a new state, Russia's only mission in South Ossetia is to ensure that hostilities are not resumed. He added that the agreement on the peacekeeping status in South Ossetia does not determine the numerical strength of the peacekeeping contingent. Further, referring to the six principles brokered by French President Nicolas Sarkozy between Russia and Georgia that ended the fighting in August, one principle states that Russian peacekeepers will determine the security zone, in particular the width of the strip and the number of peacekeepers<sup>94</sup> (apparently Lavrov is referring to Principle Five, which states that "prior to the establishment of international mechanisms the Russian peacekeeping forces will take additional security measures" or Principle Six, which notes that "an international debate on the future status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and ways to ensure their lasting security will take place").<sup>95</sup>
  - On 19 August South Ossetian President Eduard Kokoity stated that he will ask Russia to station a military base on its territory. This will require Russia to take "an active stance" in regard to unrecognized republics.<sup>96</sup>
  - On 20 August Russian news outlets state that Russia may recognize South Ossetian independence. Gleb Pavlovsky, head of the Effective Policy Foundation, said recognizing the independence of the two territories would facilitate building a pan-Caucasus security system.<sup>97</sup>
  - On 20 August Interfax reported that Russia had established eight new peacekeeping outposts. There should be 270 servicemen deployed at them. A second line of outposts will be set up later along the administrative border of South Ossetia.<sup>98</sup> These eight outposts would be 40 kilometers from Gori according to Colonel General Anatoly Nogovitsyn.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>92</sup> ITAR-TASS 1015 GMT 18 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080818950123.

<sup>93</sup> Mikhail Lukanin, 'Price of Victory: Military Experts on Mistakes of the Campaign in South Ossetia,' *Trud*, 18 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080818349001.

<sup>94</sup> ITAR-TASS, 1413 GMT 19 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080819950293.

<sup>95</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Internet Version-www) 0545 GMT 13 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080813950033.

<sup>96</sup> Marina Perevozkina and Vadim Solovyev, 'Unrecognized Military Base. Russian Army Can Stay in South Ossetia Forever', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080820380001.

<sup>97</sup> Interfax, 1538 GMT 20 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080820950382.

<sup>98</sup> Interfax, 1339 GMT 20 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080820950375.

<sup>99</sup> Interfax 0952 GMT 20 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080820950125.

## Changes to the International Realm

- On 12 August Russian Aleksey Arbatov wrote that Russian attacks can cause it to lose its moral supremacy in the region. The attacks will hasten Georgia's path to NATO.<sup>100</sup>
- On 13 August it was announced that Russian-NATO relations would change after the South Ossetian crisis. Not a word has been said by NATO to denounce Georgia's aggression. Russia's envoy to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, stated that "this is a war for oil, no matter how strange it may seem." Rogozin said the US's plans were to use Georgia to destabilize the situation in the region, control oil deliveries, and deprive Russia of ways to really cooperate with Europe. He added that Georgia left the Roki tunnel untouched to give the surviving population of South Ossetia an opportunity to leave. This proves that Georgia wanted to carry out ethnic cleansing, Rogozin added.<sup>101</sup>
- On 13 August Russian analyst Aleksandr Konovalov stated that Ukraine's desire to enter NATO will increase with thoughts that Russia may attempt to solve the issue of the status of Sevastopol and Crimea through the use of coercive pressure. Konovalov writes that the decision to halt military operations so quickly may have been influenced by Russia's desire to join the World Trade Organization, the conflict's impact on the conduct of the Olympic Games in Sochi, and other issues.<sup>102</sup>
- From 13–19 August Israeli press commentators questioned the reliability of the United States in the wake of the Georgian-Russian conflict.
- On 17 August Yevgeny Volk, a political analyst with the US-based Heritage Foundation think tank, stated that the conflict will have "dramatic repercussions for Russia and the international community as a whole for quite some time to come. It is the biggest geopolitical turning point since the 1991 Soviet collapse." Poland obtained US agreement on conditions deemed necessary for Poland's approval to host a new US missile system.<sup>103</sup>
- On 17 August German Ex-Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder accused Tbilisi of launching the conflict in South Ossetia. He stated that "we witnessed the West's blunders in its policy with respect to Russia" adding that Europe risks losing its influence.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Aleksandra Samarina, Interview with Aleksey Arbatov, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 12 August 2008 p. 4, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080812025006.

<sup>101</sup> RIA-Novosti, 1715 GMT 13 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080814950087.

<sup>102</sup> Aydyn Mekhtiyev, citing Aleksandr Konovalov, 'Hostilities Halted in Time', Strana.ru National Information Service, 13 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080813025016.

<sup>103</sup> 'New World Order Seen as Powers Square Off on Georgia: Analysts', AFP (North European Service) 0458 GMT 17 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number EUP20080817075009.

<sup>104</sup> ITAR-TASS 1339 GMT 17 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080817950096.

- On 19 August a Lithuanian writer asked how an army trained by NATO could only endure a Russian attack for two days.<sup>105</sup>
- On 19 August a former Estonian prime minister stated that it needed more defense against Russian information warfare capabilities in light of Russia's media war against Georgia. What matters is speed and resourcefulness. Estonia also needs to build a strong defense.<sup>106</sup>
- Ras al-Khaimah, one of the emirates of the United Arab Emirates, has invested heavily in Poti to encourage a free economic zone. Russian damage to the port and their continued peacekeeping occupation of the port spoils for the time being the Gulf investment in the Caucasus.<sup>107</sup>
- On 20 August Syrian President Bashar al-Assad pledged support to Russia in its conflict with Georgia and said it is ready to consider deploying Russian Iskander missile systems in its territory in response to the US missile shield in Europe.<sup>108</sup>
- On 21 August NATO ships were deployed to the Black Sea immediately adjacent to the boundary of the security area in which the Russian Black Sea Fleet operates. Russia is worried that humanitarian assistance to Georgia via NATO ships will include Patriot missile systems and firearms, reconnaissance in the interest of the United States, and the start of a process to determine the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.<sup>109</sup>
- On 21 August the Russian General Staff accused the OSCE of not warning Russian peacekeepers about Georgia's plans to attack South Ossetia.<sup>110</sup>
- On 21 August the Open Source Center reported that conservative Iranian media blame Georgia and the West for the conflict and think this could lead to the erosion of the 5+1 diplomatic initiative against Iran's nuclear program. This will allow Iran to take advantage of deteriorating US-Russian relations<sup>111</sup> and eliminates a US back channel to Iran.

<sup>105</sup> Rytas Staselis, 'Two Days of the Georgian Army', Bernardinai.it, 19 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080820070001.

<sup>106</sup> Mart Laar, 'A Politician's Opinion: Information Warfare', Molodezh Estonii Online, 19 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080820070002.

<sup>107</sup> Theodore Karasik, 'In Georgia, Russia Sends Clear Message that US, Israeli Influence Will not Be Tolerated', [http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition\\_id=10&categ\\_id=2&article\\_id=95161#](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=10&categ_id=2&article_id=95161#)

<sup>108</sup> Interfax 0749 GMT 20 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080820950069.

<sup>109</sup> RIA-Novosti, 0855 GMT 21 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080821950185.

<sup>110</sup> Interfax, 0944 GMT 21 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080821950164.

<sup>111</sup> OSC Feature, 21 August 2008, OSC document number FEA20080822757031.



- On 26 August Russian General Staff Deputy Chief Anatoly Nogovitsyn noted that Russia has not stopped NATO military transit to Afghanistan through its territory but may do so.<sup>112</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

This analysis reviewed Russian press reports about their peace enforcement operation and its consequences. It discussed the background and context of events leading up to the confrontation in South Ossetia; the strengths and weaknesses of the Russian armed forces conduct of the operation; and what the potential consequences of the conflict might be for South Ossetia, the United States, and other nations. It also discussed the three aspects of information operations (cyber, information-psychological, information-technical) from a Russian perspective.

First, the press review revealed some strong resentment among the Russian military and some journalists about the suspected involvement of the US military in this operation. This resentment led to several almost inexplicable assumptions and statements from Russian leaders. Earlier it was mentioned that Colonel General Nogovitsyn stated the United States does not do well with humanitarian issues. Another article stated that the Georgian army had weak morale since the US tradition of “ready to fight but not to die” had rubbed off on the Georgians.<sup>113</sup> These and similar comments demonstrate a real misunderstanding about the traditions, accomplishments, and methods of western forces. These misunderstandings are understandable from the context of Russia’s approach to problems in the Caucasus which is colored by a series of issues: Russia’s predisposed assumptions about US military intentions (which we have helped construct) due to our actions in the vicinity of Central Asia; the inherent ambiguity in Russian reporting (making statements that are not backed up with proof, whether it be Georgia or events surrounding the death of a Chechen rebel leader), that seems to be a leftover tradition from the days of the USSR; and the restoration of Russian dignity (payback?) for the nose thumbing on the part of its former republics as they left the USSR.

Second, winning or losing the information war was a major theme of the press review. Papers, radio and tv, and the Internet were filled with reports on this issue. Media operations started slowly but eventually became effective. The interpretation of events through the Russian press was easier to ascertain than in Soviet times but remains difficult.

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<sup>112</sup> Interfax, 0959 GMT 26 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080826950120.

<sup>113</sup> Pavel Gerasimov, ‘On Guard for Justice’, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 3 September 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080905548002.

The overwhelming weight of official reports from ITAR-TASS versus the more light weight reporting of journals was quickly felt. President Medvedev's tone was one of praise for the armed forces achievements and capabilities. He also sounded like the optimist in light of his statements encouraging future cooperation with not only international organizations and the United States but with Georgia as well. He directed negative comments at Georgian President Saakashvili's fitness for office. Medvedev's lighter tone contrasted sharply with Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's harsh and strict deliveries which at times were laced with derision as well. This didn't appear to be a good cop-bad cop setup but rather the figure head Medvedev versus the actual real power authority still vested in Putin.

On the other hand, there were also significant achievements that indicate Russia learned some lessons in dealing with the press in Chechnya. The difference is that Chechnya was an internal conflict and a different methodology was needed than that required to deal with an international incident. Egon Bar, said by some to be Germany's patriarch of foreign policy, noted that Russia's mistake was not bringing in the Western press right off.<sup>114</sup> With regard to cyber activities the press review revealed that the Russian media focused primarily on what Georgia was doing to block access to Russian reporting in Georgia. The US publication *Defense News* stated that Russia's attacks did little harm so perhaps there simply was nothing to crow about.

Third, the Russian press utilized the words of people outside their own country to buttress their accusations that Georgia initiated the conflict. In particular, authoritative figures were used. They included the US Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Edelman and US Ambassador to Russia Beyrle. However, on 18 September ITAR-TASS added more fuel to this fire. According to former Defense Minister Irakly Okruashvili, who served as Saakashvili's defense minister between 2004 and 2006, part of the blame for the war belongs on the shoulders of the US administration which, according to the former minister, could not contain President Saakashvili's ambitions. He noted that in 2005 Saakashvili and he (Okruashvili) drafted plans to capture both Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Saakashvili believed that the United States would block Russia's response through diplomatic channels. Okruashvili thinks Saakashvili let Russians into Georgia so that he could avoid criticism and portray himself as a victim. Today, Okruashvili is a political exile living in France.<sup>115</sup>

Fourth, there was much to add with regard to equipment failures and shortcomings. Perhaps retired Colonel General Sergey Mayev offered the

<sup>114</sup> Madina Shavlokhova, 'Tskhinvali's Information Field Was Swept of Mines in Berlin', *Gazeta*, 25 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP2008082095020825021008.

<sup>115</sup> ITAR-TASS, 0744 GMT 18 September 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080918950108.

best advice. He laid the failure of equipment to the fact that it was outdated, and he noted that equipment was outdated because of officer corruption. Money for the military-industrial complex often was redirected to areas other than where it was intended, that is for the modernization of equipment. He emphasized that there were over 3,000 financial violations in fulfilling government orders in the first half of 2008 alone! Enterprises, he added, live by the rules of the crises-ridden 1990s. These include illegal salary schedules and various amendments. Now, he noted, there is so much money that some enterprises in the military-industrial complex “cannot spend it all and turn to various illegal schemes.”<sup>116</sup> What is needed is government will in executing decisions that have been made in the past as well as rigid control over their execution.”<sup>117</sup> Equipment requirements that involve information technologies were highlighted as priority shortcomings that must be fixed.

Other recommendations to improve shortcomings were not far behind those of Mayev. Chief of the Main Combat Training and Troop Service Directorate, Lieutenant General Vladimir Shamanov, offered an example of future offensive combat exercises (and a template for conducting offensive operations?) during a tactical exercise conducted by the 138<sup>th</sup> Guards Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade. The order of offensive operations would be artillery preparation fires, air defense units taking out enemy aircraft, Russian bomber and army aviation units joining the fight, and the use of Smerch as the final chord in the song. Journalist Yuliya Nikitina, who wrote the report on Shamanov, finished by stating that “the General Staff intends to place special emphasis on strengthening air assault battalions and creating for the troops their own aviation” although the specific type was not specified.<sup>118</sup> A few days later Shamanov stated that troops need equipment with up-to-date geolocation and telecommunications instruments integrated into the fire command chain, and they need top-notch friend-or-foe systems that differ from the old Soviet models, still used by many of the former republics. The three main shortcomings from the war were, in his opinion, poor coordination between the Ground Troops units and the Air Force, problems with ensuring uninterrupted telecommunications, and the poor resolution power of reconnaissance assets.<sup>119</sup>

General of the Army Makmut Gareyev, perhaps Russia’s finest military theoretician today, offered further criticism of combat operations. He stated that the conflict exposed “the inexpediency of some main commands of the armed services and the main directorates of the Defense Ministry to take

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<sup>116</sup> Safonov.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Yuliya Nikitina, ‘Battles of More than Local Importance’, Fontanka.ru, 20 September 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080922322001.

<sup>119</sup> ITAR-TASS, 1301 GMT 23 September 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080923950226.

control of certain special, logistical, and even combat units and formations in military districts.”<sup>120</sup> He recommended that army aviation should be under the control of combined-arms commanders and not in the hands of an air force commander-in-chief.<sup>121</sup> Finally, he noted that Russia can learn a lot from NATO military personnel by studying leading technologies, their improved command and control systems, and how they equip their soldiers. However, Russia should NOT borrow NATO’s personnel training methodology. He stated that

Their unit commanders still conduct exercises with their subunits; they themselves plan them, and develop operations for themselves and for their enemy. That is like telling the players before a chess match who must move how and later see how they move the pieces. Really, in a combat situation, there is practically no information about the enemy, and everything is not always known about our own troops—where they are, how many there are, who has gotten lost, and who has ended up under fire. Therefore, Marshal Zhukov already called exercises, in which everything is known beforehand, pampering.<sup>122</sup>

Gareyev added that many international exercises are a sham, a senseless expenditure of ammunition and time, for this very fact.<sup>123</sup>

Fifth, it is unfortunate that the UN, NATO, the CIS, or the EU couldn’t have found a way to stop the confrontation. Russia points out that it warned about the possibility of conducting a peace enforcement operation in South Ossetia in *Red Star* on two occasions in July. In the absence of any success at the level of international organizations, Georgian took matters into its own hands and Russia responded with a peace enforcement operation. The question to ask is whether this type of peacekeeping model could be used in other areas on Russia’s periphery? Or is this a one-time use model? Russian President Dmitry Medvedev offered one reply to this question. He noted that “should somebody encroach against our citizens, our peacekeepers, we shall certainly respond in the same fashion we have done already. One should have no doubts about that.”<sup>124</sup> International organizations still figure strongly in future Russian plans, however, and they will be called upon often to help sort out complicated situations.

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<sup>120</sup> ITAR-TASS, 1923 GMT 24 September 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080924950548.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Denis Telmanov, interview with Makhmut Gareyev, ‘Policy: Fighting Spirit also Has Its Own Life Cycle’, *Gazeta*, 8 September 2008, as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080909358003.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> ITAR-TASS, 1400 GMT 15 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080815950374.

Finally, the Russian method of concluding this conflict indicates that Russia feels it will no longer make easy concessions (if they ever did) in the area of peace operations. In Georgia, for example, this new method has included staying in particular areas longer than anticipated, especially in the Poti port vicinity. A new peacekeeping provision was added as well that, according to the Russian media, will allow the Russian Black Sea Fleet to be used “exclusively as part of the peacekeeping operation.”<sup>125</sup>

Russia’s press reported that peacekeepers will be pulled back to the temporary security zone determined by the decision of the Joint Control Commission (JCC) of 1999 after checkpoints and stations are completed. At the same time consultations with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were initiated to negotiate a possible increase in the number of military observers from the OSCE in South Ossetia.<sup>126</sup> Additional Russian peacekeeping checkpoints are an additional security measure to be installed by 22 August.<sup>127</sup> Most important with regard to peacekeepers, the six point plan agreed to by all parties continues to be reinterpreted by all sides and the final shape of troop deployments may not be known for some time.

Russia will probably learn from this conflict and be even better prepared to conduct a peace enforcement operation and to use the press to its advantage the next time around—but let’s hope there won’t be a “next time.” Yet planning for potential future incidents has become a reality now that South Ossetia is in the rear view mirror. That is the geo-political reality with which everyone must now deal.

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<sup>125</sup> RIA-Novosti, 0855 GMT 21 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080821950185.

<sup>126</sup> ITAR-TASS, 1935 GMT 19 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080819950387.

<sup>127</sup> Interfax, 1028 GMT 19 August 2008 as translated and downloaded from the Open Source website as document number CEP20080819950151.