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## Russia and Georgia at war

Posted by dws - 2008/08/08 17:26

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From Reuters today.

Russia sends forces into South Ossetia

MEGVREKISI, Georgia (Reuters) - Russian armoured vehicles have entered the northern edges of the capital of the breakaway Georgian region of South Ossetia, the separatists' press service reported on its website on Friday.

"Russian armoured vehicles have entered the northern suburbs of Tskhinvali," the website cominf.org reported, adding that Georgian troops had started to retreat.

Moscow said its troops were responding to a Georgian assault to re-take the breakaway region, and Georgia's pro-Western President Mikheil Saakashvili said the two countries were at war.

Russia would cut air links with Georgia from midnight on Friday, the Russian Transport Ministry said.

Saakashvili told BBC World television Russia had been massing troops on the northern border of Georgia for months.

"They have been calling it training exercises, but they have not been concealing the fact that they are training these troops for use inside Georgia," he said.

"The way the escalation went was we came first under extensive artillery barrage from the separatists ... but in the end I was told that Russian armoured vehicles started to cross the Georgian border. And that was exactly the moment when I had to take this decision to fire back."

The United States on Friday asserted its support for Georgia's territorial integrity and urged an immediate ceasefire. NATO and the European Union have joined calls for a halt to fighting. State Department spokesman Gonzalo Gallegos also said the United States was sending an envoy to the region "to engage with the parties in the conflict."

U.S. President George W. Bush discussed the situation with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in Beijing, where world leaders were attending the opening of the Olympic Games, the White House said, giving no further information.

**MORE THAN 1,000 DEAD**

A South Ossetia minister said more than a thousand people had died in overnight shelling by Georgian forces of their capital Tskhinvali, Russia's RIA news agency reported.

"According to our information, as a result of the night-time shelling of Tskhinvali ... the number of fatalities is more than a thousand," Nationalities Minister Teimuraz Kasaev told the news agency by telephone.

A senior Georgian security official said Russian planes had bombed the Vaziani military outside the Georgian capital Tbilisi. The Interior Ministry said later three Georgian soldiers were killed.

Political analysts saw Georgia's bid to re-take its rebel region of South Ossetia by force as a gamble by its leader that he could still count on Western support in a clash with Russia.

"He is in big danger of losing the cachet he built up for himself in being pro-Western and the restraint he has often shown in the face of provocation by Russia," said James Nixey, analyst at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London,.

"If he is going to start a war, he is going to lose the support of a lot of friends in the West."

Saakashvili, who wants to take his small Caucasus nation into NATO, has made it a priority to win back control of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, another rebel region on the Black Sea.

The issue has bedevilled Georgia's relations with Russia, angered by Tbilisi's moves towards the Western fold and its pursuit of NATO membership.

**"ETHNIC CLEANSING"**

As fighting raged, the roar of warplanes and the explosion of heavy shells resounded more than three km (two miles) from Tskhinvali. Many houses were ablaze.

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Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused the Georgians of driving people from their homes. "We are receiving reports that a policy of ethnic cleansing was being conducted in villages in South Ossetia, the number of refugees is climbing, the panic is growing, people are trying to save their lives," he said in televised remarks from the ministry.

The crisis, the first to confront Russian President Dmitry Medvedev since he took office in May, has flared in a region emerging as a key energy transit route, and where Russia and the West are vying for influence.

It dented sentiment on Russia's benchmark equity index, which fell more than 4 percent to a 14-month low while the rouble lost more than 1 percent against a basket of currencies.

Medvedev vowed to defend Russian "compatriots" in South Ossetia, where most people have been given Russian passports.

"We will not allow their deaths to go unpunished," Interfax quoted him as saying.

The majority of the roughly 70,000 people living in South Ossetia are ethnically distinct from Georgians. They say they were forcibly absorbed into Georgia under Soviet rule and now want to exercise their right to self-determination.

I find the reference to ethnic cleansing particularly disturbing. That aside, how will this effect oil/gas prices, given the pipeline that runs through Georgia?

Bloody Hell, this is all the world needs just now...:(

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## Re:Russia and Georgia at war

Posted by InfrequentAllele - 2008/08/08 21:04

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Here are some online resources if anyone wants more background to this conflict. Alas, it's only one of many conflicts in the Caucasus region. It makes me very glad that Scotland has recognised frontiers that no-one disputes.

There's a good map here which shows the distribution of ethnic groups in the Caucasus. Complex as it is, it still only shows the more important ethnic groups.

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/commonwealth/ethnocaucasus.jpg>

For the Ossetian point of view see

<http://www.ossetians.com/eng/>

General information about Georgia is here

<http://www.sakartvelo.com/contntfrm.html>

Caucaz.com is an independent news site covering Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan (in English)

[http://www.caucaz.com/home\\_eng/](http://www.caucaz.com/home_eng/)

The history of the North Caucasus is here

<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/63/index-dk.html>

Kafkas is a Turkish based non-government organisation dedicated to providing information about the peoples and conflicts of the Caucasus.

<http://www.kafkas.org.tr/english/index.html>

Their report on South Ossetia is here.

[http://www.kafkas.org.tr/english/bgkafkas/bukaf\\_gosetya.html](http://www.kafkas.org.tr/english/bgkafkas/bukaf_gosetya.html)

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## Re:Russia and Georgia at war

Posted by Clare - 2008/08/09 03:39

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dws, isn't it scary how quickly the phrase "ethnic cleansing" has slipped comfortably into our language? No matter how often I read it or hear it I shudder.

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## Re:Russia and Georgia at war

Posted by Bananaman - 2008/08/09 11:56

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My question is if we Scots can vote for and get independence as can Kosovo which was as ethnically mixed as Ossetia why are we not supporting their independence?

Global politics i.e. hypocrisy.

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## Re:Russia and Georgia at war

Posted by dws - 2008/08/09 12:09

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Bananaman wrote:

My question is if we Scots can vote for and get independence as can Kosovo which was as ethnically mixed as Ossetia why are we not supporting their independence?

Global politics i.e. hypocrisy.

Global politics = self-serving conglomerates

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## Re:Russia and Georgia at war

Posted by LYDIA REID - 2008/08/09 14:15

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I probably gurn the loudest, Westminster cut our grant, they are trying to stop this and that but, I think we should all take just a few minutes today to think how lucky we are. We may or may not gain our Independence but I doubt we would be bombed if we try.

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## Re:Russia and Georgia at war

Posted by Brenna1508 - 2008/08/09 16:20

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Lydia commented: We may or may not gain our Independence but I doubt we would be bombed if we try.  
Hi Lydia. As I understand the situation it isn't the ones who are trying to gain their independence (the South Ossetians) that are being bombed. Russia is bombing Georgia because Georgia moved troops into South Ossetia to try to stop South Ossetia becoming independent of them. Apparently the Russians are worried about the whole region being destabilised by the actions of Georgia.

Georgia gained her independence from Russia several years ago.

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## Re:Russia and Georgia at war

Posted by dws - 2008/08/09 16:45

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LYDIA REID wrote:

We may or may not gain our Independence but I doubt we would be bombed if we try.

Maybe not bombed Lydia, but tanks and troops aren't unheard of...

Government concerns about industrial militancy and revolutionary political activity in Glasgow reached new heights after the events of 31 January 1919. Fears within government of a workers' revolution in Glasgow led to the deployment of troops and tanks in the city.

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An estimated 10000 English troops in total were sent to Glasgow in the immediate aftermath of the Battle of George Square. This was in spite of a full battalion of Scottish soldiers being stationed at Maryhill barracks in Glasgow at the time. No Scottish troops were deployed, with the government fearing that fellow Scots, soldiers or otherwise, would go over to the workers side if a revolutionary situation developed in Glasgow.

'I will do whatever is necessary to ensure the stability and maintenance of the Union.' Gordon Brown, PM

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## Re:Russia and Georgia at war

Posted by Bananaman - 2008/08/10 00:31

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Brenna1508 wrote:

As I understand the situation it isn't the ones who are trying to gain their independence (the South Ossetians) that are being bombed. Russia is bombing Georgia because Georgia moved troops into South Ossetia to try to stop South Ossetia becoming independent of them.

Two points

1) several reports state that there was a working ceasefire in place until the Georgians launched an artillery assault on the 7th. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7551576.stm> (see the entry for 7th August)

Now I don't believe the Russians are unbiased peace-keepers here either. But consider this

2) Georgia, which has considerably boosted its arms spending over the past two years, has irked Russia by buying most of its military hardware from the US, Ukraine, Israel and other non-Russian sources.(from an article in that well known revolutionary rag the FT. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/a0fb913c-660a-11dd-b222-0000779fd18c.html>)

So there we go again the largest arms dealers on the planet selling weapons to a country when we know damn well that they are going to use them against their own people (which the Ossetians are despite their vote for independence). And incidentally did we imagine after Kosovo that the Russians would stand back and let them murder Russian citizens?. And then we have the gall to be shocked and condemnatory when this happens....

No wonder most of the world thinks we're two-faced, hypocritical, lying murderers who talk the great talk but actually are only interested in our own bottom line.

This stinks and for that war criminal Bush to go and call for ceasefires whilst sabre rattling against Iran is almost as bad as him lecturing China on human rights whilst continuing Guantanamo.

And as for Bullshit Brown he's even more pathetic. Blair was bad but gutless Gordon is beyond a joke. He almost makes me ashamed to be a Scot. Can't we revoke his Scottish citizenship?

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## Re:Russia and Georgia at war

Posted by Bananaman - 2008/08/10 01:05

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I've since found this article

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/georgia/2531026/Georgia-US-training-gives-Georgia-military-advantage.html>

And just who, pray tell, do we think these forces were being trained to fight against?

What nudge nudge wink wink messages were being sent to the Georgian leadership?

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## Re:Russia and Georgia at war

Posted by Brenna1508 - 2008/08/10 10:42

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Bananaman stated: Georgia, which has considerably boosted its arms spending over the past two years, has irked

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Russia by buying most of its military hardware from the US, Ukraine, Israel and other non-Russian sources Israel has done a lot more than supply arms to Georgia, Bananaman. Last year, the Georgian president commissioned from private Israeli security firms several hundred military advisers, estimated at up to 1,000, to train the Georgian armed forces in commando, air, sea, armored and artillery combat tactics. They also offer instruction on military intelligence and security for the central regime. Tbilisi also purchased weapons, intelligence and electronic warfare systems from Israel.

These advisers were undoubtedly deeply involved in the Georgian army's preparations to conquer the South Ossetian capital Friday.

In recent weeks, Moscow has repeatedly demanded that Jerusalem halt its military assistance to Georgia, finally threatening a crisis in bilateral relations. Israel responded by saying that the only assistance rendered Tbilisi was "defensive."

This has not gone down well in the Kremlin. Therefore, as the military crisis intensifies in South Ossetia, Moscow may be expected to punish Israel for its intervention. <http://www.debka.com/article.php?aid=1358>

As we all know, the US is bankrolling Israel as well as supplying them with nuclear weapons. See: <http://civillibertarian.blogspot.com/2007/01/exactly-how-much-does-israel-cost-us.html> It is easy to see what country is directing the latest conflict.

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## Re:Russia and Georgia at war

Posted by LYDIA REID - 2008/08/10 11:03

dws wrote:

LYDIA REID wrote:

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Maybe not bombed Lydia, but tanks and troops aren't unheard of...

Government concerns about industrial militancy and revolutionary political activity in Glasgow reached new heights after the events of 31 January 1919. Fears within government of a workers' revolution in Glasgow led to the deployment of troops and tanks in the city.

An estimated 10000 English troops in total were sent to Glasgow in the immediate aftermath of the Battle of George Square. This was in spite of a full battalion of Scottish soldiers being stationed at Maryhill barracks in Glasgow at the time. No Scottish troops were deployed, with the government fearing that fellow Scots, soldiers or otherwise, would go over to the workers side if a revolutionary situation developed in Glasgow.

'I will do whatever is necessary to ensure the stability and maintenance of the Union.'Gordon Brown, PM

I take your point but I doubt even Gordon Brown or whoever is in government would show him/her self as a complete tyrant in that way if we won a referendum.

That was nearly 100 years ago.

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## Re:Russia and Georgia at war

Posted by InfrequentAllele - 2008/08/10 14:41

My grandmother told me about the tanks in George Square in 1919. She was a young child and was taken to see them by her father. He told her always to remember the government and bosses would do anything in order to retain their power and control, and that the lives of people like us were not important to them. She remembers being shouted at roughly and pushed by an English soldier with a gun, and the tanks with their barrels pointed directly at the crowds. She's still alive, and will be 98 this year.

My great-grandfather was a founder member of the Labour party in Scotland. If you listen carefully you can hear the sound of him spinning in his grave.

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But times have changed. I think the chances of a British government sending tanks and troops into a Scotland which has democratically voted for independence are about as likely as the Labour party living up to the ideals of my great-grandfather.

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## Re:Russia and Georgia at war

Posted by Bananaman - 2008/08/15 10:53

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A refreshingly less hyper take on what's been going on. Ironically from the most neo-liberal Daily Mail type broadsheet in Ireland.

<http://www.independent.ie/world-news/russia-shows-its-claws-but-is-still-not-grisly-bear-west-sees-1456358.html>

Contrast this with the hypocritical s...e from our media and their favourite gang of war criminals....

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