



EMBASSY OF GEORGIA TO THE REPUBLICS OF AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY
PERMANENT MISSION OF GEORGIA TO THE OSCE AND OTHER
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

S T A T E M E N T

*Delivered by Ambassador Victor Dolidze at the 710th Permanent Council
Vienna, 24 April, 2008*

Mr. Chairman,

Dear Colleagues,

Last Thursday I had the possibility to speak in a detailed manner on the recent dangerous steps taken by the Russian Federation towards Georgia, especially threatening peace and stability in the conflict regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and undermining the conflict resolution process. Today I have rather alarming message to deliver in respect to the Georgia-Russian relations.

I would like to draw your attention to the latest act of aggression against Georgia undertaken by the Russian Federation in the zone of conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia.

On 20 April 2008 at 09:53.31 local time a MIG-29 "Fulcrum" Russian fighter jet shot down an unarmed Georgian reconnaissance drone (UAV) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs over Georgian territory.

According to simultaneous NATO-standard radar data released by the Georgian Ministry of Defense, the Russian aircraft returned northward, entering Russian airspace at 10:06, following the act of aggression.

The Government of Georgia strongly condemns this act of aggression, which endangers the maintenance of peace and proves unequivocally that Russia is not a neutral party or facilitator of the negotiation process aimed at peaceful resolution of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia. Rather, the Russian Federation represents a party to the conflict disregarding the vital interests of the peaceful population of the region.

Georgia has released high quality video footage of the unprovoked attack which clearly identifies the aircraft as Russian.

This act violates Paragraph 4, Article 2 of the UN Charter prohibiting the use of force against the territorial integrity of any State. Furthermore, this act constitutes an "act of aggression" under Annex, paragraph b, Article 3 of the 1974 *UN General Assembly Resolution on Definition of Aggression*, according to which the use of any weapons by a State against the territory of another State is an act of aggression.

Notwithstanding video, radar and eyewitness accounts that the act of aggression was conducted by a Russian fighter jet, rebel separatist leaders have claimed credit for shooting down the Georgian UAV. These statements of separatists lack all credibility, as the aircraft can be clearly identified on the video footage.

This act of aggression follows escalating measures taken by the Russian Federation, about which we talked here during last PC.

We have already invited independent international experts to verify the materials, which we have distributed. We would also welcome the OSCE Member States to participate in this process, including through designation of their experts, thus immensely contributing to maintaining peace and stability within the OSCE area.

Yesterday night Special Security Council meeting was convened in New York, where Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia made a statement about the issues I just outlined here. Group of Friends of the Secretary General for Georgia, unfortunately without Russian participation, once again reconfirmed “sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia”. These states also expressed their high concern about the Russian initiative to establish official ties with institutions of the de facto authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and condemned “all activities, which risk to escalate tension” in connection with the incident of shooting unmanned aerial vehicle in Abkhazia, Georgia. This, we believe, should be clear signal for the Russian Federation to, as the Group of Friends stated, “revoke or not implement its decision” on formalizing ties with the separatists and immediately stop acts of aggression against Georgia.

Dear Colleagues,

Even though, United Nations is mostly seized of the issues related to Abkhazia, this is no excuse for the OSCE community to pay no attention to this issue. Every square meter of Abkhazia, is part of the OSCE community, which spreads from Vancouver to Vladivostok and we should all understand that uncontrolled processes in the OSCE area have repercussions for every OSCE participant state. It should not be acceptable for anyone, when one OSCE member state conducts acts of aggression against, or annexes territories of another OSCE state. UN may have a leading role in the settlement of Abkhazian conflict, but processes that take there, should be of interest and particular attention for OSCE, especially in the times like this.

I would like inform you that Georgia is strongly motivated to utilize all possibilities within the OSCE, for raising this issue in the nearest future for more thorough consideration, and we have already started active consultations within this Organization on the matter.

Thank you

II Intervention - Response to Russian Delegation

Mr. Chairman,

I apologize for taking the floor again on this matter, however I am compelled to do so. First of all, let me thank all delegations for their reactions and statements. In response to my distinguished Russian colleague, I would like to make the clear picture on the legitimacy of flight of the Georgian reconnaissance drone.

Pursuant to Article 1 of the 1994 Moscow Agreement on Cease-fire and Separation of Forces, "the parties shall scrupulously observe the cease-fire on land, at sea and in the air and shall refrain from all military actions against each other."

The flight of the unmanned plane of the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs in the airspace over the territory of Abkhazia, Georgia, cannot be qualified as a military action given the fact that this plane was not a military vehicle. Besides, a list of the military equipment that is precisely prohibited from the conflict zone under the Moscow Agreement does not include a non-military unmanned air vehicle.

It should be noted that, according to the Moscow Agreement and the UN Security Council resolutions, a third state, in this case the Russian Federation, is not entitled to exercise monitoring of the afore said agreement or establish facts of violation of the agreement. All the above mentioned activities are within the competence of the UNOMIG.

The Russian side being unable to deny the fact of aggression that unequivocally speaks against it, tries although rather helplessly to shift the entire focus to the "violations" allegedly committed by the Georgian side as a result of the flight of the unmanned drone, seeking at the same time to exert influence upon international community through deliberate distortion of facts.

I respect the sense of humour of Mr. Voronkov, but all of us, around this table, remember quite well the same kind of ``block-buster`` from last year in Kodori Gorge and in the village Tsitelubani near Tskhinvali, when it was more than obvious who carried out the bombing of Georgian territories.

That is why I would like to once again invite International Investigation Team in Georgia.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.