

= Russo @-@ Georgian War =

The Russo @-@ Georgian War was a war between Georgia , Russia and the Russian @-@ backed self @-@ proclaimed republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia . The war took place in August 2008 following a period of worsening relations between Russia and Georgia , both formerly constituent republics of the Soviet Union . The fighting took place in the strategically important Transcaucasia region , which borders the Middle East . It was regarded as the first European war of the 21st century .

The Republic of Georgia declared its independence in early 1991 as the Soviet Union began to fall apart . Amidst this backdrop , a war between Georgia and separatists left parts of the former South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast under the de facto control of Russian @-@ backed but internationally unrecognised separatists . Following the war , a joint peacekeeping force of Georgian , Russian and Ossetian troops was stationed in the territory . Meanwhile , a similar stalemate developed in the second rebel region of Abkhazia , which had waged its own separatist war in 1992 ? 1993 . Following Vladimir Putin 's rise to power in Russia in 2000 and a pro @-@ Western change of power in Georgia in 2003 , relations between Russia and Georgia began to deteriorate , reaching a full diplomatic crisis by April 2008 . By August 1 , 2008 , Ossetian separatists began shelling Georgian villages , with a sporadic response from Georgian peacekeepers in the region . To put an end to these deadly attacks and restore order , the Georgian Army was sent to the South Ossetian conflict zone on 7 August . Georgians took control of most of Tskhinvali , a separatist stronghold , in hours . Georgia later stated it was also responding to Russia moving non @-@ peacekeeping units into the country .

Russia accused Georgia of " aggression against South Ossetia " , and launched a large @-@ scale land , air and sea invasion of Georgia on 8 August with the stated aim of " peace enforcement " operation . Russian and Ossetian forces battled Georgian forces in and around South Ossetia for several days , until Georgian forces retreated . Russian and Abkhaz forces opened a second front by attacking the Kodori Gorge held by Georgia . Russian naval forces blockaded part of the Georgian coast . This was the first war in history in which cyber warfare coincided with military action . An active information war was also waged during and after the conflict . President of France Nicolas Sarkozy negotiated a ceasefire agreement on 12 August .

Russian forces temporarily occupied the Georgian cities of Zugdidi , Senaki , Poti , and Gori , holding on to these areas beyond the ceasefire . The South Ossetians destroyed most ethnic Georgian villages in South Ossetia and were responsible for an ethnic cleansing of Georgians . Russia recognised Abkhazia and South Ossetia as separate republics on 26 August ; in response , the Georgian government severed diplomatic relations with Russia . Russia mostly completed its withdrawal of troops from Georgia proper on 8 October . In the aftermath , Russia 's international relations were largely unharmed . The war displaced 192 @,@ 000 people and while many returned to their homes after the war , 20 @,@ 272 people remained displaced as of 2014 . The Russian military has , since the war , increased its presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in violation of the ceasefire agreement of August 2008 .

= = Background = =

= = = History = = =

In the tenth century AD , Georgia for the first time emerged as an ethnic concept in the territories where the Georgian language was used to perform Christian rituals . After the Mongol invasions of the region , the Kingdom of Georgia eventually was broken up into several kingdoms and principalities . In the nineteenth century , the Russian Empire gradually annexed the Georgian lands . In the aftermath of the Russian revolution , Georgia declared its independence on 26 May 1918 .

The Ossetian people are indigenous to North Ossetia , located in the North Caucasus . Controversy surrounds the date of Ossetian arrival in Transcaucasia . According to one theory , they first

migrated there during the 13th and 14th centuries AD , and lived alongside the Georgians peacefully for centuries . In 1918 , conflict began between the landless Ossetian peasants living in Shida Kartli , who were influenced by Bolshevism and demanded ownership of the lands they worked and the Menshevik government backed ethnic Georgian aristocrats , who were legal owners . Although the Ossetians were initially discontented with the economic policies of the central government , the tension soon transformed into ethnic conflict . During uprisings in 1919 and 1920 , the Ossetians were covertly supported by Soviet Russia , but even so , were defeated .

The independent Democratic Republic of Georgia was invaded by the Red Army in 1921 and a Soviet government was installed . The government of Soviet Georgia created an autonomous administrative unit for Transcaucasian Ossetians in April 1922 , called the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast . Historians such as Stephen F. Jones , Emil Souleimanov and Arsène Saparov believe that the Bolsheviks granted this autonomy to the Ossetians in exchange for their help in fighting the Democratic Republic of Georgia , since this area had never been a separate entity prior to the Russian invasion .

Nationalism in Soviet Georgia emerged in 1989 when the weakening of the Soviet Union began . The Kremlin endorsed South Ossetian nationalism as a counter against the Georgian independence movement . On 11 December 1990 , the Supreme Soviet of Georgia abolished the South Ossetian autonomous region . Georgia declared its restoration of independence on 9 April 1991 , thus becoming the first non -@-@ Baltic state of the Soviet Union to do so . A military conflict broke out between Georgia and South Ossetia in January 1991 , which lasted until June 1992 . The separatists were aided by former Soviet military units now under Russian command . The war resulted in South Ossetian separatists achieving de facto independence from Georgia . After the Sochi agreement in 1992 , Georgian , South Ossetian , Russian and North Ossetian peacekeepers were stationed in South Ossetian conflict zone under the Joint Control Commission 's (JCC) mandate . Some parts of the former South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast remained under the Georgian control .

This situation was mirrored in Abkhazia , an autonomous republic in the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic , where the Abkhaz minority seceded from Georgia during the early 1990s . The population of Abkhazia was reduced to 216 @,@ 000 after an ethnic cleansing of Georgians , a decrease from 525 @,@ 000 before the war . An unrecognised government did not control the entire territory of Abkhazia .

= = = Russian interests and involvement = = =

Transcaucasia lies between the Russian region of the North Caucasus and the Middle East , forming a " buffer zone " between Russia and the Middle East . It borders Turkey and Iran . The strategic importance of the region has made it a security concern for Russia . Significant economic reasons , such as presence or transportation of oil , also affect interest in Transcaucasia . Control of Transcaucasia , according to Swedish academic Svante Cornell , would enable Russia to control Western influence in the geopolitically important region of Central Asia .

Russia saw the Black Sea coast and the border with Turkey as invaluable strategic attributes of Georgia . Russia had more vested interests in Abkhazia than in South Ossetia , since the Russian military presence on the Black Sea coast was seen as vital to Russian influence in the Black Sea . Before the early 2000s , South Ossetia was originally intended as a tool to retain a grip on Georgia .

Vladimir Putin became president of the Russian Federation in 2000 , which had a profound impact on Russo @-@ Georgian relations . The conflict between Russia and Georgia began to escalate in December 2000 , when Georgia became the first and only member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) on which the Russian visa regime was imposed . In December 2001 , Eduard Kokoity , an alleged member of organised crime , became de facto president of South Ossetia ; he was endorsed by Russia since he would subvert the peaceful reintegration of South Ossetia into Georgia . The Russian government began massive distribution of Russian passports to the residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2002 without Georgia 's permission ; this " passportization " policy laid the foundation for Russia 's future claim to these territories . In 2003 ,

President Putin began to consider the possibility of a military solution to the conflict with Georgia .

After Georgia deported four suspected Russian spies in 2006 , Russia began a full @-@ scale diplomatic and economic war against Georgia , accompanied by the persecution of ethnic Georgians living in Russia .

By 2008 , most residents of South Ossetia had obtained Russian passports . According to Reuters , Russia supplied two @-@ thirds of South Ossetia 's annual budget before the war . Russian officials had de facto control of South Ossetia 's security institutions , including the armed forces ; South Ossetia 's de facto government was largely staffed with Russians and South Ossetians with Russian passports , who had occupied equivalent government positions in Russia .

= = = Unresolved conflicts = = =

The conflicts in Georgia remained at a stalemate until 2004 , when Mikheil Saakashvili came to power after Georgia 's Rose Revolution , which ousted president Eduard Shevardnadze . Restoring South Ossetia and Abkhazia to Georgian control was a top @-@ priority of Saakashvili 's .

The Georgian government launched an initiative to curb smuggling from South Ossetia in 2004 after its success in restoring control in Adjara . Tensions were further escalated by South Ossetian authorities . Intense fighting took place between Georgian forces and South Ossetian militia between 8 and 19 August .

At the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in January 2005 , Georgian president Saakashvili proposed a peace settlement for South Ossetia within a unified Georgian state . The proposal was rejected by South Ossetian president Eduard Kokoity . In 2006 , Georgia sent security forces to the Kodori Valley region of Abkhazia , when a local militia leader rebelled against Georgian authorities . In 2007 , Georgia established what Russia called a " puppet government " in South Ossetia , led by Dmitry Sanakoyev (former South Ossetian prime minister) , calling it a provisional administration .

Georgia began proposing the placement of international peacekeeping forces in the separatist regions when Russia began to apply more pressure on Georgia after April 2008 . The West launched new initiatives for peace settlement , with peace plans being offered and conferences being organised by the European Union , the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Germany . Georgia accepted the German project for Abkhazia , but the separatists dismissed it . Russia and the separatists did not attend an EU @-@ funded peace conference on Abkhazia . They also dismissed an OSCE offer to renew talks regarding South Ossetia .

= = = Relations between Georgia and the West = = =

One of President Saakashvili 's primary goals for Georgia was NATO membership , which has been one of the major stumbling blocks in Georgia @-@ Russia relations .

Although Georgia has no significant oil or gas reserves , its territory hosts part of the Baku ? Tbilisi ? Ceyhan pipeline supplying Europe . The pipeline circumvents both Russia and Iran . Because it has decreased Western dependence on Middle Eastern oil , the pipeline has been a major factor in the United States ' support for Georgia .

During the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008 , American president George W. Bush lobbied for offering a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Georgia and Ukraine . However , Germany and France said that offering MAP to Ukraine and Georgia would be " an unnecessary offence " to Russia . NATO stated that Ukraine and Georgia would become members of the alliance and pledged to review the applications for MAP in December 2008 . Russian President Vladimir Putin was in Bucharest during the summit . At the end of the summit on 4 April , Putin said that expansion of NATO to Russia 's borders " would be taken in Russia as a direct threat to the security of our country " . After the Bucharest summit , Russia became more aggressive and began to actively prepare for the invasion of Georgia . Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces Yuri Baluyevsky said on 11 April that Russia would take " steps of a different nature " in addition to military action to prevent NATO membership of former Soviet republics . General Baluyevsky

admitted in 2012 that when the decision to attack Georgia was taken by President Putin before Dmitry Medvedev assumed the office of president in May 2008 , a military action was planned and explicit orders were issued in advance before August 2008 . Russia aimed to stop Georgia 's accession to NATO and also to bring about a " regime change " .

= = Prelude = =

= = = April ? July 2008 = = =

On 16 April 2008 Russian president Vladimir Putin authorised official ties between the Russian government and the separatists in Abkhazia and South Ossetia by signing a decree . The legal acts issued by the separatists and the entities registered under them were also recognised . After a United Nations Security Council meeting on 23 April convened at Georgia 's request , the United States , the United Kingdom , France and Germany issued a statement saying : " We call on the Russian Federation to revoke or not to implement its decision . " However , this was labelled a " tall order " by Vitaly Churkin , Russia 's Ambassador to the UN .

A Russian jet shot down a Georgian reconnaissance drone flying over Abkhazia on 20 April . However , Russia denied responsibility for the incident and Abkhazia claimed that the drone was shot down by an " L @-@ 39 aircraft of the Abkhaz Air Force " . An allegation of an attack by a NATO MiG @-@ 29 was made by the Russia ' Ambassador to NATO , Dmitry Rogozin . NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer commented that " he 'd eat his tie if it turned out that a NATO MiG @-@ 29 had magically appeared in Abkhazia and shot down a Georgian drone . " On 26 May , a United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) investigation concluded that the jet belonged to the Russian Air Force ; it was either a MiG @-@ 29 " Fulcrum " or a Su @-@ 27 " Flanker " .

In late April , the Russian government said that Georgia was amassing 1 @, @ 500 soldiers and police in the upper Kodori Gorge area and was planning to " invade " Abkhazia , and that Russia would retaliate against Georgian attack and had boosted its forces in the separatist regions . Any buildup in the Kodori Gorge or near the Abkhaz border by either party was not confirmed by the UNOMIG .

Russia increased the number of its peacekeepers in Abkhazia to 2 @, @ 542 in early May , but its troop levels remained under the limit of 3 @, @ 000 imposed by a 1994 decision of CIS heads of state . Georgia showed video footage captured by a drone to the BBC allegedly proving that Russian troops used heavy hardware in Abkhazia and were a fighting force , rather than peacekeepers ; Russia denied the accusations . On 15 May , the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution calling for the return of all refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to Abkhazia . Russia voted against the Georgian @-@ sponsored resolution . The Russian Foreign Ministry said that the resolution was " a counterproductive move " .

Russia sent railway troops (unarmed , according to the Russian defence ministry) on 31 May to repair a rail line in Abkhazia . Georgia stated that the move was an " aggressive " act . The European Parliament adopted a resolution on 5 June which condemned the deployment of Russian forces to Abkhazia . The resolution stated that the peacekeeping structure must be changed because Russia was no longer an unbiased player . Russian railway troops began withdrawal from Abkhazia on 30 July after attending the opening ceremony of the railway line . The repaired railway was used to transport military equipment by at least a part of the 9 @, @ 000 Russian soldiers who entered Georgia from Abkhazia during the war .

In late June , Russian military expert Pavel Felgenhauer predicted that Vladimir Putin would start a war against Georgia in Abkhazia and South Ossetia supposedly in August . The Kavkaz Center reported in early July that Chechen separatists had intelligence data that Russia was preparing a military operation against Georgia in August ? September 2008 which mainly aimed to expel Georgian forces from the Kodori Gorge ; this would be followed by the expulsion of Georgian military and population from South Ossetia .

In early July , the security situation in South Ossetia aggravated , when a South Ossetian separatist militia official was killed by explosions on 3 July and several hours later an unsuccessful assassination attempt on Dmitry Sanakoyev , the leader of the Georgian @-@ backed Ossetian government , injured three policemen . On 7 July , four Georgian soldiers were captured by South Ossetian separatists . The next day , the Georgian president ordered police to get ready to liberate the soldiers . Four Russian Air Force jets flew over South Ossetia on 8 July . A scheduled visit of Condoleezza Rice , the US Secretary of State , to Georgia on the next day nearly coincided with the timing of the flight . Georgia recalled its ambassador to Russia after Russia admitted its planes had flown in Georgia 's airspace to " let hot heads in Tbilisi cool down " . This was the first time in a decade that Russia had admitted to an overflight of Georgian territory .

On 15 July , the United States and Russia began two parallel military exercises in the Caucasus , though Russia denied that the identical timing was intentional . The joint US @-@ Georgian exercise was called Immediate Response 2008 and also included servicemen from Ukraine , Azerbaijan and Armenia . A total of 1 @,@ 630 servicemen , including 1 @,@ 000 American troops , took part in the exercise , which concluded on 31 July . Counter @-@ insurgency action was the focal point of the joint exercise . The Georgian brigade was trained to serve in Iraq . The Russian exercise was named Caucasus 2008 and units of the North Caucasus Military District , including the 58th Army , participated . The exercise included training to aid peacekeepers stationed in Abkhazia and South Ossetia . During exercises , a leaflet named " Soldier ! Know your probable enemy ! " was circulated among the Russian participants . The leaflet described the Georgian Armed Forces . Russian troops remained near the Georgian border after the end of their exercise on 2 August , instead of returning to their bases .

= = = Early August = = =

At 8 : 00 am on 1 August , a Georgian police lorry was blown up by an improvised explosive device on the road near Tskhinvali , injuring five Georgian policemen . In response , South Ossetian border checkpoints were assaulted by Georgian snipers during the evening , killing four Ossetians and injuring seven .

Ossetian separatists began intensively shelling Georgian villages on 1 August , with a sporadic response from Georgian peacekeepers and other troops in the region . During the night of 1 / 2 August , grenades and mortar fire were exchanged . The number of Ossetian casualties rose to six and the number of injured to fifteen , including several civilians ; the Georgian casualties were six injured civilians and one injured policeman . According to the OSCE mission , the incident was the worst outbreak of violence since 2004 . On 2 ? 3 and again on 3 ? 4 August , firing recommenced during the night . A 1992 ceasefire agreement was breached by Ossetian artillery attacks .

The Russian deputy defence minister , Nikolay Pankov , had a secret meeting with the separatist authorities in Tskhinvali on 3 August . An evacuation of Ossetian women and children to Russia began on the same day . According to researcher Andrey Illarionov , the South Ossetian separatists evacuated more than 20 @,@ 000 civilians , which represented more than 90 percent of the civilian population of the future combat zone .

On 4 August , South Ossetian president Eduard Kokoity said that about 300 volunteers had arrived from North Ossetia to help fight the Georgians and thousands more were expected from the North Caucasus . On 5 August , Georgian authorities organised a tour for journalists and diplomats to demonstrate the damage supposedly caused by separatists . That day , Russian Ambassador @-@ at @-@ Large Yuri Popov declared that his country would intervene on the side of South Ossetia . The destruction of the village of Nuli was ordered by South Ossetian interior minister Mindzaev . About 50 Russian journalists had arrived in Tskhinvali . They were waiting for " something to happen " . A pro @-@ government Russian newspaper reported on 6 August : " Don Cossacks prepare to fight in South Ossetia " .

Mortar and artillery exchange between the South Ossetian and Georgian forces erupted in the afternoon of 6 August along almost the entire line of contact , which lasted until the dawn of 7 August . Exchanges resumed following a brief gap in the morning . At 14 : 00 on 7 August , two

Georgian peacekeepers were killed in Avnevi as a result of Ossetian shelling . At about 14 : 30 , Georgian tanks , 122 mm howitzers and 203 mm self @-@ propelled artillery began heading towards South Ossetia to dissuade separatists from additional attacks . During the afternoon , OSCE monitors recorded Georgian military traffic , including artillery , on roads near Gori . In the afternoon , Georgian personnel left the Joint Peacekeeping Force headquarters in Tskhinvali .

At 16 : 00 , Temur Iakobashvili (the Georgian Minister for Reintegration) arrived in Tskhinvali for a previously @-@ arranged meeting with South Ossetians and Russian diplomat Yuri Popov ; however , Russia 's special envoy , who blamed a flat tire , did not appear ; and neither did the Ossetians . One day earlier the South Ossetians refused to participate in bilateral talks , demanding a session of the Joint Control Commission for Georgian ? Ossetian Conflict Resolution . Tbilisi had withdrawn from the Commission in March , demanding that body include the European Union , the OSCE and the Provisional Administrative Entity of South Ossetia . Iakobashvili met with General Marat Kulakhmetov (the Russian commander of the Joint Peacekeeping Force) who said that Russian peacekeepers could not stop Ossetians and Georgia should implement a ceasefire . " Nobody was in the streets ? no cars , no people , " Iakobashvili later told journalists .

At around 19 : 00 , Georgian President Saakashvili announced a unilateral ceasefire and no @-@ response order . The ceasefire reportedly held for about three hours . Russia regarded the ceasefire as an attempt to buy time to deploy Georgian forces for an offensive . The separatists shelled Tamarasheni and Prisi after Saakashvili 's ceasefire . They destroyed Avnevi and a police station in Kurta , the seat of the Provisional Administrative Entity of South Ossetia . The escalated attacks forced civilians to flee the Georgian villages . A senior official from the Georgian Ministry of Defence said late on August 7 that his country was going to " restore constitutional order " in response to the shelling . Georgian Interior Ministry official later told Russian newspaper Kommersant (on 8 August) that after Ossetians had responded to the ceasefire by shelling , " it became clear " that South Ossetians wouldn 't stop firing and the Georgian casualties were 10 killed and 50 wounded . According to Pavel Felgenhauer , the Ossetians intentionally provoked the Georgians , so Russia would use the Georgian response as a pretext for premeditated military invasion .

According to Georgian intelligence , and several Russian media reports , parts of the regular (non @-@ peacekeeping) Russian Army had already moved to South Ossetian territory through the Roki Tunnel before the Georgian military operation . Even the state @-@ controlled Russian TV showed Abkhazia 's de facto president Sergei Bagapsh on 7 August as saying : " I have spoken to the president of South Ossetia . It has more or less stabilized now . A battalion from the North Caucasus District has entered the area . " Georgian president Saakashvili later told journalists that around 23 : 00 on 7 August , Russian tanks had begun moving into Georgia , causing the Georgians to open fire with artillery weapons .

= = Large @-@ scale conflict = =

= = = Battle of Tskhinvali = = =

Georgian artillery units launched smoke bombs into South Ossetia at 23 : 35 on 7 August . This was followed by a 15 @-@ minute intermission (which purportedly enabled the civilians to escape) before the Georgian forces began bombarding enemy targets .

Early in the morning on 8 August the Georgian 4th Brigade from Vaziani Military Base advanced on the left flank of Tskhinvali ; the 3rd Brigade advanced on the right flank . The aim of the flank operations was to advance northward after capturing key positions . The Georgian troops would take the Gupta bridge and the road to the Roki Tunnel , barring the Russian troops from moving southward .

Georgian forces started moving towards Tskhinvali following several hours of bombardment and engaged South Ossetian forces and militia near the town at 04 : 00 on 8 August , with Georgian tanks remotely shelling South Ossetian positions . An attempt to take the village of Kveysa from the west of South Ossetia by the Georgian special forces was thwarted by a platoon of South Ossetian

troops occupying fortified positions ; several Georgian soldiers were wounded . The Georgian 3rd Brigade entered the Eredvi region (east of Tskhinvali) at 06 : 00 and captured strategic positions . They faced resistance from a company @-@ sized South Ossetian unit positioned in the Prisi Heights . By the morning , the South Ossetian authorities had reported that the Georgian shelling had killed at least 15 civilians .

Georgian forces (among them special forces of the Ministry of Internal Affairs) entered Tskhinvali after taking the heights near the town . The centre of the town was reached by 1 @, @ 500 men of the Georgian ground forces by 10 : 00 . The Russian air force began bombing targets inside South Ossetia and Georgia proper after 10 : 00 on 8 August . According to Russia , it suffered its first casualties at around 12 : 00 when two servicemen were killed and five wounded following an attempt by the Georgian troops to storm the northern peacekeeping base in Tskhinvali . Georgia has stated that it only targeted Russian peacekeepers in self @-@ defence , after coming under fire from them . Most of Tskhinvali and several villages had been secured by Georgian forces by the afternoon ; however , they failed to achieve their objective of blocking the Gupta bridge and the main roads (linking Tskhinvali with the Roki Tunnel and the Russian military base in Java) . One Georgian diplomat told Kommersant on the same day that by taking control of Tskhinvali , Tbilisi wanted to demonstrate that Georgia wouldn 't tolerate killing of Georgian citizens .

By 15 : 00 MSK , an emergency meeting of Security Council of Russia had been convened by Russian president Dmitry Medvedev and Russia 's options regarding the conflict in South Ossetia had been discussed . Russia accused Georgia of " aggression against South Ossetia " . Russia stated it was defending both peacekeepers and South Ossetian civilians (who were Russian citizens) . While Russia claimed that it had to conduct peacekeeping operations according to the international mandates , in reality such agreements had only arranged the ceasefire observer status ; according to political scientist Roy Allison , Russia could evacuate its peacekeepers if attacked . At around 16 : 00 MSK , it became known that two tank columns of the 58th Army passed the Roki Tunnel and Java and were on the road to Tskhinvali . The column had begun moving towards South Ossetia at the same time as President Medvedev was giving a televised speech . According to Kommersant , at around 17 : 00 MSK , Russian tank columns surrounded Tskhinvali and began bombing the Georgian positions . The Russian Air Force mounted attacks on Georgian infantry and artillery on 8 August , but suspended sorties for two days after taking early losses from anti @-@ aircraft fire . Georgian troops left the centre of the town in the evening .

In the afternoon of 9 August , Georgian attempt to push into Tskhinvali was repulsed with Georgian losses and they withdrew . According to the Georgian Defence Minister , the Georgian military had tried to push into Tskhinvali three times by 9 August . During the last attempt they were met with a heavy counterattack , which Georgian officers described as " something like hell . " On the same day a Russian advance column , led by Lieutenant @-@ General Anatoly Khrulyov , was ambushed by Georgian special forces near Tskhinvali ; Khrulyov was wounded in the leg . The number of Russian forces deployed in South Ossetia exceeded the number of Georgians by 9 August .

A unilateral ceasefire was announced on 10 August by the Georgian government . An intention to pull out Georgian troops from South Ossetia was stated by the Georgian government . However , Russia did not embrace this ceasefire offer . The duration of the military engagement was three days and nights in the Tskhinvali region . After the ceasefire agreement was negotiated by French president Nicolas Sarkozy on 12 August , military action was to cease at 15 : 00 on 12 August , however Russian forces didn 't stop to advance .

= = = Bombing and occupation of Gori = = =

Gori is an important city in central Georgia , located about 25 km (16 mi) from Tskhinvali . On 9 August , a Russian air attack targeted military garrisons in Gori , damaging the base , several apartment buildings and a school . Russia denied intentionally attacking civilians . The Georgian government reported that the air raid had killed 60 civilians . At least five Georgian cities had been bombed by 9 August .

After Georgian troops had left Tskhinvali on 10 August , the Russians indiscriminately bombed the

civilian areas in Gori on 11 August . The Georgian forces withdrew from Gori on 11 August . A Georgian official said that the troops were ordered to secure Tbilisi . By late 11 August , most remaining inhabitants and Georgian troops had abandoned Gori . Georgian president Saakashvili stated that Russians had split Georgia into two by occupying an important crossroad near Gori .

Russian planes bombed Gori on 12 August , killing a seven people and wounding over thirty . Dutch television journalist Stan Storimans was among those killed and another foreign correspondent was injured . Georgian officials said that the Russians targeted the city 's administrative buildings . The air raids set the post office and the Gori University on fire . The Gori Military Hospital was struck by a missile , in spite of the fact that it was flying a Red Cross flag , killing one doctor .

Russian forces occupied Gori on 13 August . A Russian military spokesman said that military hardware and ammunition was being confiscated from an abandoned arms depot near the city . On 14 August , Major General Vyacheslav Borisov (the commander of the Russian occupying troops) told Aleksandre Lomaia , secretary of Georgia 's National Security Council , that the Russian presence did not upset the locals of Gori . That day , Borisov stated that the Georgian police and Russian troops were jointly in charge of Gori . He also said that Russian troops would begin leaving Gori in two days . Joint patrol efforts by the Russian Army and Georgian police in Gori soon broke down . The next day , Russian forces pushed to about 40 kilometres (25 mi) from Tbilisi and stopped in Igoeti at the same time as Condoleezza Rice was received by Georgian president Saakashvili .

Russian forces turned back some humanitarian aid missions trying to help civilians , with only the United Nations (UN) managing to bring limited food provisions to the city . The situation in Gori was assessed as " desperate " by the UN . Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that its researchers interviewed Georgians from Gori and the surrounding villages ; those Georgians reported South Ossetian militias assaulting their automobiles and kidnapping civilians trying to escape attacks on their homes after the Russian advance . HRW was told by villagers in the region by telephone that they observed looting and arson by South Ossetian militias ; however , after finding out about assaults on those who did escape , the Georgians did not dare to leave .

The occupation lasted until 22 August , when Russian troops left and Georgian police re entered the city . Georgia 's main east - west highway was effectively reopened .

== = Abkhaz front = = =

A naval confrontation took place between Russian and Georgian ships on 10 August . According to the Russian Ministry of Defence , the Russian navy sank one Georgian vessel after four Georgian missile boats had attacked the Russian Navy ships off the coast of Abkhazia . The Russian patrol ship Mirazh was probably responsible for the sinking . The Georgian coast was blockaded by vessels of the Russian Black Sea Fleet on 10 August . The Black Sea Fleet , which participated in the military conflict for the first time since 1945 , had probably departed from Sevastopol before full scale hostilities between Russia and Georgia began .

Abkhaz forces opened a second front by attacking the Kodori Gorge , held by Georgia . Abkhaz artillery and aircraft began a bombardment against Georgian forces in the upper Kodori Gorge on 9 August . Three days later , a military offensive against the Kodori Gorge was officially initiated by Abkhaz separatists . Russian paratroopers supported the Abkhaz troops . Abkhaz foreign minister Sergei Shamba said that " Russian troops were not involved " in the operation . Abkhaz defence official said that Georgian forces were pushed out of the Kodori Gorge by the operation . Casualties were light on both sides ; Abkhaz fighters accidentally killed one of their comrades , and two Georgian soldiers were also killed . About 2 ,000 people living in the Kodori Gorge fled .

Russian forces advanced into western Georgia from Abkhazia on 11 August . This marked the opening of a new front . Russian troops captured the police stations in Zugdidi despite earlier Russian official claims of not intending to expand assault to Georgia proper . Russian forces reached the town of Senaki that day and captured a military base there .

== = Occupation of Poti = = =

Poti is the crucial port of Georgia on the Black Sea and serves as an essential entry point for Transcaucasia and the landlocked nations of Central Asia . Russian aircraft bombed the town of Poti on 8 August , causing the port to be closed for two days . Russia positioned ships in the vicinity of Poti and other Georgian ports on 10 August 2008 . The next day , Georgian and Russian representatives said that Russian troops had entered Poti (although Russia claimed it had only sent a task force for surveying the area) . On 13 August , six Georgian naval vessels were sunk by Russian troops in Poti . Russian deputy chief of the General staff , Anatoliy Nogovitsyn , denied the Russian presence in the port the following day . On 19 August , Russian forces took twenty @-@ one Georgian soldiers prisoner and grabbed five US Humvees in Poti , taking them to a military base occupied by Russian troops in Senaki . The Wall Street Journal said that Russian actions in Poti constituted an additional attack on Georgian economy .

= = = Bombing of Tbilisi = = =

During the fighting in South Ossetia , the Russian Air Force repeatedly attacked Tbilisi and its surrounding areas . On 8 August , the Georgian Interior Ministry reported that two bombs were dropped on Vaziani Military Base near the city . A Georgian military airstrip in Marneuli was bombed , killing three people . Georgian officials said on 9 August that Russian air attacks had targeted the Baku ? Tbilisi ? Ceyhan pipeline , but missed . Correspondents for Reuters in Tbilisi reported hearing three loud bangs in the early @-@ morning hours of 10 August and a Georgian Interior Ministry senior representative said that three bombs were dropped on Tbilisi International Airport by Russian jets . Construction plant near the airport was also bombed by Russia that day . A civilian radar station in Tbilisi was bombed the following day . Although an end to hostilities was announced on 12 August , Russian air attacks in Georgia continued through the day . The Wall Street Journal reported on 14 August that reporter had witnessed 45 craters near " oil and gas pipelines bringing fuel to the West " (intersection of Baku ? Tbilisi ? Ceyhan pipeline and Baku ? Supsa Pipeline south of Tbilisi) .

= = = Media and cyber war = = =

The war was accompanied by a media battle between Russia and Georgia . The Russian military brought Russian journalists to the combat zone to report news discrediting Georgia and portraying Russia as the saviour of Russian citizens in the conflict zone . Russia also aired television footage supporting its actions which had a strong effect on the local populations of South Ossetia and Abkhazia . In a first for Russia , a Russian Armed Forces spokesman was provided by the Russian authorities to give television interviews about the war . Despite these tactics and domestic success , the Russian information campaign against Georgia was not successful internationally . In response to the information war , the Georgian government halted the broadcasting of Russian television channels in Georgia and blocked access to Russian websites . The information skirmishes between Georgia and Russia continued after armed hostilities had ended . According to political scientist Svante Cornell , the Kremlin spent millions in an international information campaign to blame Georgia for the war ; however there is abundant evidence , including some in Russian media , that Russia actually started the war .

During the war , hackers attacked Georgian government and news websites and disabled host servers . Some Russian news websites were also attacked . Some experts noted this as the first time in history that a notable cyberattack and an actual military engagement happened at the same time .

= = Ceasefire agreement = =

On 12 August , Russian President Dmitry Medvedev announced that he had ordered the cessation of the " peace enforcement " operation in Georgia . " The operation has achieved its goal , security

for peacekeepers and civilians has been restored . The aggressor was punished , suffering huge losses . " Later that day he met French President Nicolas Sarkozy (the President @-@ in @-@ Office of the European Union) and approved a six @-@ point peace plan . The plan originally had four points , but Russia insisted on an additional two . Georgia requested that the additions be parenthesised ; Russia objected and Sarkozy prevailed upon Saakashvili to sign the agreement . According to Sarkozy and Saakashvili , a sixth point in the Sarkozy plan was removed with Medvedev 's consent . On 14 August , South Ossetian President Eduard Kokoity and Abkhaz President Sergei Bagapsh also signed the peace plan . The following day Condoleezza Rice travelled to Tbilisi , where Saakashvili signed the plan in her presence . On 16 August , Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed the peace plan .

The peace plan embodied the following principles (rejected additions are parenthesised) :

No recourse to the use of force

Definitive cessation of hostilities

Free access to humanitarian aid (and to allow the return of refugees)

Georgian military forces must withdraw to their normal bases of encampment

Russian military forces must withdraw to the lines prior to the start of hostilities . While awaiting an international mechanism , Russian peacekeeping forces will implement additional security measures (six months)

Opening of international discussions on the modalities of lasting security in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (based on the decisions of the U.N. and the O.S.C.E.)

After the ceasefire was signed , hostilities did not immediately end . Noting that civilians were fleeing before advancing Russian tanks , soldiers and irregulars , a reporter for The Guardian wrote on 13 August that " the idea there is a ceasefire is ridiculous " .

On 8 September , Sarkozy and Medvedev signed a new agreement on a Russian withdrawal from Georgia . After meeting with the French president , Medvedev said the withdrawal depended on guarantees that Georgia would not use force ; his troops would pull out " from the zones adjacent to South Ossetia and Abkhazia to the line preceding the start of hostilities " . However , a withdrawal of troops from South Ossetia or Abkhazia was not announced .

= = Aftermath = =

= = = Russian withdrawal = = =

On 17 August , Medvedev announced that Russian forces would begin to pull out of Georgia the following day . The two countries exchanged Prisoners of War on 19 August . A Georgian official said that although his country exchanged five Russian servicemen for fifteen Georgians (including two civilians) , Georgia suspected that Russia still held two more Georgians . On 22 August , Russian forces withdrew from Igoeti and the Georgian police proceeded towards Gori . Russia claimed that its military withdrawal was completed ; however , Russian checkpoints remained near Gori and two Russian lookout stations remained near Poti . On 13 September , Russian troops began withdrawing from western Georgia and by 11 : 00 Moscow Time , the posts near Poti were abandoned . Withdrawals from Senaki and Khobi also took place . Russian forces withdrew from the buffer zones adjacent to Abkhazia and South Ossetia on 8 October and authority over them was transferred to the European Union monitoring mission in Georgia .

Russia continued to maintain a single checkpoint in the border village of Perevi . On 12 December , Russian forces withdrew ; eight hours later they re @-@ entered the village and Georgian police withdrew after the Russians threatened to fire . Russian forces then setup three checkpoints in the village . On 18 October 2010 all Russian troops in Perevi withdrew to South Ossetia and a Georgian Army unit moved in .

On 9 September 2008 , Russia announced that its troops in South Ossetia and Abkhazia would remain under bilateral agreements with their respective de facto governments . Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that a military presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia was essential to

prevent Georgia from regaining control . Georgia considers Abkhazia and South Ossetia Russian @-@ occupied territories . In November 2011 , the European Parliament passed a resolution recognising Abkhazia and South Ossetia as occupied Georgian territories .

= = = Recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Russia = = =

On 25 August 2008 , the Russian parliament unanimously voted in favour of a motion urging President Medvedev to recognise Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states . On 26 August , Medvedev signed decrees recognising the two states , saying that recognising the independence of the two entities " represents the only possibility to save human lives . "

The recognition by Russia was condemned by the United States , France , the secretary @-@ general of the Council of Europe , the president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe , the OSCE chairman , NATO and the G7 on the grounds that it violated Georgia 's territorial integrity , United Nations Security Council resolutions and the ceasefire agreement . In response to Russia 's action , the Georgian government severed diplomatic relations with Russia .

Russia sought support for its recognition from the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation . However , because of concerns about separatist regions in SCO states (especially China) , the organisation did not support recognition .

= = = International monitors = = =

The mandate of the OSCE mission in Georgia expired on 1 January 2009 , after Russia vetoed its extension . OSCE monitors had been denied access to South Ossetia since the war . The mandate of the UNOMIG expired on 16 June 2009 ; its extension was also vetoed by Russia , which argued that the mandate did not properly reflect Russia 's position of recognising Abkhazia as an independent state . According to UN mission head Johan Verbeke , about 60 @,@ 000 ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia became vulnerable after the mission 's end .

As of 5 January 2015 , 259 European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) monitors operate in Georgia and 2 in Brussels . Russia does not allow EUMM monitors into Abkhazia and South Ossetia .

= = = Geopolitical impact = = =

The 2008 war was the first time since the fall of the Soviet Union that the Russian military had been used against an independent state , demonstrating Russia 's willingness to wage a full @-@ scale military campaign to attain its political objectives . The failure of the Western security system to respond swiftly to Russia 's attempt to forcibly revise the borders of an OSCE member country revealed its weaknesses . The division between Western European and Eastern European nations also became apparent over the relations with Russia . Ukraine and other post @-@ Soviet states received a clear message from the Russian leadership that the possible accession to NATO would cause a foreign invasion and the break @-@ up of the country . Effective annexation of Abkhazia was also one of Russia 's geopolitical goals . The construction of the EU @-@ sponsored Nabucco pipeline (connecting Central Asian reserves to Europe) in Transcaucasia was averted .

The war in Georgia showed Russia 's assertiveness in revising international relations and undermining the hegemony of the United States . Shortly after the war , Russian president Medvedev unveiled a five @-@ point Russian foreign policy . The Medvedev Doctrine stated that " protecting the lives and dignity of our citizens , wherever they may be , is an unquestionable priority for our country " . The presence of Russian citizens in foreign countries would form a doctrinal foundation for invasion if needed . Medvedev 's statement that there were areas in which Russia had " privileged interests " , underlined Russia 's particular interest in the former Soviet Union and the fact that Russia would feel endangered by subversion of local pro @-@ Russian regimes .

The war eliminated Georgia 's prospects for joining NATO . Russian President Dmitry Medvedev stated in November 2011 that NATO would have admitted former Soviet republics if Russia had not

invaded Georgia . " If you ... had faltered back in 2008 , the geopolitical situation would be different now , " Medvedev declared at a Vladikavkaz military base .

= = Humanitarian impact and war crimes = =

Human Rights Watch (HRW) states that all parties to the war seriously violated international laws governing war , causing many civilian casualties . The South Ossetian parliament and several schools and nurseries were used as military positions or posts by South Ossetian troops and volunteer militias and targeted by Georgian artillery fire . Georgia stated that its attacks only intended to " neutralize firing positions from where Georgian positions were being targeted " . HRW documented witness accounts that civilian objects were used by South Ossetian fighters (making them permissible military aims) , concluding that South Ossetian fighters put civilians at risk by setting up military positions near or in civilian structures . Georgia was responsible for indiscriminate attacks , with little concern for minimising civilian risk .

Russia deliberately attacked fleeing civilians in South Ossetia and the Gori district of Georgia . Russian warplanes bombed civilian population centres in Georgia proper and villages of ethnic Georgians in South Ossetia . Armed militias engaged in looting , arson attacks and abductions , forcing Georgian civilians to flee . HRW said the conflict was a civilian disaster and called for international organisations to send fact @-@ finding missions to the area of conflict . It also asked for the authorities to hold people responsible for any crimes accountable .

The use of M85S cluster bombs by the Georgians and RBK 250 cluster bombs by the Russians resulted in civilian casualties . Georgia was reported to have used cluster munitions twice to hit civilians fleeing via the main escape road and admitted using cluster bombs against Russian troops and near the Roki Tunnel . Russia denied using cluster bombs .

HRW reported that during the war , ethnic @-@ Georgian villages in South Ossetia were burned and looted by South Ossetian militias , preventing 20 @,@ 000 displaced people from returning after the conflict . According to the Memorial society , the villages of Kekhvi , Kurta , Achabeti , Tamarasheni , Eredvi , Vanati and Avnevi were " virtually fully burnt down " . South Ossetian president Eduard Kokoity said in an interview that Georgian villages had been demolished and no Georgian refugees would be allowed to return . Georgian civilians willing to live in South Ossetia were coerced into obtaining a Russian passport . The EU commission said it was likely that during and after the war , an ethnic cleansing of Georgians was committed in South Ossetia .

Russian officials initially claimed that up to 2 @,@ 000 ethnic Ossetian civilians of Tskhinvali were killed by Georgian forces ; according to Russia , the reason for the military intervention in Georgia was this large number of casualties . Public opinion among Ossetians was impacted by claims of high casualties ; according to HRW , some Ossetian civilians said in interviews that they approved of burning and looting of Georgian villages because of the " thousands of civilian casualties in South Ossetia " reported by Russian television . In December 2008 , the figures were revised down to a total of 162 civilian casualties in South Ossetia by the Investigative Committee of the Prosecutor 's Office of the Russian Federation .

Georgia and South Ossetia have filed complaints about alleged war crimes committed by the other side with international courts , including the International Criminal Court , the International Court of Justice , and the European Court of Human Rights .

The war displaced a 192 @,@ 000 people including both Ossetians and Georgians . Many were able to return to their homes after the war , but a year later around 30 @,@ 000 ethnic Georgians remained displaced . As of May 2014 , 20 @,@ 272 persons remained displaced , with their return being blocked by de facto authorities .

= = Reactions = =

= = = International reactions = = =

Russian actions during the war were heavily criticised by some western countries .

United Kingdom ? British Foreign Secretary David Miliband said on 9 August , " Russia has extended the fighting today well beyond South Ossetia , attacking the Georgian port of Poti , and the town of Gori , while Abkhaz forces have been shelling Georgian positions in the Upper Kodori valley . I deplore this . "

United States ? US president George W. Bush said , " Russia has invaded a sovereign neighbouring state and threatens a democratic government elected by its people . Such an action is unacceptable in the 21st century . " Bush later again criticised Russia , saying " Bullying and intimidation are not acceptable ways to conduct foreign policy in the 21st century . " Although the Bush administration considered a military response to defend Georgia , it decided against it so as to not provoke a conflict with Russia . Instead , the US sent humanitarian aid to Georgia on military aircraft . The Bush administration also imposed sanctions on Russia , which were revoked by the Obama administration in May 2010 .

Poland ? The presidents of Poland , Lithuania , Estonia , Ukraine and the prime minister of Latvia (Lech Kaczyński , Valdas Adamkus , Toomas Hendrik Ilves , Viktor Yushchenko and Ivars Godmanis) , who met with Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili at Kaczyński 's initiative , appeared at a 12 August 2008 Tbilisi rally held in front of the parliament which was attended by nearly 150 @, @ 000 people . The crowd responded enthusiastically to the Polish president 's speech , chanting " Poland , Poland " , " Friendship , Friendship " and " Georgia , Georgia " .

Hungary ? Hungarian opposition leader Viktor Orbán drew parallels between the Russian intervention and the crushing of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 .

Ukraine ? Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko said that he intended to increase the rent for the Russian naval base at Sevastopol in the Crimean Peninsula .

France and Germany took an intermediate position , abstaining from naming a guilty party :

European Union ? On 8 August , France (who held the rotating presidency of the European Union) announced that the EU and the US would send a joint delegation to negotiate a ceasefire .

Germany ? German chancellor Angela Merkel expressed her concern about the humanitarian situation in Georgia and called for an immediate ceasefire .

A few leaders supported Russia 's position :

Italy ? Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Franco Frattini said , " We cannot create an anti @-@ Russia coalition in Europe , and on this point we are close to Putin 's position . " He emphasised that Vladimir Putin was a near partner of Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi .

Belarus ? President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko said , " Russia acted calmly , wisely and beautifully . "

Georgia announced on 12 August 2008 that it would leave the Commonwealth of Independent States , which it blamed for failing to avert the conflict . Its departure became effective in August 2009 .

According to academic Martin Malek , western countries did not feel it was necessary to aggravate relations with Russia over " tiny and insignificant " Georgia . He wrote in the *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* that western policy makers did not want to isolate Russia because its support was necessary to solve " international problems " .

= = = NATO reaction in the Black Sea = = =

NATO increased its naval presence in the Black Sea significantly following the Russian invasion , with ships docking in Georgian ports , and (according to the US Navy) delivering humanitarian aid . NATO said that its presence in the Black Sea was not related to the Georgian crisis ; its vessels were conducting typical visits and preplanned naval exercises with Romania and Bulgaria . Russian General Anatoliy Nogovitsyn reminded NATO of the limit on the number of vessels allowed in the Black Sea under the 1936 Montreux convention . Russian President Dmitry Medvedev questioned the claim that ships going to Georgia were bringing only humanitarian assistance , alleging the delivery of military material . According to political analyst Vladimir Socor , the US maintained a continual presence in the Black Sea . The ships were rotated from time to time in the Black Sea

because of the constraints on ship 's weight and length of visits set by the Montreux Convention .

= = Combatants = =

= = = Georgian order of battle = = =

According to the Moscow Defence Brief , an English @-@ language magazine published by the Russian non @-@ governmental organisation the Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies , the Georgian troops included the 2nd , 3rd and 4th Infantry Brigades , the Artillery Brigade , part of the 1st Infantry Brigade and the separate Gori Tank Battalion . Additionally , special forces and Ministry of Internal Affairs troops were deployed . The total number of troops was 16 @,@ 000 according to the magazine . According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies , ten light infantry battalions of the 2nd , 3rd and 4th infantry brigades , special forces and an artillery brigade , totalling approximately 12 @,@ 000 troops , had been concentrated by the start of the conflict . The primary task of capturing Tskhinvali was accomplished by the 4th Brigade with support from the 2nd and 3rd Brigades . According to the EU fact @-@ finding mission , 10 @,@ 000 ? 11 @,@ 000 soldiers took part in the war .

The 1st Infantry Brigade , the only one trained to NATO standards , was serving in Iraq at the beginning of the war ; on 11 August , the United States Air Force airlifted it to Georgia .

= = = Russo @-@ South Ossetian @-@ Abkhaz order of battle = = =

A sizeable portion of the Russian 58th Army , one of the foremost military units in Russia , was included in the Russian order of battle . It exceeds the Georgian Army in the number of troops , heavy hardware and planes . The 58th Army fought in Second Chechen War .

= = = Military analysis = = =

= = = = Georgia = = = =

United States officials said that " one of the few effective elements of the [Georgia] ' s military " was air defence , with the analysts crediting the SA @-@ 11 Buk @-@ 1M with shooting down a Tupolev @-@ 22M bomber and contributing to the loss of some Su @-@ 25s . This view was supported by independent Russian analysis . Colonel @-@ General Anatoliy Nogovitsyn , Russian deputy chief of general staff , said the Soviet @-@ made Tor and Buk anti @-@ aircraft missile systems , bought by Georgia from Ukraine , were responsible for downing Russian aircraft during the war . A Russian assessment , reported by Roger McDermott , said that Russian losses would have been significantly higher if the Georgians had not left behind a portion of their Buk @-@ M1 systems near Senaki (in western Georgia) and several Osa missile launchers in South Ossetia . According to some reports , Georgia also possessed a battery of the Israeli @-@ made SPYDER @-@ SR short @-@ range self @-@ propelled anti @-@ aircraft system . The Georgian air @-@ defence early @-@ warning and command @-@ control tactical system was connected via Turkey to a NATO Air Situation Data Exchange (ASDE) , which provided Georgia with intelligence during the conflict .

Georgia has said that its key vulnerabilities were ineffective communication during action and its weaker air strength . Konstantin Makienko of CAST saw substandard training of pilots as the primary reason for the poor performance of Georgian air sorties . According to Georgian first deputy defence minister Batu Kutelia , Georgia needed a complex , multi @-@ layered air @-@ defence system to protect its airspace . However , Western military officers experienced with Georgian military forces suggested that Georgia 's military shortcomings were too great to be eliminated by new equipment acquisitions . According to a 2 September 2008 New York Times article , " Georgia 's Army fled

ahead of the Russian Army 's advance , turning its back and leaving Georgian civilians in an enemy 's path . Its planes did not fly after the first few hours of contact . Its navy was sunk in the harbor , and its patrol boats were hauled away by Russian trucks on trailers . "

According to a Western military officer , Georgian logistical preparations were mediocre and there was interference between units during the action . Exercises simulating combat against a probable enemy (the 58th Army) had never been organised by the Georgian Army . During the war , communications broke down in the mountains and troops had to resort to mobile phones . There was insufficient planning ; according to Giorgi Tavdgiridze , nobody thought of how to seal the Roki Tunnel . There was a dismal organisation of the delivery of 10 @, @ 000 Georgian reservists in Gori on 9 August ; they had no specific targets and went back to Tbilisi the following day . The conflict was called by journalists as the war " that was hidden from history " because there was very little video recording of military action . According to their American trainers , Georgian soldiers were unprepared for combat despite having " warrior spirit " . There were few well @-@ trained , educated officers in high ranking positions , and Saakashvili 's government had no military experience .

= = = = Russia = = = =

The Russian Command , Control , Communications and Intelligence (C ³ I) performed poorly during the conflict . The Russian communication systems were outdated , with a 58th Army commander allegedly making contact with his combat troops via a journalist @-@ owned satellite phone . Without the modern GLONASS , precision @-@ guided munitions could not be used ; the US @-@ controlled GPS was unavailable , since the war zone was blacked out . Due to the negligence of Russian defence minister , the use of unmanned aerial vehicles was not authorised ; an RIA Novosti editorial said that Russian forces lacked reliable aerial @-@ reconnaissance systems , once using a Tupolev Tu @-@ 22M3 bomber instead . However , Russian reconnaissance battalions and regiments were also deployed during the war . General Anatoly Nogovitsyn , deputy chief of the General staff , said that during the war , new weapons were not tried out .

The RIA Novosti editorial also said that Russian Su @-@ 25 ground @-@ attack jets did not have radar sights and ground @-@ target coordinate computing . They also did not have long @-@ range surface @-@ to @-@ air missiles that could be launched beyond the air @-@ defence zones of an adversary . Opposition @-@ affiliated Russian analyst Konstantin Makienko observed the poor performance of the Russian Air Force : " It is totally unbelievable that the Russian Air Force was unable to establish air superiority almost to the end of the five @-@ day war , despite the fact that the enemy had no fighter aviation . "

According to Russian expert Anton Lavrov , on 8 August , Russian and South Ossetian troops deployed in South Ossetia were unaware that Russian aviation was involved in the war . Russian troops and South Ossetians often assessed Russian aircraft as hostile and fired at them before precise identification took place . On 8 August , the air force performed 63 flights in support of Russian ground troops . A total of six Russian aircraft were lost during the war : one Su @-@ 25SM , two Su @-@ 25BMs , two Su @-@ 24Ms and one Tu @-@ 22M3 ; friendly fire was the cause of the downing of three planes . Lavrov denied that the Tu @-@ 22M was used for reconnaissance .

The relationship between the North Caucasus Military District commander and the air force and their roles in commanding were unclear . Colonel @-@ General Aleksandr Zelin , commander @-@ in @-@ chief of the Air Force did not set foot in the command post , instead running Air @-@ force operations on a mobile phone from his office without any help from his air @-@ defence assistants . The air force was accused of rendering no assistance to land campaign .

Swedish analysts Carolina Vendil Pallin and Fredrik Westerlund said that although the Russian Black Sea Fleet did not meet significant resistance , it proved effective at implementing elaborate manoeuvres . Mechanised infantry opened a second front in Abkhazia , which contributed to the rapidity of the Russian military victory .

Heritage Foundation researchers said in their assessment of the preparation of Russian general

@-@ staff that the operations were planned and implemented effectively , with a strategic surprise being engineered by the Russians . A Reuters analyst described Russia 's army as " strong but flawed " ; the war demonstrated that Russia 's " armed forces have emerged from years of neglect as a formidable fighting force , but revealed important deficiencies . " He stated that due to these weaknesses , Russia fell short of its image of a world @-@ class military power . Unlike the Second Chechen War , Russia 's force in Georgia was composed primarily of professional soldiers instead of conscripts . Reuters journalists in Georgia stated that they saw the Russian forces to be well @-@ equipped and disciplined forces . CAST director Ruslan Pukhov said that " the victory over the Georgian army ... should become for Russia not a cause for euphoria and excessive joy , but serve to speed up military transformations . " Roger McDermott wrote that slight differences in criticism by civilian media or official sources after the conflict was " an orchestrated effort by the government to ' sell ' reform to the military and garner support among the populace . "

However , the Russian Army 's transformation into a professional army was not deemed as successful . In September 2008 , General Vladimir Boldyrev acknowledged that many of the professional soldiers did not have better training than the conscripts . Russian Airborne Troops and special forces conducted most of the land fighting . Due to the Russian Air Force 's inability to penetrate Georgian air defence , airborne troops could not be airlifted behind Georgian lines . An ambush of a ground @-@ troop commander , in which only five of thirty vehicles in his convoy survived , indicated intelligence and surveillance negligence . Many Russian land units reportedly had an insufficient ammunition supply .

= = = Equipment losses and cost = = =

After the ceasefire was signed on 12 August , in Georgia proper , Russian troops attempted to seize and destroy Georgian armament , a process termed by the Moscow Defence Brief as the " demilitarization of the Georgian Armed Forces " . After the war Stratfor states that Russia " has largely destroyed Georgia 's war @-@ fighting capability " . According to Moscow Defence Brief , Georgia lost its air and naval forces and its air @-@ defence systems . The Georgian army lost large quantities of equipment to the Russians during the conflict . Russian Ground Forces official Igor Konashenkov said that the Russians captured 65 Georgian tanks , over 20 of which were destroyed because they were beyond repair or too old . Russia estimated that the Georgian Air Force lost three Su @-@ 25 attack aircraft and two L @-@ 29 jets . A Russian air attack on Marneuli Air Force Base destroyed three AN @-@ 2 aircraft . Russian airborne forces set fire to two Mi @-@ 24 helicopters and one Mi @-@ 14 on 11 August . Georgian Defence Minister Davit Kezerashvili said that Georgia lost materiel worth \$ 250 million . According to Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili , his country saved 95 percent of its armed forces . The 4th Brigade had more casualties than any other Georgian military unit .

In 2009 , Russian Army Chief of General Staff Nikolai Makarov stated that Georgia was rearming , although the armament was not directly provided by the United States . According to Makarov , the Georgian Armed Forces had exceeded their pre @-@ war strength by 2009 .

Russia admitted that three of its Su @-@ 25 strike aircraft and one Tu @-@ 22M3 long @-@ range bomber were lost , in addition to at least three tanks , 20 armoured and 20 non @-@ armoured vehicles . Moscow Defence Brief provided a higher estimate , saying that Russian Air Force total losses during the war were one Tu @-@ 22M3 long @-@ range bomber , one Su @-@ 24M Fencer fighter @-@ bomber , one Su @-@ 24MR Fencer E reconnaissance plane and four Su @-@ 25 attack planes . Anton Lavrov listed one Su @-@ 25SM , two Su @-@ 25BM , two Su @-@ 24M and one Tu @-@ 22M3 lost . According to Nezavisimaya Gazeta , the five @-@ day war cost Russia an estimated 12 @-@ 5 billion rubles , a daily cost of 2 @-@ 5 billion rubles .