

Georgia's Invasion of South Ossetia: Two Years On

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Ahead of the second anniversary since Georgia's attack on its breakaway republic of South Ossetia in August 2008, a certain progress in talks on security in South Caucasus can be seen, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Grigory Karasin, said, adding that observers in the European Union (EU) share his opinion.

[Audio](#)

Late in the evening of the 7th of August, 2008, when the whole world anticipated the opening of the Olympic Games in Beijing, the Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili ordered his troops to invade the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinval. Saakashvili promised the locals there would be no violence but at midnight the sleeping city was hit by falling shells which are known to be used in large-scale military operations in the army. But then Georgia used them against the civilians.

After the bombing, the Georgian troops, tanks and other military vehicles, entered Tskhinval. In just a few days it turned into a war-torn city. Victims were reported not only among civilians but also among the Russian peacekeepers who had been staying in South Ossetia under the UN's mandate. The President of Georgia bears ultimate responsibility for what happened, though his 'patrons' in the West are also to blame since the Georgian army had been trained by foreigners and used arms purchased from abroad. The whole operation against South Ossetia had been plotted by two Israeli generals who were in charge of the Georgian troops's headquarters. And rocket launchers used on the night of August 8th had been also reequipped in Israel.

When Moscow became aware that Saakashvili intended to oust Ossetians from their territory, Russia decided to interfere and send its troops to the conflict zone to stop bloodshed and save the local population from genocide. By the morning of the fifth day of battles (that is why the conflict is also known as the Five-Day War), Russia's campaign 'to coerce Georgia to peace' was over, and the Georgian army left South Ossetia.

The armistice was preceded by the Moscow peace accords negotiated by the Russian and French Presidents Dmitry Medvedev and Nicolas Sarkozy and later signed by Georgia.

Shortly afterwards, Russia officially recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia's independence, a move that seriously strained its relations with the West. But time proved that it was a correct choice. Alexei Malashenko, an analyst with the International Carnegie Center, notes that the nearly-frozen relations have quickly improved:

"Relations deteriorated sharply during the war and after it. But then it became

clear this posed no major obstacle for a revamp of Russian-US ties and Moscow's relations with the West in general. Russia won. It proved capable of tough action to tackle its problems, not afraid of anyone."

As for President Saakashvili, his image in the West has suffered a dramatic change. His halo of a victim of the so-called Russian aggression has markedly faded, particularly after the European Union's fact-finding mission led by the Swiss diplomat Heidi Tagliavini published the unbiased conclusions of its 9-month inquiry, asserting that Saakashvili had been the first to attack.

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