

Georgia urges Russia to halt navy drills

By [Global Research](#)

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UNITED NATIONS, Oct 3 (Reuters) - Georgia on Tuesday urged Russia to stop naval exercises near the countries' sea border, calling them a threat to regional peace and a violation of the United Nations charter.

Georgia's U.N. envoy Irakli Alasania made the comments amid a spying row that has chilled relations between the ex-Soviet neighbors to the worst level in a decade.

"Georgia calls upon the Russian side to immediately cease these trainings that are directed against the national interests of Georgia and threatens peace and security in the entire region," Alasania told a news conference.

Russia, which has been irked by Georgia's pursuit of NATO and EU membership, has cut rail, air and postal links with Georgia and recalled its ambassador over the arrest of four Russian soldiers on spying charges. Georgia released the four on Monday in what it termed a goodwill gesture.

Alasania said the peace process between Georgia and its breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia needed to be overhauled. Despite their rocky ties, he said Georgia still wanted Moscow to be part of the solution.

Abkhazia won effective independence from Georgia in a 1992-1993 war, and Moscow props up the province by paying pensions, issuing Russian passports and allowing cross-border traffic as well as stationing peacekeepers there.

Georgia accuses Russia of backing Abkhaz separatists, which Moscow denies. The United Nations has monitors stationed in Abkhazia.

Russia's U.N. Ambassador, Vitaly Churkin, said on Tuesday he had withdrawn a draft U.N. Security Council statement that would have rebuked Georgia for its actions against the Russian soldiers and in Abkhazia. Instead, he said he was introducing a resolution extending the U.N. observer force and warning Georgia to refrain from further "provocative actions."

Alasania said Georgia remained committed to a peaceful solution in the region but Russia had "not yet made the strategic decision to be part of the solution rather than be part of the problem".

"It is crystal clear that the Russian peacekeeping force is not an impartial, nor international

contingency," Alasania told a news conference. "It became the force that works to artificially alienate the sides from one another."

"If the Russian government wishes to get back lost credibility as a facilitator in a conflict settlement, then it must act like one and behave responsibly," he said.

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