

Mounting Tensions in the Caucasus

By [Global Research](#)

Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

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Abkhazia, Georgia talks possible if Tbilisi withdraws troops

11/07/2008 14:16 MOSCOW, July 11 (RIA Novosti) - Dialogue between Georgia and its breakaway republic of Abkhazia can only be resumed if Tbilisi withdraws troops from the Kodori gorge, the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Friday.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov held a meeting on Thursday with Abkhaz President Sergei Bagapsh, where the two officials expressed their concern over a new surge of violence in the conflict zone with Georgia's rebel regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

"Moscow and Sukhumi are confident that a way out of the situation can be found only through stopping the provocation and signing a non-violence agreement as soon as possible for both conflicts, which in the case of [Abkhazia](#) should be accompanied by the withdrawal of Georgian troops from the upper reaches of the Kodori gorge," the ministry said in a statement after the Lavrov-Bagapsh talks.

As a major mediator in both conflicts, Russia pledged to maintain its peacekeeping efforts in the region.

Russian peacekeepers have been put on high alert, a spokesman for the North Caucasus military district said on Friday.

Negotiations between Sukhumi and Tbilisi were halted in July 2006, when Tbilisi deployed troops in the Kodori gorge, Abkhazia's only region under Georgian control.

Abkhazian authorities said the talks could be resumed only if Georgia withdraws its troops from the area.

Abkhazia and South Ossetia broke away from Georgia in the early 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The pro-Western Georgian leadership has said it is determined to bring the breakaway regions back under Tbilisi's control.

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