

Russia calls for more observers in Georgia

By [Global Research](#)

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MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia called Saturday for more international observers to be sent to Georgia, two days before a European Union summit that Tbilisi hopes will decide on measures to punish the Russian leadership.

The appeal for stronger European monitoring in Georgia came as Prime Minister Vladimir Putin urged EU leaders to show “common sense” at the summit on Monday and ignore calls for sanctions against Russia.

Leaders of the 27-nation EU are to agree on a response to Russia’s military surge into Georgia and decision to recognise the independence of two secessionist regions.

Georgia called for sanctions on Russian leaders after breaking off diplomatic relations with Moscow to protest the decision to recognise South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

But in an apparent conciliatory gesture, President Dmitry Medvedev told British Prime Minister Gordon Brown during a phone conversation that Russia wants more OSCE observers to be sent to Georgia, a Kremlin statement said.

The West sees the presence of monitors from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe as critical to ensure the success of the French-brokered ceasefire that ended five days of fighting between Georgian and Russian forces.

The 56-nation OSCE decided this month to send up to 100 observers to Georgia. Some 20 observers are currently on the ground.

Russia “calls for the dispatch of additional OSCE observers to the security zone and setting up an impartial monitoring of the acts of the Georgian government,” said the Kremlin statement.

The German weekly Der Spiegel separately reported that OSCE observers were blaming Georgia for triggering the crisis in a series of unofficial reports presented to the German government.

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Ossetia on August 7. Tbilisi has claimed that they were provoked by the Russian side.

Russian troops entered Georgia on August 8 to push back Georgian troops attempting to restore control over South Ossetia.

Russia halted a five-day offensive into Georgia but has failed to withdraw all its troops, saying they are on a peacekeeping mission. Tbilisi has labeled them an occupation force.

Medvedev reiterated that Russia was “in full compliance with the six principles” of a ceasefire deal, despite calls from the West for further withdrawals.

Putin said Russian troops “of course will leave these positions where we are now... We will not remain there forever”.

The former Kremlin leader acknowledged Russia was worried about calls for sanctions or other harsh measures from some EU governments.

“If I were to say that we don’t care, that we were indifferent, I would be lying,” Putin said in an interview to Germany’s ARD television.

Georgian Reintegration Minister Temur Yakobashvili called for Russian leaders to be punished with targeted sanctions.

“There is no point in isolating Russia.

“But we expect certain sanctions, which won’t be against the people, but against the political elite,” he told AFP in Tbilisi.

The minister did not specify what the sanctions against Russian leaders could involve, although such measures often include travel bans or the freezing of overseas bank accounts.

Georgia on Saturday also imposed visa restrictions on Russian citizens, with a foreign ministry spokeswoman saying it was a tit-for-tat measure. The new visa regime will take effect on September 8.

Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg said he supported calls for stripping Moscow of the right to host the 2014 Winter Olympics in the Black Sea resort of Sochi.

“Organising a celebration of peace and sport in an area near where there was a massacre and a war of aggression seems to me to be a strange idea,” Schwarzenberg told the Austrian Die Presse newspaper on Saturday.

Russia has faced an avalanche of criticism from the West after the five day war and its formal recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states.

Putin rejected suggestions from French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner that other former Soviet republics — in particular Ukraine — could be Russia’s next target.

“We have long ago recognised the borders of modern-day Ukraine,” he said.

Putin renewed his accusation that Washington provoked the conflict to whip up anti-Russian sentiment, hoping it would boost the chances of Republican candidate John McCain, who has

taken a tough line on Russia.

“They wanted to make an enemy out of Russia and unite voters around one of the presidential candidates, of course, a ruling party candidate, because it is only the ruling party that has this kind of resources,” he said.

“We know there were many US advisors there,” Putin said, renewing accusations he made in an interview to CNN television.

“Why did the senior US leadership allow their citizens to be present there... ? And if they allowed it, I begin to suspect that it was done intentionally to organise a small victorious war,” he said.

The White House has dismissed the accusations as “patently false”.

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