

# The 2008 Crisis in the Caucasus: A Unified Timeline, August 7-16.

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Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

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To reveal and analyze what actually happened, it is essential to have a unified version of key events.

To achieve this objective, I have examined the detailed timelines provided on the web sites of the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Russia Today news service, integrating these with various Georgian, Russian, and international press reports.

There are surprisingly few discrepancies about the actual sequence of events.

Those that exceed two hours are noted by *\*\*\*italics*.

For convenience, all times have been standardized to GMT (UTC). My notes, in CAPS, highlight certain details that emerge, though the timeline certainly raises as many questions as it answers.

[Local Time in Tblisi is GMT + 3].

After six days of sniper and machine-gunfire exchanges between Georgian troops and Ossetian militia, the conflict intensifies on August 7. The separatists claim the Georgians are seeking to occupy the surrounding hill. Georgia denies this but sends reinforcements to the border.

## **August 7 — Georgia attacks**

[Note 15.10 GMT is 18.10 local time. The first reports of shelling were late at night at 23.53 local time]

15:10 — In a televised address Georgian President Saakashvili announces a unilateral ceasefire.

18:00 — Tbilisi informs Marat Kulakhmetov, commander of peacekeepers, that the cease fire has been cancelled.

19:05 — Mamuka Kurashvili, chief of Georgian peacekeeping operations, announces on television that Georgian troops are engaged in an operation to “restore constitutional order throughout the region.”

*\*\*\*19:30 — Tbilisi says 100 Russian vehicles have crossed through the Roki tunnel into Georgia, and so begins shelling it. Later, however, it reports that “first Russian troops enter through Roki Tunnel” six hours later, at 01:30 on August 8.*

20:53 — First reports of shelling of Tskhinvali.

22:45 — Georgia says it has occupied three villages in Southern Ossetia

## **NOTES:**

THE CEASE FIRE LASTS LESS THAN THREE HOURS. DURING THE LATE AFTERNOON, GEORGIAN TROOPS MOVE TWO BRIGADES UP TO THE FRONT. (Washington Post, August 17; Civil Georgia, August 25);

PRIOR TO LAUNCHING MILITARY OPERATIONS IN S. OSSETIA, GEORGIAN OFFICIALS REPORT NO RUSSIAN TROOPS IN THE REGION. ON TV NEXT DAY SAAKASHVILI SAYS THAT RUSSIAN AIR STRIKES ALSO BEGAN ON AUGUST 8. (Civil Georgia, August 8)

## **August 8 — Russia Responds**

04:30 — Medvedev convenes an emergency session of government to discuss Russia's options in this crisis.

05:01 — South Ossetia asks Russia for protection.

06:51 — UN Security Council fails to approve a Russia-sponsored call for a ceasefire.

07:30 — In a televised address, Saakashvili mentions Russian air strikes on August 8.

09:21 — NATO Secretary General calls for an immediate end to the violence.

10:15 — Georgia announces a three-hour ceasefire for the evacuation of civilians in Tskhinvali.

10:30 — Georgia says it now controls Tskhinvali.

12:04 — Russia's Defence Ministry announces it has sent "peacekeeping reinforcements" into South Ossetia.

14:44 — Georgia reports that Russian forces have reached Tskhinvali.

\*\*\*16:30 — Georgian reports that its troops have withdrawn from Tskhinvali, though it later reports that its troops withdrew on August 10 at 03:00. The commander of Russian forces reports that his forces control the city on August 9 at 07:40.

17:03 — Kokoity says that 1,400 people were killed in Friday's confrontation.

## **NOTES:**

RUSSIA REQUESTS A UN CEASEFIRE RESOLUTION FIVE HOURS BEFORE SENDING IN GROUND FORCES;

RUSSIA'S TROOPS OFFICIALLY ENTER SOUTH OSSETIA 17 HOURS AFTER GEORGIA OFFICIALLY LAUNCHES ITS OPERATION;

GEORGIA REPORTS FIRST RUSSIAN AIR ASSAULTS, BUT NO ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN RUSSIAN AND GEORGIAN FORCES ON THE GROUND FOR 19 HOURS;

DEPENDING ON THE SOURCE, THE BATTLE FOR TSKHINVALI LASTED ANYWHERE FROM 2-37 HOURS.

## **August 9 — UN mediation stalls**

02:00 — U.S. condemns Russia's 'military actions against Georgia' at the UN.

05:46 — Medvedev announces that Russia is engaged in "peace enforcement" operations in South Ossetia.

07:04 — Russia says 30,000 refugees have fled South Ossetia over the past 1.5 days.

07:16 — US Department of State condemns Russia's 'use of strategic bombers and missiles' against Georgia.

10:30 — Georgia declares it is at war with Russia. It simultaneously declares martial law within Georgia and a general mobilization.

11:05 — Saakashvili calls for an immediate ceasefire.

11:52 — Abkhazia launches an offensive to remove Georgian troops occupying the Kodory Gorge in Abkhazia.

23:00 — UN Security Council for the third time fails to pass a resolution on the conflict.

#### **NOTES:**

US CONDEMNS RUSSIAN "MILITARY ACTIONS AGAINST GEORGIA." ON 8/22, HOWEVER, US AMBASSADOR TO MOSCOW JOHN BEYRLE WILL SAY THAT RUSSIAN FORCES "RESPONDED TO ATTACKS ON RUSSIAN PEACEKEEPERS IN SOUTH OSSETIA LEGITIMATELY. . ." (Reuters, August 22);

UN SECURITY COUNCIL FAILS REPEATEDLY TO PASS A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR CEASE FIRE, AS RUSSIA DEMANDS THAT GEORGIA BE CONDEMNED FOR INITIATING HOSTILITIES.

#### **August 10 — The Conflict Winds Down**

13:30 — Georgian Foreign Ministry hands diplomatic note on cease fire terms to Russian charge d'affaires in Tbilisi. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Karasin announces the terms of ceasefire-Georgia must withdraw to the positions existing before the beginning of the conflict, and make a pledge not to use force.

19:17 — French and Finnish Foreign Ministers arrive in Tbilisi to mediate peace deal.

#### **NOTES:**

BASIC CEASE FIRE TERMS AGREED UPON BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF FOREIGN INTERMEDIARIES.

#### **August 11 — Russia enters Georgia**

05:07 — Russian military says 9,000 Russian troops have been sent to Abkhazia.

08:18 — British Foreign Secretary condemns Russia's military actions in Georgia.

08:48 — Moscow calls for a Russia-NATO council meeting to discuss South Ossetia.

09:16 — NATO head says Russia is using 'disproportionate force' against Georgia.

09:30 — Saakashvili signs ceasefire agreement prepared by France and Finland.

13:00 — Georgia reports that Russian troops now occupy Zugdidi, outside S. Ossetia.

14:12 — Russian troops say they are taking "preventative action" near Senaki and Zugdidi, both inside Georgia proper.

17:19 — Saakashvili says the Russian military has blocked a central highway linking east and west Georgia.

21:15 — George W. Bush says "Russia has invaded a sovereign neighboring state and threatens a democratic government elected by its people."

#### **NOTES:**

13:00 ON 8/11 IS THE FIRST MENTION BY GEORGIA OF RUSSIAN FORCES INSIDE GEORGIA PROPER. THIS IS 73 HOURS AFTER RUSSIA'S TROOPS OFFICIALLY ENTER SOUTH OSSETIA, AND 90 HOURS AFTER THE OFFICIAL COMMENCEMENT OF MILITARY OPERATIONS BY

GEORGIA.

### **August 12 — “Peace is at Hand”**

16:31 — Abkhazia says it has re-taken the Kodori Gorge (confirmed by Georgia three hours later).

21:11 — Saakashvili accepts the ceasefire terms signed in Moscow.

### **August 13 — Russia Consolidates its Position**

10:50 — Polish President Lech Kaczynski describes the ceasefire agreement as inadequate and calls on the EU to take a more decisive stance.

12:05 — EU says it is ready to send peacekeepers to Georgia.

15:13 — Bush orders U.S. Defence Secretary Gates to start a “humanitarian mission headed by the U.S. military” in Georgia.

### **NOTES:**

THROUGHOUT 8/12 AND 8/13 THERE ARE REPORTS OF RUSSIAN TROOPS IN GEORGIA PROPER. THE GEORGIANS SAY THEY ARE THERE TO LAUNCH AN ASSAULT ON TBILISI. RUSSIA CLAIMS THEY ARE ESTABLISHING A SECURITY PERIMETER AROUND OSSETIA TO PREVENT FURTHER GEORGIAN ATTACKS.

### **August 14 —**

06:59 — U.S. Secretary of State Rice warns Russia to honor the cease fire terms.

08:10 — Russian army reports it has transferred control of Gori to civilian administration, but remains in the city to prevent looting. Georgian television reports that “the situation in Gori is calm.”

09:42 — Leaders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia sign a peace plan in Moscow as part of the cease fire. Medvedev says Russia will support any decision made by the people of Abkhazia and South Ossetia on their status.

### **August 16 —**

10:57 — Medvedev officially signs the French-brokered peace plan.

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