



## Remarks With Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili

**Secretary Condoleezza Rice**

Tbilisi, Georgia  
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**PRESIDENT SAAKASHVILI:** Madame Secretary, I'm very pleased to host you here in Tbilisi. I think your visit is a strong investment to ever stronger Georgia-U.S. partnership. I think this is a partnership based on our common security interests, our own common economy -- economic interests. U.S. is number one investor in Georgia. But primarily, this is a partnership based on values, all the mutual values that we -- that unite us, values that's based on democracy, freedom and support for democracy and freedom worldwide. I think Georgia is a success case of President Bush democracy and freedom agenda. And I think that we are going to continue this way, with all the ups and downs we might have. But it is a success story.

I think Georgia today is a successful country, a country which -- that is energy supplier for the region, country that is supplier of -- basically that is number one investment recipient, in terms of FDI in the region, the per capita, the country whose economy tripled since your last visit here in 2005, but also the country that also sets example for democratic transformation for the rest of the region. And certainly we are very, very grateful for all your support in all these endeavors.

We are also very grateful for your support for our peace plan for the conflicts and for your unwavering support for Georgia's territorial integrity and peaceful resolution of the existing conflicts. Certainly, without that support, things might have been much more complicated, even more complicated than they are, although they still are complicated.

So again, Madame Secretary, thank you for -- so much for being here. And please, you have the floor.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. President, and thank you for welcoming me here in what is really a beautiful city -- Tbilisi is a fantastic place -- and thank you for the great dinner last night overlooking a wonderful city. And I just have to say that the musicians were fantastic, especially the wonderful, young boy of 11 or 12 years old, who's one of the best jazz pianists I've heard anywhere. And so thank you very much for that.

We have had very good discussions here. I want to again affirm that the United States remains committed to the territorial integrity of Georgia, to its democratic development. It is extremely important that the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia be resolved on the basics -- basis of principles that respect that territorial integrity, that respect the need for them to be resolved peacefully. We have noted concerns that violence should be -- should not be carried out by any party. And we, through the Friends process, will do everything that we can to help resolve those conflicts.

You know that we have been concerned from time to time about activities in the region and I have indeed said that some of the activities that Russia has engaged in have been activities that have not promoted a peaceful resolution. But that said, we believe that the friends process needs to continue. And I committed to you to try with our colleagues to reinvigorate and to, indeed, intensify our efforts to resolve these frozen conflicts.

I want to thank you also for the contributions of Georgia, globally, to the spread of prosperity and democracy; in particular, your forces that are with our forces in other conflicts. And let me single them out in Iraq where you have lost soldiers because of their brave activities in places like Diyala Province, a very tough place. But the Georgian soldiers fight well and they fight effectively. They are well-trained. They have high morale. And our military people are proud to serve with them.

Finally, I have had an opportunity to speak with Civil Society this morning and some members of the opposition. And as we have talked, it is extremely important that Georgia continue to develop democratic institutions. A strong parliament, strong independent media, a strong civil society and an independent judiciary will ultimately serve as the foundation for democracy in Georgia. We are proud to call Georgia our friend and we look forward to many, many years of friendship, not just between our governments, but between our peoples. Thank you.

**PRESIDENT SAAKASHVILI:** Thank you. So who has the questions?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Let's see. A Georgian journalist, maybe first?

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Georgian (inaudible). Secretary Rice, I will ask a question in Georgian.

(Via Interpreter.) How all those events taking place in Abkhazia, all those blasts and explosions can affect Sochi Olympic Games?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, first of all, the Sochi Olympic Games are a ways off. But I really want to speak to the violence. The violence needs to stop. And whoever is perpetrating it -- and I've mentioned this to the President -- there should not be violence. And innocent lives have been taken and it is very important that all parties reject violence as an option. There must be a peaceful solution to the situation in Abkhazia and that is what we will work for.

Arshad.

**PRESIDENT SAAKASHVILI:** And certainly, I mean, by the way --

**SECRETARY RICE:** I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

**PRESIDENT SAAKASHVILI:** When we talk about the Sochi Olympics, you know, we'll be more than pleased. Of course, it's related to security situation in the region. Of course (inaudible). And we will be more than pleased to set up the joint committee with the Russian Federation on preparation of safe and successful environment for Sochi Olympics, including economic issues, including cooperation issues, trans-border issues, immigration of the -- you

know, of the movement of people issues, everything that concerns Sochi Olympics.

We have this – we've proposed it before. We've proposed it again formally to have the joint committee with the Russian Government to facilitate the holding of the Olympics and to avoid any possible problems. And problems are there for the Olympics and we cannot ignore them. We were the strongest supporters of Olympics for Sochi. We thought and we still think it's a very good chance for peace in the region.

Please.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Thank you.

Arshad.

**QUESTION:** Secretary Rice, yesterday, as you were saying that the United States considers Georgia's territorial integrity inviolable, Georgian officials were saying that Russian aircraft had violated their airspace.

One, can you give us your assessment of why Russia may have done such a thing, let alone the other actions that have given you concern about – toward Georgia? Second, how concerned are you about the possibility of the violence in Abkhazia erupting into a wider war? And third, what ideas did you bring or how can you push forward the direct bilateral talks between Georgia and Russia?

And Minister – Prime Minister Saakashvili – President Saakashvili, excuse me, can you give us your assessment of Russian motives and also the bilateral process?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I can't speak to the specific incident yesterday, but there have been incidents. There have been incidents that the United States has spoken out about on a number of occasions, including even the presidential decree that the Russians issued in April of this year.

I am not going to try to judge Russian motives. I am only concerned about the actions at this point. And Russia is a member of the friends. It should – really needs to behave as – in that way, which means that it needs to be a part of resolving the problem and solving the problem and not contributing to it. And I've said that to the Russians privately, I've said it publicly. I believe that there are ways to resolve this peacefully. Not only should there be contacts, as there are between Russia and Georgia – Russia and Georgia need to develop good relations – but there also need to be contacts between Georgia and Abkhazia. And the Abkhaz deserve to know that they will have prospects for a better future. And the United States is prepared to work on that element of this as well.

**PRESIDENT SAKASHVILI:** Well, I mean, going back to the – yesterday's incident, Russian planes came down – came close to the capital and came at sufficient low for us to see them from proximity and maybe they wanted to salute Secretary Rice, I don't know, but normally – normal – you know, normal air forces don't do these kind of things.

But the reality is – you know, jokes aside, that this is a very worrisome development and that has been taking continuous character. The -- you know, the main point is that Russia no longer supports – no longer acknowledges jurisdiction of Georgia towards essential part of its own territory. And these kind of things has never happened since – not only since the end of Cold War, but are unprecedented since the end of Second World War anywhere. This is basically the most blatant challenge you could give to post-Cold War, in general, to modern European order.

Now what is the motivation? What's the way – the Russians have been explaining this publicly as well as privately to us. This is their reaction to NATO expansion plans. This is their reaction to the independence of Kosovo. And this is their reaction to increasing U.S. presence here in the region. Looks like some people have not noticed that the Cold War is over.

But the point here is we are talking about vision of Abkhazia from where more than 450,000 people have been thrown out from their houses. This is one of the most forgotten and, you know, brutal ethnic cleansings of the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century. With the help of Russian army, we were bombed. This time, they are flying over. Last time, they were bombing us in Abkhazia for many, many months before these people had to flee the place. And this is something that U.S. supported at – resolution General Assembly, talking about ethnic cleansing in Abkhazia. We want to find equitable solutions; understanding sensitivities of every group in the region, but this is the region that has only less than one – 20 percent of (inaudible) population. It's basically empty.

And, you know, in order to fill this gap, we need peaceful solutions. We need creative 21<sup>st</sup> century solutions for what was the 20<sup>th</sup> century conflict, not 19<sup>th</sup> century violent and brutal and imperial solutions as some people might think. And from that point of view, the U.S. role is essential in promoting peace, promoting democracy, promoting chances – individual chances for every individual inhabitant of those territories, in order to avoid violence and to find their way ahead for everybody, and to incorporate people.

Georgia is a tapestry of minorities. This – it's not our weakness; it's our strength. And we believe in strong multicultural, multiethnic democracy. And that's what we are and that's what we'll build together with the U.S. support. Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Helena Bedwell, Bloomberg. Dr. Rice, what concrete steps the U.S. Government is going to take of causing alliance with the European Union to stop this violence? And Mr. Saakashvili, very briefly, can you tell us, is Georgian Government going to take economic (inaudible) steps toward Abkhazia in answer, for example, what Russia is doing right now? Thank you.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, the United States is working very closely, particularly with the Germans, but also with other members of the Friends Group to try and get a peace process back online. One of the – one of our envoys, our Deputy Assistant Secretary Matt Bryza was in the region recently to talk about some of the ideas that might form a foundation for this.

I personally believe, and I've said to the President, that we need to elevate the issue. I am going to call for discussions to be held at a higher level, at least at the level of political directors and perhaps beyond that, because this is a serious situation. There are ideas about de-escalation. There are ideas about ending the isolation of Abkhazia. Georgians and Abkhaz need to talk directly. So there are many things that could be done and we're going to pursue them, but I do think we need to do it more intensively and at a higher level.

**PRESIDENT SAKASHVILI:** Well, I think certainly, we are talking together to reach out to every group in the region. That's exactly what we mean by blatant besiege mentality and they selecting these people to reach out and to do – have political dialogue at every level – at the level of level of communities.

This is important. However, one should not omit to see the elephant in the room. And the elephant is the actions of the Russian Federation and the two – by stopping to recognize borders. And, you know, these kind of things happened in the last century. And not in very good examples and they were not done by very good governments in the regimes. I don't want to name them, now, but people do remember that. And it all – it was a bad case. We don't need repetition of bad cases of the past. We need to look ahead of us, to look to find some new ways to do things.

So what we are trying to do is to certainly reach out to every community. We should know that the town of Gagra, five kilometers from the Olympics, is a town from which 95 percent of the people have been expelled. This is a town where they took out every single book in Georgia from the schools and burned them publicly in the downtown of Gagra, just couple of years ago. This is very close to Olympic venues.

So this is about morality. We want to have Olympics. We want to have peace. We want to have development and we want to have chance to everybody in this region. Certainly, we are willing to work very closely with Russia. As Secretary Rice rightly said, we don't only need to normalize relations; we will need good relations with them. We are not – we feel very strongly – we have very strong ties with Russia. We have very strong emotional, culture and historic ties, and we do certainly feel obliged for ourselves and for future generations to reestablish and make for – very strong (inaudible) with the Russians.

At the same time, we certainly have – we are a small country, but we have our small national security interests and national interests. And certainly, we are also part of the democratic system that exists here and, certainly, democracy has its own rules and the way it reacts to things. And, you know, democracies are peaceful, but they also tend to stand up for their national interests and to, you know, do every peaceful way to secure those national security interests together with the support of our democratic friends, primarily the United States.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Anne Gearan.

**QUESTION:** On yesterday's Iranian missile tests, there have been some statements from Tehran indicating that this was intended as a message for Israel. There was one official quoted saying that if there was an Israeli strike on Iranian facilities that Iran would light up Tel Aviv. Do you think they're serious? And do you have a message in return?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Look, I'm not going to send messages on behalf of anybody to the Iranian Government. We've sent a message to the Iranian Government. It's in the form of three Security Council resolutions that say that Iran is in violation of international obligations and it needs to get on the right side of the international community.

We are also sending a message to Iran that we will defend American interests and defend our – the interest of our allies. We've done that both by -- I think you know that in the Gulf area, the United States has enhanced its security capacity, its security presence. And we are working closely with all of our allies to make certain that they are capable of defending themselves. And we take very, very strongly our obligation to help our allies defend themselves. And no one should be confused about that.

We also are able to look to the future of a missile defense system that will make it more difficult for Iran to threaten and be bellicose and say terrible things because their missiles won't work. And so these are all elements of America's intention and determination to prevent Iran from threatening our interests or the interests of our friends and allies. And I don't think the Iranians are too confused either about the capability and the power of the United States to do exactly that.

Now one final point about Iran: We've also laid out a path where Iran could enter the international community in a positive way. There is still a P-5+1 package sitting before Iran that Iran can take up and get on the right side of the international community. And it ought to be talking about that, not about threats against America or threats against America's allies, because frankly, it's not going to do them any good.

If I could just mention one other thing: The President talked about our friendship. I just – I want it to be known also – because we didn't have a chance in the questions – we did talk again also about Georgia's transatlantic aspirations. And the United States continues strongly to support those transatlantic aspirations and believes that the intensified dialogue that Georgia now enjoys with NATO is important, but that a membership action plan, which, after all, is not membership, but is a way to give a way for – to give a context in which countries can build greater democracy is important.

Mr. President, I hope you note that the United States stood strongly with many others and that out of Bucharest, there was, from NATO, a strong affirmation of Georgia's transatlantic future.

**PRESIDENT SAKASHVILI:** So are you going – I understood you are going to give a tough fight for us in December.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Always, Mr. President. We always fight for our friends.

**PRESIDENT SAKASHVILI:** I think it should be an ultimate victory of Bush Administration if Georgia and Ukraine can get into MAP by the end of this administration.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, we will work on it, but again, I just – I hope that the Georgian people and I wanted to have an opportunity to say that to the Georgian people, take note of even the Bucharest declaration, which clearly said that Georgia's future is in NATO. Thank you.

**PRESIDENT SAKASHVILI:** We did take note. We are ready for that. (Inaudible) some people took note of it, but that's fine.

**SECRETARY RICE:** (Laughter.)

**PRESIDENT SAKASHVILI:** We can deal with it. Thank you. Excellent.  
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