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For Immediate Release
Office of the Vice President
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Remarks by Vice President Cheney and President Saakashvili of Georgia After Meeting

Presidential Administration
Tbilisi, Georgia

12:35 A.M. (Local)

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PRESIDENT SAAKASHVILI: Well, I would like to welcome Mr. Vice President. And thank you for your visit, for your support, and for your solidarity. Let me, on behalf of my people, extend my gratitude for the assistance package you have pledged for Georgia. We heard a statement from your President Bush yesterday, and by Secretary Rice, as well, as we discussed in our conversation.

The support of the United States, now more than ever, reflects just how close our two countries are: that our common values are what truly unite and bind our two peoples. Together with our other partners in Europe, America and elsewhere, we will rebuild Georgia.

Looking forward, it is my number one priority to rebuild this great nation and to send the message to the world: That message is that the light of freedom can never be extinguished in Georgia; the spirit and will of my nation, the resolve of my government, are stronger than ever before; and, we may be a small nation, but our hearts and spirits are not, and our love of freedom is even bigger, and as many challenges lay ahead of us, we are willing to tackle them and to take them.

We feel that we are not alone. We feel that a great community of nations from the European Union, the United States, Japan, other responsible nations, China, are standing by Georgia, and I think we will endure, we will prosper, and we will succeed.



Of course, this has been a very hard time. You know, I think that one thing should be clearly understood: We have two territories in Georgia where ethnic cleansing has been committed. From Abkhazia over the years, more than 80 percent of the population have been expelled.

From South Ossetia, in South Ossetia, two-thirds of the territory has been ethnically cleansed just during those weeks. This is to remind to everybody they're just trying to legalize the results of ethnic cleansing. But if you are trying to legalize -- if anybody in the world would try to legalize or accept what has happened, basically you will be accepting and legalizing human tragedies of hundreds of thousands of people -- more than half a million, actually, thrown out of their houses, deprived of their livelihoods, deprived of their right to not only to return but even to see their own houses because of their wrong ethnic origin, because of their wrong loyalty. Ethnic cleansing in South Ossetia took place not only of ethnic Georgians but also ethnic Ossetians that were considered to be disloyal. So I think -- I really call on all responsible nations of the world not to accept this, but to continue to condemn -- (inaudible) -- to upheld international law and to upheld international justice.

On our part, Georgia is a peace-loving nation. We will do our best to avoid violence. We are committed to a peaceful resolution of all the issues. And we are committed to a dialogue with everybody, internally, and with all the nations in the neighborhood and worldwide. We will serve as responsible partners with the United States. Certainly, we have weathered a terrible storm. Let us now plant new seeds. Our slogan of Georgia is "Strength and Unity." So I think it's also unity between our nations, between us and other civilized, democratic nations of the world. Thank you again, and God bless this nation. Thank you.

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: Thank you, Mr. President. I appreciate the kind words, and the opportunity to visit your great country. I'm pleased as well to bring greetings from Georgia's friend and ally, President George W. Bush. He, of course, has visited this capital city, and has fond memories of the warm welcome that he received from the people of Georgia. I have felt that same warmth today, and I'm delighted to be here. I also want to recognize Ambassador Tefft and all the staff of the American Embassy here, American and Georgian, for their magnificent work over the last few weeks.

I also bring a message of friendship from the people of the United States. Americans are acutely conscious of the great trials your country has faced over the last four weeks, and we stand in solidarity with the people of Georgia. After your nation won its freedom in the Rose Revolution, America came to the aid of this courageous young democracy. We are doing so again, as you work to overcome an invasion of your sovereign territory -- and an illegitimate, unilateral attempt to change your country's borders by force that has been universally condemned by the free world.

The United States has already provided nearly \$30 million in humanitarian assistance, including more than 1,200 tons of food and supplies. And yesterday in Washington, President Bush announced another billion dollars in economic assistance to Georgia, as part of America's contribution to a broader international effort called for by the European Union. These funds will support reconstruction, humanitarian needs, the resettlement of displaced persons, and other vital priorities. President Bush has also directed a range of American government agencies to give additional support to Georgia's recovery by promoting greater international trade and investment in this country. As I have assured President Saakashvili today, America will help Georgia rebuild and regain its position as one of the world's fastest growing economies. He and his democratically elected government can count on the continued support and assistance of the United States.

I assured the President, as well, of my country's strong commitment to Georgia's territorial integrity. Georgia has that right, just as it has the right to build stronger ties to friends in Europe and across the Atlantic.

For the sake of long-term security in this region, we call for the peaceful resolution of the dispute over the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia -- based on good faith discussions among the parties, and objective international mediation.

Russia's actions have cast grave doubt on Russia's intentions and on its reliability as an international partner -- not just in Georgia but across this region and indeed throughout the international system.

America will do its duty to work with the governments of Georgia and our other friends and allies to protect our common interests and uphold our values. America is fully committed to Georgia's Membership Action Plan for NATO, and to its eventual membership in the Alliance.

The United States is very pleased with the recent establishment of a NATO-Georgia Commission. As the current members of NATO declared at the Summit in Bucharest, Georgia will be in our alliance. NATO is a defensive alliance. It is a threat to no one. Indeed, NATO is one of the great forces for freedom, security and peace that the modern world has known.

Mr. President, before they were called home to defend their country, Georgian troops were on assignment in Iraq, helping to defend that struggling, young democracy. Now, it is the responsibility of the free world to rally to the side of Georgia. We will help your people to heal this nation's wounds, to rebuild this economy, and to ensure Georgia's democracy, independence and further integration with the West.

Mr. President, you've been fearless in response to the occupation of your territory, and steadfast in your principles. America respects you, and we respect the noble people of this country -- more than 100,000 of whom came out this week to demonstrate their support for Georgia's independence and sovereignty.

PRESIDENT SAAKASHVILI: Actually, 1.5 million.

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: 1.5 million. Well, it was more than 100,000.

(Laughter.) Good, 1.5 million.

Georgia's independence and sovereignty has been very important, obviously. And Georgians have sacrificed for freedom, and served for freedom's cause in other lands. All Georgians deserve to live as free men and women -- and this, I believe, is their destiny. In their hearts, the Georgian people have great courage. And in America, they have a sturdy and faithful friend. Thank you.

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