

GeoArmy



ONE TEAM, ONE STRATEGY, ONE COMMON GOAL



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“INSURING SECURITY AND DEFENCE OF THE COUNTRY IS A DUTY OF EVERY CITIZEN”

Interview with the Minister of Defence of Georgia, Levan Izoria

Many reforms have been recently carried out in the Ministry of Defence of Georgia. The Ministry elaborated the document of Strategic Defence Review, that includes a view of transformation and strengthening a combat readiness of the Armed Forces. We conducted an interview with the Minister of Defence of Georgia Mr. Levan Izoria concerning five main directions of the document and current prominent themes in the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Minister, the Ministry of Defence has recently published the document of Strategic Defence Review, that describes the main priorities of the Ministry of Defence during 2017-2020. What is the main essence of the document? What does the Ministry focus on during the next three years?

Considering the existing growing threats of a country, our aim is to strengthen combat readiness of the Armed Forces. Therefore, we have developed a conceptual view in order to raise defence capabilities of the country and strengthen combat readiness. As a result of identification of active working processes in the Armed Forces of the country, several important issues had been identified that determined the priorities of the Ministry.

Five main directions have been identified in the document of strategic review, such as Strategic Management; Force Optimization; Force Readiness; Institutional reforms; and Multinational and Bilateral Engagement. The goal of this document is to have a strong and effective Defence agency and modern Armed Forces through our active working effort that will be able to respond to existing threats and defend national security and sovereignty.

Mr. Minister, optimization reform carried out in the Ministry of Defence has been skeptically received by the opponents. What do you think, how fair is this assessment and what was the main goal of this reform?

First of all it should be noted that optimization reform is the most important part of transformation of the Armed Forces. Objective of the optimization taking place in the Ministry of Defence is to redistribute expenses in a manner that big part of the funds should be used to strengthen defence capabilities of the country and less for personnel costs. Last year 67 percent of the budget that included 670 million was considered only for social and salary expenses and 33 percent was calculated for ammunition, equipment and other needs. After optimization this proportion will get closer to NATO standards. Moreover, there is a kind of pyramid regarding

military servicemen in the agency, that was absolutely broken down or in other words the amount of people with high ranks, colonels, lieutenant colonels was disproportionately big that hindered the perspective of promoting young cadres. In the case of civilians there was so called “staff with a star”. Person with rank or without it could be appointed to this staff and this didn’t need any qualification requirements. In this way staff units were enlarged in the agency during years.

According to this, optimization reform was critical to increasing defence effectiveness. It is also important that this reform practically didn’t touch military servicemen. It should be noted that according to the principle of justice and transparency of processes a special committee was created that examined capabilities of those employees working in the Ministry. Based on this, qualified employees of the Ministry of Defence continued working. I want to assure you that this process was carried out with the methods that abide the relevant laws and regulations. The employees who had to leave working positions received an appropriate compensation, that included 5 000 000 million GEL in total.

Mr. Minister, during your recent speeches you often talk about total defence concept. As we know the Ministry has already actively started working in this direction. What does the total defence concept mean and what will it bring to the Armed Forces and country?

Within the total defence policy it is possible to strengthen defence readiness of the country, deter the threats and defend sovereignty of Georgia effectively through synchronization of international projects (especially SNGP and GDRP), lessons learned in the international missions and trainings, mobilization of the whole national defence resources and activation of interagency cooperation.

It is important for the country to mobilize not only the whole national defence resources, but also agencies and to have high degree of coordination among them during crisis and war. Compatibility of these two components ensures the total defence, inevitably with broad involvement of a society. Activation of enlisted and reserve system serves precisely this purpose. Stability of the country is a part of the main principle. As you know, during the Warsaw Summit special emphases were placed precisely on providing resilience in member and partner states. Accordingly elements that provide support to military forces including the political and informational fields should be strong as strong as military capabilities of the country.

There were conflicting opinions in the society about restoration of the renewed compulsory military service. What is a position of the Ministry?

It is critically important to improve capabilities of the Armed Forces interoperable with NATO and partner nations in order to take appropriate measures in response to challenges of national defence and security; to continue transformation process and fulfillment of assumed international obligations by the Ministry of Defence. This includes focus on the following main factors, such as personnel, equipment, training, sustainment and support with relevant resources. From the day I arrived in the Ministry, first international visits in Sweden, Finland and Estonia precisely served the above-mentioned purpose. I want to say that it indeed wasn’t accidental. We try to share the best experience from our partners to neutralize modern threats effectively. We made this decision precisely as a result of 3 month active cooperation with foreign partners and experts.

Compulsory military service system is of utmost importance to increasing combat readiness. We don’t want to return to an old system, that is why we have introduced certain innovations to the society. The important innovation is that, enlisted man will take the same basic training courses, as contracted serviceman. He will feel that he is a meaningful soldier. His level of individual training will give us a high degree of performance of our combat units. Enlisted men will take active theoretical and practical classes that will be qualitatively a different approach from previously existed model of compulsory military service. Compulsory Military servicemen will have a right to rest during days off, which was absent before. Compulsory military servicemen will get benefits from improved social packages, as well as they will receive an improved insurance package and increased payment. It should be noted that compulsory military service will promote an integration of religious and ethnic minorities in the civilian defence system.

Renewed compulsory military service is important for implementing total defence principle. It is every citizen’s duty to serve his/her country.

Mr. Minister, how would you assess intensity of our international relationships on the way towards the integration of the country into NATO?

I want to emphasize that Georgia and the Ministry of Defence fundamentally strive to settle down in North Atlantic security architecture. For us it is a choice that doesn’t have an alternative,



both for the security of our country and for democratic development. In the last year, we have unprecedented intensification of cooperation with NATO. Representatives from the North Atlantic Council visited Georgia in September under the direction of the Secretary General; The Military Committee arrived in Georgia on March 2-3, later NATO parliamentary assembly was held in May. From my observations, we haven’t had such a dynamics in the history of our relationships, that indicates tendency to deepen these relationships.

I want to express my gratitude to the Secretary of Defence of the United States, General Mattis, who demonstrated willingness in his supporting letter regarding ongoing reforms in the Ministry of Defence in order to assist us in carrying out these ambitious reforms.

Opening of a modern training base in Georgia within Georgia Defence Readiness Program (GDRP) represents a clear confirmation of active international and bilateral cooperation. As you know Georgian military servicemen take pre-deployment trainings in Germany under the direction of American Command. As a result of construction of this base, our servicemen and those from NATO member and partner nations will have an opportunity to attend similar trainings in Georgia.

I also want to note that Georgia hosted two the most important international exercises in spring and in autumn – “Noble Partner 2017” and “Agile Spirit 2017”. Bilateral trainings planned together with partner and regional nations increasing a level of combat readiness of Georgian Armed Forces that serves to strengthen interoperability with NATO and partner countries armed forces.

By strengthening Georgian defence capabilities and successfully transforming the Armed Forces; deepening relationships with international partners; and involving all citizens in the affairs of national defence and security, we will be able to handle existing challenges and become a worthy member of the North Atlantic Alliance.

STRENGTH IS IN PARTNERSHIP!

Multinational Exercises - “Noble Partner 2017” and “Agile Spirit 2017” were successfully completed in Georgia



Stability, improving skills in Defensive and Offensive Operations, maintaining and deepening interoperability between NATO partner nations and GAFs - these are the main purposes of the International Exercises, serving the development of the country Armed Forces.

Therein, summer of 2017 was multi-lateral and quite active for the Armed Forces. Georgia hosted multinational exercises “Noble Partner 2017” and “Agile Spirit 2017”. Multinational exercise was officially opened at Vaziani Airfield on 30th of July and its active phase was completed on 12th of August at Vaziani 11th Range by demonstrative exercise.

“Strength is in Partnership” - was the main motto of the multinational exercise “Noble Partner 2017” this year. The main purpose of the exercise thoroughly justifies its title and content. It’s worth mentioning, that exercise scales increase and additional partners participate in it every year. This time, NATO member states and 8 partner nations participated in the exercise, including: Georgia, the United States of America, United Kingdom, Germany, Turkey, Slovenia, Armenia and Ukraine.

Exercise “Noble Partner 2017” is a part of USAREUR-led exercise cycle in the



Black Sea Region, involving territories of seven countries.

Improve interoperability between the United States of America, Great Britain, Georgia and other Partner Nations Armed Forces, increase NATO Response Forces (NRF) combat capabilities and deepen interoperability among NRF units - multinational exercise fairly accomplished its mission! More than 2800 servicemen from different countries worked side by side collaboratively.

Prepare military personnel integrated into the NRF for participation in joint operations and responding to the crises; improve interaction between units of participant countries’ Armed Forces at a tactical level; merge infantry and mechanized units, including improvement of cooperation with the United States of America and Partner Nations - this is the importance, mission and the purpose of the multinational exercise “Agile Spirit 2017”, which unified 1500 military personnel from different countries (Georgia, U.S.A, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia and Azerbaijan) at Orpolo Range this year.

With regard to the International Exercise, we’ve talked to Shavlego Tabatadze, the East Commander of Land Forces of General Staff of the GAF...

Colonel, what can you say about the importance of the international exercises?

International Exercises are of great significance for GAF. We gain best lessons learned, in the perspective of cooperation and compatibility and in view of



Command and Control issues. Generally, as I’ve previously mentioned these types of exercises facilitate development of the Armed Forces and improvement of C2; also development and training of NCOs and Officers’ Corps. During the exercise, Command chain and every soldier are compatible with the military personnel from other countries and they make common decisions. And main thing is that, these types of trainings are important for our country in order to increase defensive capabilities and to become a member of NATO.

Colonel, what can you say about “Noble Partner 2017”? How would you assess this term of the exercise?

It’s third time “Noble Partner 2017” has been conducted in Georgia. The exercise scenario included stability, Offensive and Defensive Operations.

The planning phase lasted for two weeks. It was followed by the execution period, practical phase lasting for two weeks as well.

Georgian side hosted the exercise. This year the scopes of the exercise have significantly increased in the perspective of the number of participant soldiers, as well as employment of armored vehicles. About 500 hundred different types of armored vehicles were involved in the exercise, as well as different types of armament and 10 aircrafts.



The incensed exercise scopes caused development of the infrastructure. For example, this year we conducted exercise on the ranges, that never been used for these purposes. This is important, because every training leads us towards development.

Colonel, we know that Exercise “Agile Spirit 2017” was conducted by West Command, but your point of view concerning to this training is very important.

The scopes of this exercise were smaller, but the purpose is linked with Stability, Offensive and Defensive Operations. Integrated into the NRF for participation in joint operations and responding to the crises - is also the purpose of this exercise.

It is known, that armored vehicles and personnel for “Noble Partner 2017” were deployed by ground, air and sea. Local population from different cities of Georgia including the capital greeted moving armored military vehicles with joy and high spirit.





SOLDIERS' GOLD MEDAL – FOR GEORGIA!

Servicemen wounded in military actions won gold medals in sitting volleyball



Georgian Servicemen wounded in military actions won gold medals in sitting volleyball within “Invictus Games” being held in Canada. In intense final game the team of Georgian servicemen competed with the team of the United Kingdom and won the victory. The winners of “Invictus Games” were awarded gold medals by Prince Henry of Wales. Minister of Defence Levan Izoria supported the game of the team of Georgian servicemen from Lithuania. Levan Izoria congratulated Georgian servicemen on their victory after finishing the match from Vilnius. Besides sitting volleyball within “Invictus Games” the team completed with military servicemen wounded and

injured in combat actions of Ministry of Defence of Georgia and in International Peacekeeping Missions participates in 5 more kinds of sports: bicycle racing, swimming, powerlifting, archery, motor racing. It is the third time Georgian Military servicemen have been participating in “Invictus Games” held under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Harry. Georgian servicemen participated in “Invictus Games” first in London and then in Orlando city of the USA.

“Invictus Games” was created by Prince Harry in honor of the wounded and injured military servicemen who sacrificed themselves for their countries. Participating in “Invictus Games” is the unique opportunity of rehabilitation for the participants. It’s acknowledgement of the fact that they are still strong and are at the service of their countries again. The event was held for the first time in the United Kingdom in 2014, in the USA in 2016 and this year in Toronto, Canada.

Georgia has been taking part in “Invictus Games” since the first year of its creation. In 2014 Georgian Servicemen won a bronze medal in the individual competition of Archery; in 2016 – a silver medal in the individual competition of race, and a bronze medal – in the team competition of sitting volleyball.

Head of Department of Social Affairs and Psychological Support of Ministry of Defence Paata Patiashvili states that the Department of Social Affairs and Psychological Support actively participated in the process of involving wounded/injured servicemen in “Invictus Games”.

“We’ve been working actively with Canadian side concerning the organizational issues throughout the year; at the same time with the coordination of sport service of general staff the department assisted in the process of selecting servicemen. This is exactly the priority



of our department: more servicemen be involved in sporting events and new faces be shown. The success of our guys is a clear example how much importance the authority of the Ministry of Defence attaches to the process of rehabilitation and reintegration of injured servicemen. Congratulations to our heroes on the victory, congratulations to Georgia and Armed Forces”!

NOBLE RESPONSE TO NEW HYBRID CHALLENGE media exercise For reporters



27th of September 2017, one day prior to the media exercise “Noble Response 2017” Senaki II Infantry Brigade base hosted up to twenty media representatives from Georgia. Young people from various backgrounds and media capabilities, experiences and interests, gathered for one purpose - to get familiarized with dense and dynamic information environment during modern crisis situations. Prior to the start of the exercise, participants had to attend academics. 27th of September, at 10:00 AM a bus full of journalists left for Senaki. About 4 hours drive for the representatives of media organizations to Senaki II Infantry Brigade Base was enough to get acquainted with each other and to split into simulation media groups at their will.

“Noble Response 2017” was officially opened on 28th of September. During

two days of academics, 11 speakers took turn to discuss their respective fields of expertise. The pre-exercise training was divided into two parts: theoretical and practical. Theoretical part included: providing additional information for the attendees about hybrid war and the role of information operations and psychological operations in manipulation of public opinion by hostile entities. In that, along with the Georgian experts, the representatives from Strategic Communication Department of General Staff of Ministry of Defence of Lithuania provided the participants with their experiences and expertise in the field of countering propaganda and military media relations.

The practical section provided the participants with first aid and survival trainings essential in the extreme and unpredictable crisis and war situations.

Overall, during the pre-exercise academics participants got acquainted with specifics of civil military cooperation, operational principles during conflict situations, stress management, hybrid warfare, countering propaganda, as well as got practical experience in survival and first aid.

On the 30th of September the exercise took off. The exercise just like pre-exercise academics was divided into two parts, computer based and field exercise parts. Execution itself was all about creating simulation of a real life environment. Participants had to deal with not very friendly “role players” who were not eager to provide them with all the necessary information while at the same time they were forced to navigate through the dense and hostile information space filled with trolls eager to mis-

lead and hijack the public opinion. With this, the organizers aimed at creating typical pre-war information environment. To add to the reality, participating journalists had to deal with technical and situational obstacles. During the field exercise phase, reporters were involved in simulated conventional war for 24 hours, where they had to put the knowledge gained during the academics to practical use.

Officially, the second iteration of the media training “Noble Response 2017” ended on 2nd of October with the Minister of Defence of Georgia, Levan Izoria, granting certificates to the participants of “Noble Response 2017”.

On the 3rd of October participants and the organizational team exchanged feedback and recommendations concerning the project.



“IF I START MY LIFE OVER, I WILL ALWAYS CHOOSE TO BE A SOLDIER”

Bachuki Gakharia

Bachuki Gakharia serves in Georgian Armed forces. He has been wearing uniform since 2007. Even today, as first day in Georgian Armed forces, he is highly motivated and has an unrestrained desire to maintain peace and integrity of his country. During this period he has been appointed to several positions. In 2012, he was in the first peacekeeping mission, in Afghanistan, Helmand province; than in 2016 he was in the second peacekeeping mission, in Afghanistan, in Mazar-i-Sharif. At present, he is a commander of Intelligence Company, 2-nd infantry brigade. In spite of great experience and qualification he has, he is still working hard for further self development and to strengthen the defence capability of his country.

... His history begins at the age of 7, when he and his family had to leave home.



Did the past influence on your decision to become a soldier, because the issues concerning the integrity of your country personally affected you?

„I have this opinion since my childhood. When I left Abkhazia I was in the first grade at school. On the 28-th of September we had to leave our home through Kodorigorge; We went through hard times. This is one of the factors that affected my decision to become a soldier. Today, the integrity of my country is infringed. For me, to keep and maintain peace and integrity of my country is one of the most important deeds.”
He had already made a decision to become a soldier in Georgian Armed Forces when he was graduating from high school. After completing his study at the law faculty, he became a student at the

National Defence Academy. Since then he has been serving in Georgian Armed Forces.

„I was happy that time, and I’m still happy, as I love things I do, and in my opinion, I’m doing it well.”

How the Georgian Armed Forces changed your life?

„We have special routine. The most part of our life we spend in Armed Forces. During this period our responsibilities are train and equip personnel, after that we conduct missions and tasks and keep our unit combat readiness throughout the year”.

In Bachuki Gakharia’s opinion, the principal motivation of serving in Georgian

Armed Forces for him and for his fellow-fighters is to re-establish the territorial integrity of the country and make safe environment for each citizen of Georgia.

What is your opinion concerning international missions?

International missions play the important role in the process of development of the Georgian Armed Forces as it increases combat readiness and fighting capabilities of our country, furthermore it is important in the sphere of lessons learned. In international missions, we study by the training standards, combat capabilities, equipment, armament, techniques and tactics of all the soldiers of foreign countries, and NATO member states. Through international missions, Georgian Armed Forces make new friends in Europe, as well as in the United States. All these things have positive effects on the processes, concerning the development of Georgia and NATO integration.

For Bachuki the international mission is a great responsibility and experience. In the area of operations to keep

and save life and health of all allied nations’ representatives and each citizen greatly depended on his and his soldiers’ proficiency and immediate reaction during supporting missions. In his opinion, he gets great experience through taking part in any of these missions. For soldiers, international mission is an academy, where in practical exercises you make a decision to employ the specific technique that works better than others; Furthermore, in practical exercises, the psychology of soldier changes according to the situation. It is also important to know the price of established brotherhood at battlefield.

At present Bachuki Gakharia has a great experience. In the future he has new objectives, that are connected with self-development, progress and success.

„I plan to go to the United States and attend captain’s carrier course. This course will help to raise my qualification. I think I can achieve this goal.

If I start my life over, I will always choose to be a soldier. I want to be a person, who is always true to himself, God and homeland. „



GEORGIA - FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE!

INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS



Georgia, as an important contributing nation providing Euro-Atlantic security, actively participates in various peace operations.

Units of Georgian Armed Forces were involved in peace operation carried out in Kosovo during 1999-2008 (KFOR-Kosovo Forces). The first Georgian peacekeeping platoon was sent to the Former Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999 (after deploying international military contingent in Kosovo). Georgian platoon consisting of 34 personnel was a part of Turkish battalion in Mamusha. The amount of Georgian peacekeeping contingent in Kosovo has increased several times since 2003.

Georgian Armed Forces as a part of German Brigade was represented with one company (150 military servicemen) in Prizren. Since that time 180 servicemen of Georgian Armed Forces constantly were deployed to Kosovo. They were



rotated every 7 months (Georgian servicemen to be sent to German Brigade were trained for several weeks first in Germany and then they arrived in Kosovo, Prizren). Georgian contingent stayed in Kosovo till 2008 (before the government of Kosovo declared independence on February 17, 2008).

Georgia also participated in NATO's operation Active Endeavour, a counter-terrorist maritime surveillance operation in the Mediterranean Sea, which was initiated after the terroristic acts in USA on September 11, 2001 based on the article 5 of North Atlantic Treaty.

Georgian Armed Forces made an important contribution to Operation "Iraqi Freedom" (2003-2008). It should be emphasized that this operation wasn't a NATO-led operation and coalition forces were under the United States command.

For the first time in 2003, Medical team (70 military medical personnel) and engineer platoon were sent to Tikrit, Iraq to accomplish the peacekeeping mission. In 2004 the amount of military servicemen participating in the mission as a part of coalition forces increased up to 300, but 850 soldiers continued performing the peacekeeping mission since 2005.



After two years, since July, 2007 based on the initiative of the President of Georgia and decision of the Legislative Body, 2000 servicemen from the third infantry brigade were in Al-Kut (Wasit province) in Iraq to conduct peacekeeping mission. In January, 2008 III infantry brigade was replaced by I infantry brigade. To accomplish the peacekeeping mission brigade was deployed to the base "Delta" (Wasit province) with 1500 soldiers, 350 soldiers to the base "Clare" and 150 soldiers to Baghdad. Soldiers of I brigade returned to homeland in August, 2008.

Georgia's Contribution into the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Operation in Afghanistan is particularly important, where it was involved from 2004 till 2015. Georgia took the first place among non-NATO member partner nations participating in this operation in respect to the amount of contingent. For the first time Georgian contingent was sent to Afghanistan in 2004 to participate in the international mission. Participation in ISAF peacekeeping operation together with the Armed Forces of NATO member nations significantly supported further development of Georgian Armed Forces and increased interoperability with NATO. By contributing to Alliance mission, Georgia confirmed that it isn't only a consumer of security, but also active participant in the international peacemaking process.

Before deployment to Afghanistan military servicemen received intensive 6-month training in Georgia for the peacekeeping mission. Training was conducted under the direction of US Marine Expeditionary Brigade. Military servicemen used to arrive in Hohenfels, Germany from Georgia, where they took one-month training in US Joint Multinational Readiness Center. Before deployment to Afghanistan level of training of soldiers and their readiness were evaluated by the experts of this center, as well as by a team of trainers and advisers of US Marine Corps. In total during 2010-2013

two infantry battalions were deployed in Helmand Province and two companies in Kabul, Afghanistan, one under subordination of French Command and the other under subordination of the US. It is notable fact that Georgia sent artillery trainer team to train Afghan artillery personnel in 2011.

Since 2015 Georgia continues participation in NATO operation in Afghanistan and is involved in Resolute Support Mission where it is the second contributor in regard to the amount of military servicemen after the US. Moreover, Georgia is involved in NATO Response Forces since 2015. Several crucial initiatives were originated at the Prague Summit in 2002 that play an important role in the development of military capabilities. One of the initiatives is to create NATO Response Forces. Since 2006 NATO has its technologically highly-developed, well trained Response Forces into the state of full operational readiness.

In 2014 Georgia got involved in European Union Military Operation in the Central African Republic (EUFOR RCA). Based on decision made by the Parliament of Georgia combined company of separate light infantry battalion (156 military servicemen) and appropriate equipment were sent to the Central African Republic in June, 2014. The main mission of Georgian company was to protect airport in the capital Bangui.

On January 5, 2016 one senior officer of Georgian Armed Forces was sent to the multinational Staff of EU Training Mission in the Republic of Mali as an adviser of advisory team. Mission still continues.





EDUCATION OF INTERNATIONAL LEVEL AND FULL FUNDING OF EDUCATION BY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE!

LEPL - David Aghmashenebeli National Defence Academy of Georgia is a leading educational institution, which ensures the development of Officers Corps with high academic and military education, impeccable ethics, strong moral and the characteristics of a leader for loyal and honourable service in the Armed Forces and for the Country

HISTORY

Georgian military institution has a long and interesting history. 152 years ago Tbilisi Military School accepted the first flow of Junkers. After that, there have been various important changes in the field of military education. It is noteworthy, that the establishment of the first military institution in Georgia was preceded by the decision of General Giorgi Kvinitadze, the Commander-in-Chief of Georgian Armed Forces, on the establishment of Junkers' Military School. Unfortunately, the school only existed for three years. After the occupation of Georgia in 1921, the Junkers' Military School was first transformed into Military Institution of Red Army Cadets and later into Tbilisi Artillery School.

Ministry of Defence fully finances Junker education in the National Defence Academy!

The Junkers' Military School was not able to have first Georgian officers' graduation; however its existence made obvious the necessity of National Military Institution in the country. After regaining the independence, the establishment of highly qualified and educated Officers Corps became one of the first priorities of the Armed Forces, which led to the establishment of United Military Academy of the Republic of Georgia on May 28, 1993. The first flow of

Graduation ceremony for 84 graduates of bachelor course of Training Battalion and 6 (2 females) graduates of Officer Candidate Course was held on the formation area on September 7 of the current year.

attendees was admitted on September 1, 1993. People enrolled in military institution were called "Cadets" but soon

the term was changed to "Attendees". Later, the institution was called National Academy of Defence, then it was changed to National Defence Academy. In 2014, the attendees of the Academy returned their historic name "Junker" in the honour of Junkers - bravely fallen for the independence of Georgia in 1921. In 2003, National Defence Academy was given the name of David Aghmashenebeli and was located in Gori.

New Stage of Reforms

New stage of reforms started in 2010, which covered the whole officers' educational system. On December 8, 2010, based on the decision of the Ministry of Defence, National Defence Academy became Legal Entity of Public Law (LEPL). Academy also received a status of higher educational institution.

National Defence Academy is one of the leading military institutions in Transcaucasia which ensures the preparation of competitive officers with modern methods and gives them

This year, 72 Junkers including 4 females were enrolled in the Basic Combat Training Course of Training Battalion of National Defence Academy. At this point, Junkers will undergo 4 week Basic Combat Training Course. After completion of the course, Junkers will take military oath.

theoretical and practical knowledge. The main priority of National Defence Academy is to train intelligent and successful Officers Corps with high moral standards.

Today, the Academy provides the first stage of higher academic education - bachelor's degree - in the following fields: Management, Information Technology and Defence and Security. Na-



On September 11 of the current year 45 attendees started academic year of 2017-2018 in the Command and Staff College of National Defence Academy. Command and Staff College started Defence Analyses Master's Program this year, which accepted 13 attendees including 1 civilian. Defence Analyses Program aims to prepare military and civilian personnel in state security and Defence management issues on strategic level.

tional Defence Academy gives opportunity to civilians and military personnel serving in Georgian Armed Forces to take Officers' Training Candidate Course or Reserve Officer Preparation Course and receive Officers' basic military education. There is also a Georgian Language Preparation Programme in the Academy which ensures the development of Georgian language skills for other-than-Georgian Junkers.

Senior officers serving in the Georgian Armed Forces are given an opportunity to take Command and Staff Course at the Command and Staff College and advance their professional and analytical skills. Command and Staff Course is the highest level of Military Professional Education in the Georgian Armed Forces. The Command and Staff College offers the second stage of higher academic education to those interested that is the "Defence Analyses" Master's program accredited by the Ministry of Education.

The aim of the Bachelor's and Master's programs of National Defence Academy is to prepare the qualified officers who will be able to achieve success in both military and civilian fields. Educated Officer Corps is of a fundamental value for the country and the Georgian Armed Forces.

Infrastructure and Resources

National Defence Academy is located on a comfortable base constructed based to the modern standards where all the conditions for learning, development, physical training and rest are available. Different sport sections and self-creativity classes function at the Academy. Junkers and attendees have opportunity to be involved in local and international activities.

It is noteworthy, that 3 females were enrolled in educational programs (1 Lieutenant-Colonel and 1 Major on Command and Staff Course and 1 Lieutenant-Colonel on the Master's Program) for the first time in the history of Command and Staff College.

Modern infrastructure of National Defence Academy allows Junkers and attendees to get the best education. Academy is equipped with the comprehensive library with computer technology and military, academic and fictional literature (more than 20 000 books on Georgian, English and French languages), the conference hall and the exam centre. Modern sport complex, gym and recreation zone allows everyone to spend free time pleasantly.

The integrated academic and military programmes of National Defence Academy, qualified academic and administrative personnel, military instructors, infrastructure of high standards, modern methods of education and technologies are firm preconditions of receiving good military and civilian education.





“GEORGIA TAKES A LEADING POSITION IN THE REGION IN REGARD TO MILITARY EDUCATION”

Interview with Koba Tsirekidze, the sergeant-major of the General Staff, the Armed Forces



Koba Tsirekidze is the sergeant-major of the General Staff in the Armed Forces. He was born on September 28, 1978 in Tbilisi. After graduation from school, he decided to develop himself as an engineer-economist but he changed his decision soon and connected his life to the Armed Forces.

If you imagine an educated, professional soldier in your mind, sergeant Koba Tsirekidze is the best example considering his diligence, education, constant striving to development, goals and unlimited motivation, that serve to his personal, professional advancement on one hand, and to the development of Georgian Armed Forces on the other hand.

First he served in compulsory military service, that pushed him to the contract-based service and in this way he came in “Commando” battalion that was recognized to be trained by the American instructors and manned with profes-

sionally developed soldiers by that time. He says that in spite of difficulties these challenges have attracted him...

“This was the first train and equip program that promoted the development of the Armed Forces. On our certificate received after this training, you will read the following: “You are the future of your Armed Forces”. In fact this came true. These four battalions that had been formed at that time, laid the foundation for developing professional military service in Georgian Armed Forces” _ notes the sergeant.”

Was it difficult for you to transfer to the military life from the civilian one?

“Yes it was... This means that you are not alone anymore and you are a part of one whole. Army is a whole organism. You are responsible not only on your behalf, but also on behalf of the entire unit. This is an axiom _ if army isn't a whole



body it won't succeed. I acquired wide experience from army principles and life style. Overcoming difficulties made me believe that motivation and desire of self-development are the most important.

Yes it was difficult for me, but I am happy that I have overcome them”.

Koba Tsirekidze notes that education and professional development are important for the military serviceman. He serves as the best example of this. Sergeant took different professional courses first in Georgia, including in NCO Training School, then he began to learn English language as qualification and receiving of education in abroad were becoming urgent and essential step by step.

In 2007 he was in the United States, in Marine Corps School on infantry squad leader course _ in North Carolina. Then he took platoon sergeant course in Marine Corps School. In 2010 Koba Tsirekidze was enrolled in Main Sergeant Academy in Texas, US.

“This is the last course at this point. I can say that luckily I was honoured to

receive everything required for sergeant development and career advancement and Georgian Armed Forces gave me this opportunity.”

What would you advise soldiers who serve in the Armed Forces today and want to develop themselves professionally?

“When my unit was under formation, competition was very high since the amount of personnel who wanted to take leadership positions and to be part of this unit was too big. Accordingly selection criteria were very harsh. I want to say that everything is connected to the discipline and obviously to a desire to work on yourself and think about self-development. Later this will be surely appreciated by the leadership. Going abroad on a course means that the state makes an investment in you. After return you are obliged to develop your knowledge, use it in favor of Georgian Armed Forces and pass it to the generation that comes after you.”

Sergeant admits that today education is a priority. Reforms and changes undergoing in the Armed Forces respond to this.

“In near future Georgian Armed Forces will have highly qualified and educated personnel. Today we have a system that gives an opportunity to any citizen who wants to become a soldier to get education and develop, for example, the National Defence Academy that is one of the best in the region, also Cadets Military Lyceum; NCO Training Center works successfully for those who are already enlisted in the Armed Forces, where squad leader course, platoon and company sergeant courses are functioning at this point. Therefore, I can say proudly that Georgia takes a leading position in the region in regard to military education.”

...Koba Tsirekidze exactly knows that his son following his father's example will continue a worthy path and soon will join the lines of cadets in Cadets Military Lyceum. He wants to become a pilot...



BECOME A CADET!

Cadet's Military Lyceum is the only educational institution in the region that provides full funding military training and general education on the secondary educational level.



LEPL – General Giorgi Kvinitadze Cadet's Military Lyceum is the first level of military education in Georgia. It is the only educational institution in the region that provides military training and gen-

The goal of the lyceum is to bring up free people having national and universal values, to develop sense of civility based on liberal-democratic values and teach people to respect cultural valuables.

Pupils of general education institution who finish their basic level of secondary education (IX grade) the current year will be admitted at the lyceum in the selective competition.

With the infrastructure and the level of education Cadet's Military Lyceum is one of the outstanding education institutions in Georgia today. The lyceum gives the cadet an oppor-

eral education on the secondary educational level. Cadet's Military Lyceum was established in Kutaisi, 2010. It was named after General Giorgi Kvinitadze in 2014. The Lyceum was headed by Colonel Alex Kekelia from the opening day till 2017. Colonel Shalva Dzindzibadze has been the head of the Lyceum since 2017.

Modern infrastructure and strong material-technical base: administrative, learning and living facilities, dining facility, medical facility, internet and computer science rooms, library, natural science laboratory, assembly hall, gym, close and open playgrounds, motor pool, video observation cameras.

The lyceum is a kind of boarding-school, providing the cadets with living conditions, medical service, nutrition, proper facilities, personal property and studying materials free of charge.

tunity to become the student of high military and civilian school without private tutor assistance. All cadets enjoy equal rights in spite of their social sta-



tus, that helps them to become a fair and full-fledged member of the society. Available educational environment assists cadets' physical, moral, ethic and spiritual development. The rules and routine of the lyceum develop the cadet as law-abiding, disciplined and organized person.

Achieved success has significantly increased interest towards Cadet's Military Lyceum, that is expressed by the

Cadet's Military Lyceum already has 6 graduations. The cadets enroll National Defence Academy as well as United States and Turkish Military Academies. This process is assisted by special programs created in the lyceum (TOEFL, SAT and Turkish language).

raised amount of applicants, willing to enter the lyceum.

Competitors have to follow three steps to enter the lyceum. These steps are: General Skills Test, Physical Test and Medical check-up. The learning process of the lyceum is based on National Educational Curriculum and Military program. The teachers and the cadets actively participate in National Olympiads, educational-creative conferences, various competitions and events; they are awarded with lots of diplomas, certificates and letters of appreciation. Qualified teachers and military instructors work together at the lyceum as a team, that leads to the cadets' success. 98% of graduates passes national entrance exams successfully and enters high school.

Acceptance rules were significantly changed in 2016. The decision about acceptance of girls was made. It is an unprecedented event in the history of Transcaucasian military institutions development. Now 293 cadets including 32 girls learn at the lyceum.





“I WAS LUCKY TO GUARD MY COUNTRY ON THE CONTINENT OF AFRICA WHERE GEORGIA NEEDED ME AT THAT MOMENT”

Colonel Malkhaz Merlani

Colonel Malkhaz Merlani has been serving in Georgian Armed Forces since 1995 year. During the successful military career, he had many praiseworthy and unforgettable moments, but one of the founders and former commander of mountain training school “Sachkhere”, former commander of the 3rd Infantry brigade, the officer, who has participated in ISAF mission in Afghanistan admits that the period spent in the Republic of Mali within EUTM (from January of 2016 to July of 2016) is distinguished in his life and career. The chief of the Combat Readiness Monitoring Division of the General Staff of Georgian Armed Forces talks about the lessons learned in the Republic of West Africa and the importance of participation in the international peacekeeping missions.

EUTM Mali – Decision to deploy to new mission

When the involvement of Georgia in the EU training mission (EUTM Mali) was placed on the agenda, colonel Malkhaz Merlani was chosen as a candidate on the position of military representative: “It was an absolutely new mission. I am happy for this choice. Decision of my deployment was probably stipulated by the knowledge of french language. However, I was deployed within ISAF mission in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 2013, EU training mission wasn’t familiar to me, but at the same time it was very important and responsible. In fact I have faced an interesting challenge. When you are the first person, who is preparing for the participation in the new mission, you have to devote more attention both in the process of performing obligations and later in front of your substitute, for whom the support and sharing lessons learned mean a lot” – recalls the georgian officer, who was the first representative of non-EU country, Georgia, honoured to participate in the pecekeeping mission in Mali.

Main missions and appreciation for special contribution

The aim of the mission was to train the Armed Forces of Mali and support them in reforming the Defence system: “As you know it was a training mission and the attention was paid to training, reforming and quality improvement in relation to logistics, personal management and combat training. I also performed a function of the officer of relations with the international and non-governmental organizations within the mission. I was responsible for the cooperation process among mission leadership, non-governmental and international organizations. I felt only benevolence from them. I think



the lessons learned in Afghanistan had a positive influence. These two missions were quite different. In Afghanistan we were oriented on the combat task, in fact we were under 24-hour readiness posture, whereas the mission of Mali was focused on the training based on its name and you were limited to some extent” – notes the former military representative in Mali, who has received the words of appreciation and certificate of honour from leadership of the peacekeeping mission in Mali. Georgian colonel says that he was lucky, but it is known that during the six-month mission the certificate of appreciation is given to only one military serviceman for the special contribution. There is so called board functioning within the mission. It consists of 11 members. Before making the final decision, they consider several candidates, who can receive the certificate of honour for the special contribution.

Challenge of peacekeeper and charm of his job

Life of every military serviceman of any country is different. His job is related to the responsibility as well as to the high risks and threats that are increased while performing the international peacekeeping mission. As former military representative in the Republic of Mali notes, the charm of the job of Georgian peacekeeper is the fact that risk-factors become challenges: “In such moments threat is not a problem, it does not cause a discomfort any more. Participation in the peacekeeping mission is a form of expressing bravery of military serviceman, it is a confirmation of minimizing the fear. First of all peacekeeper gains the victory in the battle against himself, that is possible with the love of the motherland and belief in better future” – states colonel Malkhaz Merlani and continues talking about the days spent within the mission in Mali, where the envoy of Georgia represented the face of whole country and Georgian Armed Forces: “I remember that the Prime-minister of France at that time, Manuel Valls has visited us. The guest was introduced by the mission leader, General Alber. Then he pointed at me and said – “he is the only military serviceman from non-EU country. It is the first time when I am serving and working



with Georgian soldier and in my perception all Georgian military servicemen are as worthy and professional as colonel Merlani” – so human relations and establishment of contacts are very important. In my opinion mutual respect should also be considered in the development of the future of our country. It is not excluded that the people I got acquainted with, military servicemen of high ranks from 28 countries, with whom I was serving, will become decision makers. They will never forget the merit of the country and at the right moment gratitude and benevolence will be reflected on the results. As for me, I was lucky to guard the country on the continent of Africa, where Georgia needed me at that moment” – proudly states Georgian officer.

Participation in peacekeeping missions – Obligation and prevention

Why is the active involvement of non-NATO and non-EU nation – Georgia – necessary in the process of providing global security? Experienced peacekeeper has its own strong argument on this rhetorical question. He is sure that he will again participate in any peacekeeping mission with pleasure in any place of the world, if the political and military leadership of Georgia makes this kind of decision: “Our contribution to provision of the world security is our obligation, prevention from our side and self-examination. Such missions provide the best chance for the country and military serviceman to examine their capabilities. If we do not participate in the battle against terrorism, if we do not disturb them where they are, there will be more risk of dis-



turbing us in our country by them. For me, as a military serviceman, it is a matter of principle to disturb the enemy as far as possible. It puts us in more comfortable position.

Besides, peacekeeper quickly realizes that he/she is equal to the NATO and EU nations, the flag of your country flies proudly next to them, today you provide assistance to other country and tomorrow you will feel their support” – he notes.

As colonel Malkhaz Merlani states, soldiers who have never been or are not yet deployed to peacekeeping missions are out of luck. Officer pays the special tribute to the memory of people perished in the peacekeeping missions, bends low before the heroes and believes that they have sacrificed the best that they had _ their life _ for the interest of Georgia. Colonel finishes his speech optimistically. He congratulates the military servicemen day of Georgian peacekeeper, approves the readiness of representatives of Georgian Armed Forces to participate in missions and he is proud that it is prestigious for Georgian soldiers and they ask for the deployment to the missions themselves.

TAKE THE CHALLENGE – TO SERVE GEORGIA! RENEWED COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE

Joto Kobidze

Joto Kobidze is a private soldier in Georgian armed forces. He took the oath in May 26, on the celebration of independence day. He was assigned to in first anti-aircraft battalion of missile defence brigade. Compulsory military service is the beginning of his future, a good start in his career, because Joto thinks that he overcame all difficulties and challenges excellently.

Our respondent talks about meaning of compulsory military service . . .

“Compulsory military service first of all showed me the special relationship and deep reverence among the people. Here works only one principle: one for all and all for one. This is the main motivation that you are not alone in Army because your team is there with you. Everybody should undergo compulsory military service, everybody should do his duty.”

What kind of training have you got?

“Learning begins with drills which is followed by three month BCT course. This one is basic combat training which contains military training and physical preparation, as well as other things promoting to form a person and develop new skills. We developed skills at first medical care, weapons training, shooting, dismantling and assembling a gun, military topography and so on.”

Are you going to continue working in armed forces?

“I think about it. I want to enter National Defence Academy. I have made plans concerning it. As well I have taken many trainings within BCT program, which are common for contract-based military service. Therefore if I decide to join GAF, I will be qualified in many of above mentioned components. Compulsory military service has many pluses. I can talk much about it. Most important is that compulsory military service is a step forward to the independent life. This is a challenge for every young man, who begins to live independently. Necessity to continue compulsory military service was conditioned by several important circumstances. First of all it was national defence concept which means civilian’s military readiness on national level.”

According to the minister of Defence of Georgia, Levan Izoria this decision was made after three months active cooperation with foreign partners and experts. “I have made the decision to recommence recruitment system which was temporarily cancelled, based on international lessons learned. Recruitment system is very important to rise a combat readiness. The other important argument is that recruitment system is cheaper than contract-based military service. We don’t want to return to old system and offer only few innovations

to our society. Most important is that recruits will undergo the same basic preparation courses as contract-based servicemen. They will be self-confident persons who know that they are high-qualified soldiers. High qualification of our military units will be based on their individual preparation level.”

As the minister of Defence of Georgia declares there will be great and qualitative difference between the new and old systems of compulsory military service. The servicemen in compulsory military service will undergo complete basic combat training course, during 3 months, like a contract-based military servicemen. After that service members will be appointed to high-paid contract-based military positions. Besides, these personnel will have everyday combat training hours, after 3 month BCT course. Recruits will take active practical and theoretical classes, which is a different from previous model of compulsory military service. Also compulsory military service members will enjoy the improved package of social assistance and rest on the weekends. They will get improved insurance package and raised salary as well.

Chief of the General Staff of Georgian Armed Forces Vladimir Chachibaia talked about compulsory military recruitment: “This profession gives each person the opportunity to continue



service in armed forces as professional military service member. Also they will have a chance to take one year course in National Defence Academy and continue their career as sergeants.”

Every small country with the same challenges and dangers as in Georgia has compulsory military service.

A military experience of our respondent, private Joto Kobidze begins with compulsory military service. He shares his emotions and considerations with other young people and says that compulsory military service is a real challenge for every citizen of Georgia, for every man.



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საპარტვიზოს თავდაცვის სამინისტრო

PHOTO STORY

Georgian Army joined fire extinguishing efforts in Borjomi Gorge



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