



BLACK SEA NEWS UPDATE

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I. ABKHAZIA

1.

Sokhumi Urges EU, UN to Press Georgia to Stop 'Piracy'

19.08.2009, Civil Georgia

READ MORE: <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21376>

Sokhumi will resort to "proportional measures" to protect vessels en route to Abkhazia if Tbilisi continues their detention, Abkhaz leader, Sergey Bagapsh, said in his appeal to UN, EU and French President Nicolas Sarkozy on August 18. Georgian coast guard detained a Turkish cargo vessel carrying fuel to the breakaway region's capital Sokhumi on August 17. The Georgian law on occupied territories bans economic activities in breakaway Abkhazia and South Ossetia without Tbilisi's authorization.

2.

Abkhaz Opposition Fear Growing Russian Influence

07.08.1009, Institute for War & Peace Reporting

READ MORE: http://www.iwpr.net/?p=crs&s=f&o=355013&apc_state=henpcrs

Abkhazians have ceased to worry about renewed war with Georgia since Moscow recognised their independence a year ago, but now opposition politicians fear their government is surrendering hard-won freedoms to Russia. Russia and Nicaragua are the only countries that consider Abkhazia to be an independent state, following its unilateral declaration of independence from Georgia in 1991, meaning initial hopes that the Black Sea territory's foreign policy could be "multi-vectoral" - looking towards Russia, Europe and Turkey - have been stillborn.

II. GEORGIA

1.

Georgia Quits Ex-Soviet 'Commonwealth'

19.08.2009, EurActiv

READ MORE: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/georgia-quits-ex-soviet-commonwealth/article-184649>

One year after its short war with Russia, Georgia on Tuesday (18 August) became the first country to withdraw from the grouping of former Soviet republics, in a sign of rebellion met with disdain from Moscow.

2.

Saakashvili Calls for Unity on War Anniversary

07.08.2009, Civil.Ge

READ MORE: <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21349>

President Saakashvili called on the nation on August 7 for unity in the struggle for Georgia's statehood against "the liar and totally dishonest force." He made a live televised address to the nation from Gori, a town which along with Tskhinvali suffered most from the last year's war, standing on the background of a medieval fortress. Before his address a symphonic orchestra performed Georgia's national anthem, followed by the EU anthem, Beethoven's Ode to Joy.

3.

The Pawns of War

06.08.2009, The Economist

READ MORE: http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14191276

TEN months ago the fields around Tserovani were empty. Now they are the site of a whole town—complete with bungalows, health clinic, police station, schools and sports fields—for some 6,000 Georgians who fled their homes during last year's war with Russia. Much-visited by diplomats and dignitaries, Tserovani, some 20km from Tbilisi, is an impressive sight. Yet it is a far cry from the life of most of those displaced by war in repeated rounds of turbulence since Georgia became independent in 1991.

4.

Tbilisi Says West Keeps More Watchful Eye on Georgia

05.08.2009, Civil.Ge

READ MORE: <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21335>

The Georgian senior officials said on August 5, that unlike last August, now the western powers were keeping closer eye on developments in Georgia, which they said, played an important deterrent role for Russia. Eka Tkeshelashvili, the secretary of Georgian national security council, said that phone conversation between the U.S. and Russian Presidents, followed by phone talks between Vice President Biden and President Saakashvili demonstrated that "unlike last August, now the international community is fully ready for an immediate response" in case of renewed Russian aggression.

5.

Obama, Medvedev Discuss Russia

05.08.2009, Civil.Ge

READ MORE: <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21331>

In a phone conversation on August 4, the Russian and U.S. Presidents discussed the situation in Georgia and "the need to decrease tensions in the region," the White House said. Also on August 4, after the phone conversation between Medvedev and Obama, Vice President Biden called President Saakashvili on the same matter. The Kremlin said in its English-language statement that the two Presidents "exchanged views on lessons to be learned from the Georgia crisis that took place one year

ago.” Both the White House and the Kremlin said that Russian President, Dmitry Medvedev, called his U.S. counterpart, Barack Obama, to wish him happy birthday.

6.

Investors Sense Fresh Chances in Georgia

04.08.2009, The Financial Times

READ MORE: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/150df896-8110-11de-92e7-00144feabdc0.html>

Georgia’s double-digit economic growth promised rich rewards for foreign investors. But when war broke out a year ago, the risks were brought home very starkly to Rakia. Three of its employees were killed when the Russians bombed the Black Sea port of Poti.

7.

Georgia to Watch Foreign Films Only in the Georgian Language

01.08.2009, Caucasian Knot

READ MORE: <http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/10797>

On July 31, the parliament of Georgia passed amendments to the law "On Broadcasting", according to which all foreign-made films should be dubbed into Georgian or provided with captions in this language prior to demonstration in the country; TV serials can be put on air only after translation into the state language. According to the amendments, films already dubbed into Russian are forbidden in the country. The "News-Georgia" writes that the amendments will come into force since September 1, 2009.

8.

Plans Being Laid for an Investigative Journalism Training Programme Following Successful Workshop in Tblisi

30.07.2009, Institute for War&Peace Reporting

READ MORE: <http://www.iwpr.net/EN-crs-f-354810>

Georgian journalists have spoken of the important journalistic lessons they’ve learnt at an IWPR workshop set up to help them develop their investigative skills. Investigative journalism techniques, the principles of bringing public information to light, and examples of successful investigative reports were all examined and discussed at the event in May. “Before the workshop, I’d believed that a journalistic investigation only meant looking into a killing or a robbery,” said Lika Shonia, a freelance journalist who is a refugee from Abkhazia. “Now, I see how erroneous my views were.”

III. GEORGIA-RUSSIA

1.

Putin Visits Breakaway Georgian Region, Unveils Plan for Military Base

13.08.2009, The Washington Post

READ MORE: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/12/AR2009081202107.html>

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin travelled to the breakaway Georgian region of Abkhazia on Wednesday and pledged to strengthen Russia's military presence there, defying U.S. and European objections amid simmering tensions in the region. Speaking on the anniversary of his nation's victory over Georgia in a five-day war last year, Putin said the Kremlin planned to spend nearly \$500 million to build a base in the separatist enclave and reinforce its de facto border with Georgia.

2.

Russia and Georgia: Unfinished Business?

10.08.2009, The European Council on Foreign Relations

READ MORE: http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_wilson_georgia

A year ago last August Russia and Georgia went to war over tiny South Ossetia. Half way through another summer of sabre-rattling in the Caucasus, is another war of ‘unfinished business’ a serious

possibility? Georgia has asked the US to help it re-arm, Putin told Sarkozy he would like to hang Saakashvili 'by the balls'. But the Caucasian weather (heavy rain in the autumn followed by snow) means that war is probably only technically possible until the end of September. Significantly, the EU enquiry into the causes of the 2008 war, chaired by Heidi Tagliavini, the former UN Special Representative to Georgia, has delayed its report until September at least, to avoid inflaming passions on the anniversary of the conflict. Both sides want to win the 'information war', and will hopefully at least wait to bear arms until the report comes out.

3.

Medvedev Calls for Georgia Arms Ban

09.08.2009, The Financial Times

READ MORE: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/cde387e4-850e-11de-9a64-00144feabdc0.html>

Dmitry Medvedev, the Russian president, stepped up pressure on Mikheil Saakashvili at the weekend, saying the Georgian leader would be punished for the war over Georgia's breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia last year. He called for an international embargo on arms supplies to Georgia, warning that Tbilisi might use force to regain control over South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

4.

Georgia Recovers as Rebel Regions Suffer

07.08.2009, The Financial Times

READ MORE: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/e11e88d6-837e-11de-a24e-00144feabdc0.html>

Ceremonies were held on Friday on both sides of the line that separates Georgia from South Ossetia, its separatist region, to mark the first anniversary of the Georgia-Russia war.

5.

Painful Memories of S. Ossetian War

06.08.2009, Russia Today

READ MORE: http://www.russiatoday.com/Top_News/2009-08-06/ossetian-war-memories-tskhinval.html

It is almost one year since Georgia launched its assault on the Republic of South Ossetia. In the days that followed scores of Ossetians died and homes were reduced to rubble, and the scars of war still remain. The trip from North to South Ossetia normally takes no more than three hours. In August of 2008 it took the RT crew three times longer. The road was blocked in both directions. Tanks and armored vehicles were streaming in, while buses and cars with refugees were pouring out.

6.

The West Must not Abandon Georgia again

06.08.2009, The Financial Times

READ MORE: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/01a13f48-82a5-11de-ab4a-00144feabdc0.html>

A year ago this Friday Russia and Georgia went to war. By the standards of modern warfare it was a little war. It lasted five days. Casualties were modest. It nevertheless sparked the greatest European security crisis since Slobodan Milosevic unleashed the dogs of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans in the 1990s. Moscow invaded a neighbour for the first time since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. It broke the cardinal rule of post-cold war European security that borders in Europe should never be changed by force of arms. It showed an ugly neo-imperial side of its policy that many in the west had hoped was part of the past.

7.

"Saakashvili Preparing for Another War" – Deserted Georgian Soldier

06.08.2009, Russia Today

READ MORE: http://www.rt.tv/Top_News/2009-08-06/georgia-deserted-soldier-war.html

A soldier who deserted the Georgian army and has now fled to Russia says US instructors are

currently training Georgian soldiers for a war – just as they did before Georgia’s assault last year on South Ossetia.

8.

Russian FM Lashes Out at Georgian President

05.08.2009, Voice of America

READ MORE: <http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-08-05-voa32.cfm>

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has accused Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili of trying to destabilize the region by inviting U.S. observers to join a European Union team monitoring the ceasefire that ended last year's brief war between the two former Soviet republics.

9.

Tbilisi Looks Like Winning the Peace

05.06.2009, The Financial Times

READ MORE: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/274577ba-81e6-11de-9c5e-00144feabdc0.html>

One year ago this week, war broke out between Russia and Georgia. Many international leaders, including Vladimir Putin, Russia’s former president and now prime minister, and George W. Bush, former US president, were in Beijing for the opening of the Olympic Games. The hostilities seemed to take them all by surprise.

10.

A Year after Russia-Georgia War - A new Reality, but Old Relations

05.08.2009, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/A_Year_After_RussiaGeorgia_War__A_New_Reality_But_Old_Relations/1793048.html

A year after the five-day military conflict between Georgia and Russia that left Russian forces occupying the breakaway Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, tensions in the region are rising again. Georgian officials continue to place their hopes on the ability of the international community to resolve the situation. "The international community and international law are on Georgia's side," lawmaker David Darchiashvili, who chairs the Georgian parliament's Committee for European Integration, told journalists recently.

11.

Russia Praises EU Role in Georgia

05.08.2009, BBC

READ MORE: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8184870.stm>

Russia says EU monitors have helped stabilise the situation in Georgia since last year's war, but has rejected any similar role for the US. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the peace plan brokered by French President Nicolas Sarkozy "continues to be a most serious stabilising factor". He accused Georgia of trying to "drag the Americans into Georgia" and put them up against the Russian military.

12.

Russia Troops in S. Ossetia on Combat Readiness

04.08.2009, Civil.Ge

READ MORE: <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=21330>

Russia said on August 4 it had placed its troops in breakaway South Ossetia on alert as Georgia’s “provocations are not stopping” ahead of anniversary of the last year’s war.” The situation is really alarming,” Andrei Nesterenko, a spokesman of the Russian Foreign Ministry said in the comments posted on the Russian Foreign Ministry’s website. “Provocations from the Georgian side ahead of the anniversary of the last August events are not stopping. In this connection, we have stepped up the combatant readiness of Russian troops and border guards stationed in South Ossetia.”

13.

Tensions Flare up in Russia, Georgia

02.08.2009, The Washington Post

READ MORE: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/01/AR2009080100857.html>

Russia accused Georgia on Saturday of firing mortars and grenades into South Ossetia and warned that it would defend the separatist territory with "all available forces and means" as tensions mounted ahead of the anniversary of last year's war. Georgia condemned Russia's assertion as "groundless and misleading," saying it was aimed at "further destabilizing the situation and causing the unfolding of a dangerous scenario of events."

14.

The Guns of August: Non-Event with Consequences

30.07.2009, The European Council on Foreign Relations

READ MORE: http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_krastev_open_democracy_georgia_war/

It took less than a hundred days for the Russia-Georgia war of 8-12 August 2008 to be eclipsed as a history-shaping event. The guns of August were silenced by the thunders on Wall Street. A war that seemed momentous at the time became subject to instant amnesia: a non-event. But it was a non-event with consequences. A year on, a measure of these consequences seems appropriate. The post-war balance-sheets of the leading actors - Georgia and Russia themselves, but also the United States and the European Union - in many respects resemble those of the Wall Street financial institutions hit by the global economic crisis: undeclared losses and inflated profits.

IV. MOLDOVA

1.

Moldova's Surprise Election Result

30.07.2009, The European Council on Foreign Relations

READ MORE: http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_moldova_wilson_election_results

After the last Moldovan elections in April, parliament burned as protestors claimed the ruling Communists had rigged the vote. The authorities blamed youthful rioters; the opposition blamed government provocateurs. Hundreds were arrested and allegedly beaten. The authorities clamped down on the media and on businesses that supported the opposition. The outgoing President Vladimir Voronin accused neighbouring Romania of organising a coup d'état and introduced visas for Romanian visitors. Yet the opposition won enough seats, 40 out of 101, to ensure that the new parliament was gridlocked. Voronin installed himself as chair of parliament, and hoped, like Putin in Russia, to remain the power-not-too-far-behind-the-throne; but after it twice failed to elect Voronin's chosen successor as president, he reluctantly agreed to dissolve the new parliament and hold new elections on 29 July.

V. RUSSIA

1.

A Friendless Russia is Held Hostage to Putin's Vanity

20.08.2009, The Financial Times

READ MORE: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/ef405120-8db4-11de-93df-00144feabdc0.html>

The conventional story about Russia has been one of power reclaimed after the fall to chaos during the 1990s. Oil, gas and autocracy have restored it to the ranks of world powers. Some of the more hyperbolic commentary has gone so far to say that, along with China, Moscow has created an entirely new model to challenge western liberalism.

2.

Problems Beset Russia Army Reform

17.08.2009, BBC

READ MORE: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8204941.stm>

The life of those who serve can be nasty, brutish, and short – even in peacetime. In 2008, 471 Russian soldiers died in non-combat incidents. Suicide accounted for almost half of the deaths. Masha Lipman, an expert on Russian society and the regions at the Carnegie Moscow Centre, highlights bullying - or "hazing" - as a frequent factor. "The worst problem of all in this conscription army is the threat to human life, as a result first and foremost of brutal hazing, which every year results in numerous deaths, suicides, and mutilations," she said.

3.

Putin has Misread his Georgian Lesson

07.08.2009, The Financial Times

READ MORE: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/7d0b699e-837a-11de-a24e-00144feabdc0.html>

There is a dreadful sense of déjà vu to the sight of Vladimir Putin parading bare-chested for photographers while on holiday in Siberia. The Russian prime minister's annual picture shoot suggests an inordinate pride in his pectorals and his athletic image. It is scarcely coincidental that the pictures were published just before Saturday's first anniversary of Russia's nasty little war with neighbouring Georgia. That conflict against a tiresome former Soviet republic is seen in Moscow as a triumph for Russian hard power, and Mr Putin as the strong man who inspired it.

4.

Medvedev Orders Probe into State Companies

07.08.2009, The Financial Times

READ MORE: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/335d6fe4-8358-11de-a24e-00144feabdc0.html>

Dmitry Medvedev has ordered a probe into the activities of Russia's state-owned companies as pressure mounts over the government's handling of the economy that shrank 10 per cent in the first half of the year. The corporations, many of which were set up in the last year of Vladimir Putin's presidency, have swallowed up tens of billions of roubles of state funds.

5.

Putin Seals New Turkey Gas Deal

06.08.2009, BBC

READ MORE: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/8186946.stm>

The prime ministers of Turkey and Russia have signed a series of agreements regarding co-operation on major oil and gas projects. One deal is for the construction of a pipeline through Turkish waters in the Black Sea. Moscow hopes the South Stream pipeline will become a viable new route to supply Russian natural gas to Europe. Vladimir Putin sealed the agreement with Recep Tayyip Erdogan during a one-day visit to Ankara.

6.

Too Big to fail

27.07.2008, The Financial Times

READ MORE: http://www.ft.com/cms/s/742250e8-7ada-11de-8c34-00144feabdc0,dwp_uuid=579372f8-2285-11dd-93a9-00077b07658,Authorised=false.html?_i_location=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ft.com%2Fcms%2Fs%2F0%2F742250e8-7ada-11de-8c34-00144feabdc0%2Cdwp_uuid%3D579372f8-2285-11dd-93a9-00077b07658.html%3Fftcamp%3Drss&_i_referer=&ftcamp=rss

When Oleg Deripaska was forced to seek a multi-billion dollar bail-out loan from the government late last year, even the Russian tycoon's closest associates thought he was finished. Drowning in debt, he was advised to hand control of his vast aluminum interests to the government.

VI. SOUTH OSSETIA

1.

South Ossetia: The War Way of Life

20.08.2009, ISN

READ MORE: <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Current-Affairs/Security-Watch/Detail/?lng=en&id=104705>

A year has passed since Georgia and Russia fought a short and violent war over the impoverished Ossetian enclave around Tskhinvali. Shots are still sometimes fired along the border, and both sides continue to accuse the other of provocation, Ben Judah writes for ISN Security Watch.

2.

Georgia, South Ossetia Trade Jobs

05.08.2009, CNN

READ MORE: <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/europe/08/04/georgia.russia/>

The former Soviet republic of Georgia and one of its breakaway territories, Russia-backed South Ossetia, accused each other of violating the cease-fire that ended last year's Russian-Georgian war, days before the conflict's anniversary. The European Union, which monitors the boundary in place since the 2008 conflict, said on Tuesday it had not seen any evidence to confirm either side's claims but expressed concern about the allegations.

VII. TURKEY

1.

Old Rivals, New Partners: An alliance of convenience that arouses some suspicion in the West.

13.08.2009, The Economist

READ MORE: http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?story_id=14216768

Through the long Ottoman era, Turks and Russians fought many bloody wars. In modern times Turkey guarded NATO's southern flank against Soviet mischief. "The Russians are treacherous" is a popular Turkish adage. But one would hardly have guessed it as the two countries' prime ministers, Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, splashily signed a raft of agreements in a ceremony in Ankara on August 6th.

VIII. UKRAINE

1.

Dear Viktor, You're Dead, Love Dmitry: Russia's president writes his Ukrainian counterpart an insulting letter

20.08.2009, The Economist

READ MORE: http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14273936

RUSSIA marked the first anniversary of its war with Georgia with a verbal salvo against Ukraine. Russia's president, Dmitry Medvedev, wrote Viktor Yushchenko, his Ukrainian counterpart, an open letter with a familiar litany of complaints: Ukraine was supplying arms to Georgia, complicating the life of Russia's Black Sea fleet (which is based in Sebastopol, a Ukrainian port), signing treacherous pipeline deals with the European Union, kicking out Russian diplomats and falsifying joint Soviet history.

2.

Questions Abound over Ukraine's European Future

31.07.2009, EurActiv

READ MORE: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/questions-abound-ukraine-european-future/article-184554>

Ukraine is currently negotiating visa-free travel with the EU as part of a wide-ranging association

agreement, as some of the country's politicians express hopes for a clearer "European perspective". EurActiv outlines various scenarios for Ukraine's expected rocky path towards closer EU integration.

IX. CAUCASUS

1.

A Year after the Russo-Georgian War, the World Looks the Same Even if the Caucasus Are Changed Forever

07.08.2009, The European Council on Foreign Relations

READ MORE: http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_a_year_after_the_russo_georgian_war_the_world_looks_the_same_eve/

A year after the Russo-Georgian War, not much has changed in the world. But the Caucasus look very different. That makes the Georgians - including in the break-away territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia - the ultimate losers of the conflict. When Russian tanks rolled into Tskhinvali, many analysts thought it was a pivotal moment. Breathless commentary proclaimed "the end of the 1990s", the termination of that supposedly peaceful, post-Cold War period that had seen a network of treaties and deals replace the Realpolitik of an earlier era. Russia, which for years under Vladimir Putin's leadership had been bristling at NATO's expansion, showed it was willing to use not only harsh rhetoric but hard power. NATO and the European Union, in turn, declared that there could be no business as usual with the Moscow leadership and suspended their cooperation.

2.

Kasrelishvili: There are About Forty Militants in Georgia Ready to Transfer to Chechnya

27.06.2009, Georgian Knot

READ MORE: <http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/10758>

There are about forty militants in Pankisi Gorge in Georgia near the Chechen border, who have gathered here for transfer to Chechnya and Ingushetia, states Zaal Kasrelishvili, chair of the Confederation of Caucasus Nations. In providing this information, Kasrelishvili refers to the data of the internal security service of the Confederation and the information of its supporters from Europe, Asia and North Caucasus. For reference, the Russian party has repeatedly stated that members of illegal armed units arrive from Georgia to Chechnya. "After Lavrov, head of the Russian MFA, has accused Georgia of hiding militants on its territory, militants appeared in Pankisi Gorge. They came to Georgia from Azerbaijan and, according to unchecked information, intend to cross the border of the Russian Federation. There is some information that they plan to kill Kadyrov before autumn. Can you imagine what may happen if this happens? Russia may have a direct cause for attacking Georgia", stated Zaal Kasrelishvili in his interview to the Georgian weekly newspaper "Kviris Palitra".

X. SECURITY

1.

Tupolev Aircraft Maker to Develop Russia's New Strategic Bomber

19.08.2008, Ria Novostni

READ MORE: http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20090819/155857912.html

The Russian Defense Ministry and the Tupolev aircraft maker have signed a contract on the development of a new-generation strategic bomber, the company's general director said on Wednesday. "We signed a contract this year on research and development of a future strategic bomber for the Russian strategic aviation. It will be a conceptually new plane based on the most advanced technologies," Igor Shevchuk said at the MAKS-2009 air show near Moscow

2.

Russia in Talks on Buying French Warship

04.08.2008, Ria Novostni

READ MORE: http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20090804/155725329.html

Russia is discussing the purchase of a French Mistral-class amphibious assault ship worth between 300 and 400 million euros (\$430-580 mln), a high-ranking source close to the talks said Tuesday. "Such talks are being held at the level of experts; the Russian side is represented by the Navy, the United Shipbuilding Corporation, and plants' representatives. In September we will provide a final conclusion for the Russian Defense Ministry," the source told RIA Novosti. Earlier a French business daily, La Tribune, said Russia is planning to purchase a Mistral class assault ship from France. The purchase, if successful, would be the first large-scale arms import deal concluded by Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

3.

Kremlin Removes Nuclear Missile Commander

03.08.2009, Financial Times

READ MORE: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/4a340b7c-803a-11de-bf04-00144feabdc0.html>

The Kremlin replaced the commander of Russia's strategic nuclear missiles on Monday – the latest in a series of top-level departures in the armed forces. President Dmitry Medvedev issued a decree removing General Nikolai Solovtsov as head of the missile forces.

Black Sea News Update (BSNU) is a fortnightly brief of political and economic developments covering the Black Sea region. It is produced by the **ICBSS**, a think-tank aiming to foster regional cooperation in the Black Sea area.

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