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# **south caucasus – defense, security** **& conflicts resolution** **weekly review**

**13.04.09-18.04.09**

- **bilateral**

## **Georgia and the USA remain strategic partners and allies, Foreign Minister stated**

The United States remain a strategic partner for Georgia, Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze stated after meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton.

After the meeting, Hilary Clinton informed journalists that she welcomes the development of bilateral relations in the widest spectrum. “We seek for ways to deepen our further relations. We have stated our support for territorial integrity and independence of Georgia”, she stated.

Vashadze stressed that the USA welcomes the development of democratic processes in Georgia.

“The USA has not changed its stance, which was stated after the Russian aggression in August, 2008. Georgia and the USA remain strategic allies”, he stated.

## **Georgian-Turkish marine exercise took place in Poti**

On April 12-13, Georgian-Turkish marine exercise took place in the water area of Poti port.

One Turkish military ship with the crew of 200 people and five coast guard ships of Georgia with the total crew of 65 people, participated in the exercise in the open sea.

## **Georgian President continues criticizing the state of Armenian economy**

Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili continues criticizing the state of Armenian economy.

**Mediamax** reports that Georgian President made a statement in an interview, published in the Newsweek, titled “Where are my western friends?”

Answering the question on possible compromises in relations with Russia, Mikhail Saakashvili stated:

“Were I to take compromise? If I did, we would be like Kyrgyzstan, losing our democratic values, or as poor as Armenia, the economy of which fully depends on Russia”.

**Mediamax** recalls that on March 7 Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili stated that “Armenian economy collapsed, since it fully depended on the Russian market”. Commenting on this statement, Spokesman of the Armenian President Samvel Farmanyan described as “absolutely groundless” the assessments, given to Armenian economy by the Georgian President.

“I do not think that such assessments are the best way to distract attention of one’s own people from various problems, existing in Georgia”, the Spokesman of the Armenian President stated.

### **Serzh Sargsian told Iranian President about the recent developments in Armenian-Turkish dialogue**

Armenia attaches special importance to dynamic expansion of relations with Iran, considering Tehran a reliable partner.

As **Mediamax** was told in the presidential press service, Armenian President Serzh Sargsian said this on April 13 in Tehran during his meeting with his Iranian counterpart Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, in his turn, stated that deepening stable relations with Armenia is one of the foreign policy priorities of Iran.

“Discussion of joint large-scale infrastructural projects is the best evidence of our vision of further expansion and deepening of Armenian-Iranian friendly relations”, Armenian President stated.

Upon the request of the Iranian President, Serzh Sargsian told about the recent developments in Armenian-Turkish political dialogue and the process of Karabakh conflict settlement. Armenian President thanked his Iranian counterpart for Tehran’s balanced approach towards Nagorno-Karabakh problem.

### **By protesting against normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations, “Baku wants to please Moscow”, prominent journalist believes**

Prominent Turkish journalist Cengiz Candar believes that by protesting against normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations, “Baku wants to please Moscow”.

**Mediamax** reports that Cengiz Candar writes in his article in Hurriyet newspaper:

“The first thing that comes to one’s mind is that Baku wants to receive the approval of Russia”. According to him, protests, voiced from Baku, aim at “pleasing Moscow”.

“Baku wants to tell Moscow that without the consent of Russia, nothing is possible in the South Caucasus. We, as one of the Caucasus republics, very well understand this. And, despite the efforts of brotherly Turkey and U.S. President Obama, we want to demonstrate that we trust and believe you”, this is how the Turkish journalist interprets the stance of Azerbaijan.

### **“It seems prerequisites are established for normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations”, Serzh Sargsian stated**

Armenian President Serzh Sargsian stated that Armenia is ready for establishment of normal relations with Turkey without preconditions, “and up till now Turkey has not been ready for that”.

As **Mediamax** was told in the press service of the Armenian President, Serzh Sargsian said this in Tehran during his meeting with the Armenian community of Iran.

Armenian President stated that recently there have been many talks in media about Armenian-Turkish relations, and sometimes assumptions, forecasts or good wishes are presented as facts.

“Now, it seems, perquisites are established for coming out of this unacceptable situation, when neighboring countries do not even have diplomatic relations”, Serzh Sargsian stated.

At that he once again stressed that establishment of relations with Turkey does by no means imply that the fact of the Armenian Genocide is cast a doubt on.

### **Azerbaijan officially stated that “relations between Armenia and Turkey cannot be reestablished without settlement of Karabakh conflict”**

Official stance of Azerbaijan is that “normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations is possible only if the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict is settled”.

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan Mahmoud Mamedkulyev said this in Yerevan April 16, answering the question of **Mediamax** on the attitude of official Baku towards efforts of Armenia and Turkey to normalize relations.

Mahmoud Mamedkulyev is in Yerevan to participate in the session of Foreign Ministers’ Council of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC).

“We consider contacts between Armenia and Turkey to be internal affairs of these countries. On the other hand, taking into account the factor of the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict, we follow this dialogue with interest and believe that relations between Armenia and Turkey cannot be reestablished without settlement of Karabakh conflict. We believe that these issues should be related to each other. This is our stance”, Mahmoud Mamedkulyev stated, answering the question of **Mediamax**.

Let’s note that in November, 2008, answering the question in an interview to **Mediamax** on Baku’s attitude towards efforts to establish a political dialogue between Armenia and Turkey, Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan Elmar Mammadyarov stated:

“These are relations of two sovereign states and we would like to hope that the fact will have a positive influence on establishing peace and stability in the South Caucasus”.

### **Not only Baku’s pressure, but also Russia’s interests in the South Caucasus become an obstacle for normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations**

Recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the USA will be important not only for Armenia and Turkey, but also for the USA, leader of oppositional “Heritage” party Raffi Hovhannisyan stated in Yerevan April 17.

According to him, if U.S. President Barack Obama keeps his promise and uses the word “genocide” in his address to American Armenians on April 24, he will confirm the trustworthiness of statements by U.S. diplomats, who worked in Turkey in those years.

Talking about the paths for normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations, “Heritage” leader stated that putting forward preconditions is inadmissible. “If Armenia agrees to Turkey’s conditions, the Armenian people will again face threats,” the politician stated.

According to him, not only the pressure from Baku, but also Russia’s interests in the South Caucasus become an obstacle on the way of normalizing Armenian-Turkish relations.

- **nagorno-karabakh conflict**

## **“Karabakh cannot be gifted to Azerbaijan”, Armenian President stated**

Armenian President Serzh Sargsian stated that Armenia’s stance as to the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement is unchanged: “Karabakh cannot be gifted to Azerbaijan on any condition”.

As **Mediamax** was told in the press service of the Armenian President, Serzh Sargsian said this in Tehran during his meeting with the Armenian community of Iran.

Armenian President stated that Azerbaijan’s claims for Karabakh have neither juridical, nor legal, nor moral grounds.

“Nagorno-Karabakh cannot be within the composition of Azerbaijan: as to this issue, Azerbaijan has lost long ago all reserves of trust”, Serzh Sargsian stated.

## **Russia hopes for maximum progress in Nagorno-Karabakh settlement, Dmitri Medvedev stated**

Russia would like to reach maximum progress in talks on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement, President Dmitri Medvedev stated on April 17.

“According to me, also very important are the regular meetings between Azerbaijani and Armenian Presidents. Russia is ready to fulfill its mandate. We always tried to contribute to this process and if such contacts continue, and there is no alternative to this, I am sure that they will manage to solve the problem, exactly basing on the interests of the two peoples, taking into account the prepared proposals”, Medvedev stated after talks with his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev.

The Russian President did not rule out that “certain new ideas might appear”.

“Of course, one should remain within the legal plain, but one should not close the door for some new approaches, which in a certain situation might infuse new blood, around which one might be able to consolidate stances. It seems to me that this is possible”, he stated.

According to the Russian President, the sides hear each other’s arguments.

“There are prospects, and, first of all, one needs to be guided by the norms of international law and the resolutions, which were approved in UN and OSCE. This is why I think that in principle there is progress, and the most important is that those processes should not be influenced by insignificant, but sometimes very and very complex factors, for the sides, of course, to demonstrate restraint and see prospects”, Medvedev stressed.

## **Definite progress supports our hope that Karabakh conflict will be settled**

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev expressed gratitude to Russia for efforts to make stances of the sides closer as to the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement.

At that he expressed hope that the conflict will be settled quite soon.

“Of course, absence of a result cannot make us happy, but, nevertheless, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that there is definite progress in the negotiation process. This progress supports our hope that the conflict will be settled quite soon. The stances of the sides recently have become closer to a certain extent, some issues, which used to be complex, are coordinated, which is a good basis for continuing talks”, Ilham Aliyev stated at a news conference following the results of Russian-Azerbaijani talks on April 17.

“It is not a secret that in the course of almost 20 years Azerbaijani territories have been under occupation, and this fact is recognized by the international community. We hope that in the course of the nearest months we will manage to advance the settlement process more and reach a solution, which would meet the interests of both

countries, and the fact would secure reestablishment of territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and the norms and principles in our region. Everyone will benefit from this and in that case we will be able to talk about all-comprehensive regional cooperation in the South Caucasus region”, Azerbaijani President stated.

### **Defense Army exercise initiated in NKR**

Operative-tactical exercise of NKR Defense Army started in the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR).

As **Mediamax** was told in the press service of NKR Defense Ministry, the exercise is being realized in accordance with the plan for Army training for year 2009.

### **NKR President held a meeting on issues of putting Stepanakert Airport into operation**

NKR President Bako Sahakian held a working meeting, devoted to issues of putting Stepanakert Airport into operation.

As **Mediamax** was told in the press service of NKR President, 4 projects of passenger complex for Stepanakert Airport, which were considered to be the best at the initial preliminary stage, were presented at the meeting.

Bako Sahakian noted that after studying the projects, the most optimal variant will be chosen, taking into account time, quality and finance factors.

## ● **nato**

### **Session of Georgia-NATO Commission took place in Brussels**

Session of Georgia-NATO Commission at the level of the political committee took place in Brussels on April 17.

The Georgian side presented the draft cooperation program for year 2009 at the session.

### **NATO representative: Exercise in Georgia will take place**

NATO will not renounce plans to realize military exercise in Georgia in early May despite Russia’s address to cancel or postpone it, NATO Representative Simone De Manso informed.

“The exercise has been planned for a long time and will be realized”, De Manso stated in an interview to Trend News.

Russia suggested yesterday NATO canceling or postponing the military exercise in Georgia, arguing its suggestion with actions of the Georgian opposition.

“I asked NATO Secretary General [...] to postpone or cancel it”, Permanent Envoy of Russia in NATO Dmitri Rogozin informed Reuters, adding that Russia is against NATO exercise near borders.

Rogozin accounted his stance by the fact that the exercise may complicate the internal political situation in Georgia, where opposition’s rallies have been continuing for already two weeks, demanding President Mikhail Saakashvili’s resignation.

“Realization of exercise in the territory of Georgia may be used by Saakashvili against the opposition or by the opposition against Saakashvili”, he stated.

## ● **peacekeeping**

## **Medical exercise in process in Peacekeeping brigade of the Armenian Armed Forces**

Starting April 1, 12-week medical exercise has been in process in the Peacekeeping brigade of the Armenian Armed Forces for the staff of the medical platoon, which is being set up within the composition of the brigade.

As the Spokesman for Armenian Defense Minister Seyran Shakhshuryan informed **Mediamax**, such maneuvers are realized in the Armenian Army for the first time. The exercise is realized with the participation of U.S. instructors within the framework of bilateral military cooperation program.

During the exercise, the participants will gain the necessary skills on rendering first medical aid and taking away the injured from the battle field. Upon the conclusion of the course, Armenian military will receive certificates, meeting international standards.