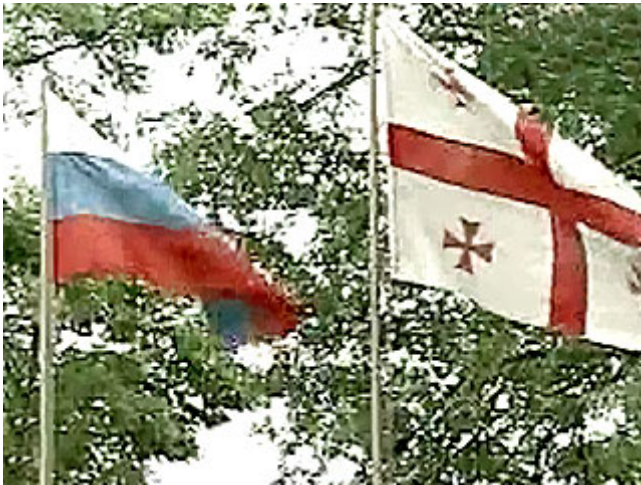


## EU Envoy Says No 'Business As Usual' In Russia-Georgia Talks



As part of the EU-brokered cease-fire between Georgia and Russia, the two sides met in Geneva on October 15. Little progress was made and the second round was set for November 19.

Ahead of those talks, the EU's special representative to the South Caucasus, Peter Semneby, talked to RFE/RL's Georgian Service Director David Kakabadze and RFE/RL correspondent Brian Whitmore about what the EU can do, and what unresolved issues he sees going forward.

**RFE/RL:** The second round of the Geneva negotiations is due to take place on November 19. How hopeful are you on the eve of this round, given that the first round last month can be [considered a failure?](#)

**Peter Semneby:** I don't really want to get into any speculation of what may come out of this meeting at this stage. Because obviously, preparations are going on and, as we all know, these are very sensitive issues, where every detail is important. The signals that we have from the different parties are encouraging enough for this meeting but I will not go into any detail.

**RFE/RL:** After the recent Nice summit, the talks on the EU-Russia agreement appear to be back on track. We just did a story ourselves, saying "[back to business as usual.](#)" Some people see this as capitulation, given that Russia has not really complied with the terms of the cease-fire agreement. How would you respond to that allegation that going back to business as usual with Russia on the part of the EU is in some ways a capitulation?

**Semneby:** I would take the issue without that it's business as usual. First of all, Russia has complied at least with a very important part of the cease-fire agreement. The Russian troops withdrew, as Russia had agreed, to the administrative boundary lines of South Ossetia and Abkhazia by October 1. There've been some questions regarding details here but fundamentally they took this very important step.

The questions that remain concern the commitment in the six-point plan to withdraw to positions before August 7. As far as the EU is concerned, the main consideration here was to have channels of communication open with Russia at the very sensitive moment. Those channels of communication and the negotiations on the agreement will in themselves give the European Union leverage also on issues related to Georgia and to the conflicts. And these issues, believe me, will be brought up in the course of those discussions with Russia.

**RFE/RL:** But even if Russia has fulfilled most of its commitments, one of the most important of them -- restoration of the status quo ante -- as you've just noted, remains unfulfilled.

**Semneby:** This is precisely what I mentioned: There are still questions -- and this is rather a mild and almost euphemistic way of putting it -- there are questions regarding that particular commitment -- the withdrawal to the positions before August 7, before the hostilities started. Absolutely.

**RFE/RL:** What leverage does the EU have to make it possible for its monitors to assess the situation inside the breakaway regions? It remains a huge problem, even if the mandate of the EU Monitoring Mission includes those regions.

**Semneby:** Absolutely. It's a very important aspect of the mandate of the monitoring mission that it covers the entire territory of Georgia. The conditions so far have not been present for their activities in the breakaway regions. This will be an issue that has already been raised and will continue to be raised in contacts with Russia within the framework of the Geneva talks and in whatever relevant context and forum that we have.

**RFE/RL:** Russia is not only increasing its troops' presence in Georgia's breakaway regions but considers moving a naval base to Ochamchire in Abkhazia. Moscow is justifying this on the grounds that these are bilateral talks between independent countries, leaving aside the fact that nobody other than Russia and Nicaragua recognizes them. Given that both sides are kind of dug in here, is there any way to bridge this gap?

**Semneby:** First of all, that kind of argument that these are bilateral agreements between independent states, they do not hold any value in our eyes. The EU does not recognize, of course, the independence of the breakaway regions and this is a very fundamental position we are also bringing across to the Russian Federation in the talks that we have with them.

As far as the military presence in the breakaway regions is concerned, of course we are concerned about any kind of military buildup, in particular also in the situation, where there is very little in terms of transparency. We know fairly well what the situation is, what is going on on the side that is controlled by the Georgian government, but we have very little insight into the situation on the other side of the administrative lines.

## **The Narrative Of Events**

**RFE/RL:** A new international commission has been recently set up to investigate the causes of the August war. This investigation is getting under way at a time when -- at least in the media -- the narrative seems to be shifting a little bit on the origins of the war, most significantly after "The New York Times" piece that came out on November 7. The article, citing unidentified OSCE observers, said that Georgia acted indiscriminately in Tskhinvali, which a lot of people don't dispute. But the piece also says that Georgians acted without being provoked, [which a lot of people do dispute](#). Is that change in any way reflected in the diplomatic community, as the investigation is under way?

**Semneby:** First of all, the discussions on launching this investigation have been going on for quite some time and that decision on the investigation was not conditioned in any way by the recent media reports. I think this is important to point out.

I agree that the recent reports have given another narrative than has been the case so far. I have been rather troubled, I must say, also by a lot of previous narrative because it has concentrated too much on a very narrow time interval on the day that the active phase of the war broke out. I don't think we are ever [likely] to get absolutely full clarity about the sequence of events and what information was available at what particular time on that day. There's always going to be some doubt about August 7 itself.

But what is as relevant and perhaps even more relevant, is the larger context. Because we saw over the course of a very long period -- I would say, a year at least -- a gradual buildup of tension, where both sides were only too happy to participate and engage in this buildup but where it seems clear that Georgia was the party that was under pressure in this period. And in most cases, in many cases, Georgia had to respond to moves of various kinds.

Part of the events in the year preceding were military, others were political. One year and one day before the war broke out, we had a Russian missile landing very close to the main highway and very close to -- maybe even within -- the area that was occupied by Russian forces this year. We had in April of this year a decree by [Russian] President [Vladimir] Putin to the government on establishing closer links with the breakaway regions. We had other military dispositions, we had in the weeks immediately preceding the outbreak of the war, also a number of events, including the overflight of four Russian fighter planes in mid-July over South Ossetia -- Georgian airspace -- including fighting in various parts of South Ossetia between South Ossetian militia and Georgian forces that never really stopped before August 7.

This is part of a much larger perspective and a much larger pattern. That is a very complex series of developments that need to be studied and that's the reason why this investigation has been launched.

**RFE/RL:** In just a couple of weeks the EU will have a new president -- on January 1, 2009, the Czech Republic will take over the presidency from France. What will that mean for Georgia? Will there be any shift -- and if yes, in which direction -- in the EU policy toward the South Caucasus? Is there any prospect for some kind of a broader mandate for the EU, maybe in form of a police force stationed in the conflict areas?

**Semneby:** Well, if you ask about change of the EU policy, yes, of course there will be a change. The European policy is adapted all the time to the circumstances and particularly in a crisis situation like the one that we have.

The strategic objectives though remain the same: We want to stabilize the situation, we want to find ways towards a political solution of the conflict and we want to make sure that the reform process in Georgia is moved forward. These we continue to consider guiding principles.

As far as the presence of the EU is concerned, there will of course in due course be a review of work of the EU Monitoring Mission. But these are still very early days and I don't dare to say what the parameters of that sort of review would be, not to speak of the outcome of the review.

There are other important events also, that we can expect during the Czech presidency. The one that will have profound consequences for Georgia and the other countries of the South Caucasus, is the discussion on the so-called Eastern Partnership, the initiative that was launched by Poland and Sweden a few months ago, and which will now be brought forward by a report to be produced by the European Commission that, in turn, will be discussed between member states.

In order at some time during the Czech presidency for the member states, for the Council of the

EU to take a decision that I believe will mean a qualitatively new step in terms of our relation with these countries. This will send the signal that the EU is firmly committed to the prosperity and security of the countries in the South Caucasus, that the partnership with the EU is a durable and lasting one, which I believe will serve to provide a kind of guiding direction for the reassurance to the countries but also a signal to other external partners that the EU is there to stay.

**RFE/RL:** In January a new administration will be coming into office in the United States. Many people would like to see the Americans and the Europeans in the region on the same page. Sometimes it seems the Americans are doing their own thing and the Europeans are doing their own thing. Are you hopeful that the Americans and the Europeans will be more coordinated on South Caucasus under the future administration?

**Semneby:** I think, all the conditions are there for a very close dialogue on the South Caucasus. These are early days, of course, after the U.S. election. I will be going myself to the United States already next week and I will meet [with] quite a few people both from the current administration and from those who are likely to take over responsible posts in the new administration. But I am fairly confident that we are going to find common language on the most important issues, relating to this region.

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## Will New President Bring 'Kadyrovization' To Ingushetia?

by Andrei Babitsky

Why did Russian President Dmitry Medvedev name Yunus-Bek Yevkurov as president of Ingushetia?



Noted Russian journalist and expert on the Caucasus Yulia Latynina has speculated that Yevkurov has been given the same task as the president of the neighboring Republic of

Chechnya: to suppress the armed resistance (in terms of the intensity of that resistance, Ingushetia is now the most dangerous place in the North Caucasus) and to take the situation in the republic under firm control.

Latynina has named this process "Kadyrovization" -- in honor of Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov -- and has said there is no more effective type of management for a region that is constantly threatening to spin out of control than strict central command.

Yevkurov's first steps don't seem to contradict or confirm this theory. So far the new president has been able to produce a general elation through a spate of populist statements and actions. Immediately after his inauguration, he went to a mosque and joined in the prayers. In the following days, he held several meetings with members of the opposition, visited the parents of the slain journalist Magomed Yevloyev and expressed his condolences, and sent a delegation to the Nalchik remand prison to investigate the conditions under which Ingush prisoners are being held.

But he got the loudest raves among his constituents with his demonstrations of the means by which he plans to rein in the siloviki, bureaucrats, and influential local businesspeople that his predecessor did not dare to touch.

During ceremonies marking the professional holiday for the police, Yevkurov -- instead of joining the chorus of voices lauding the professionalism and courage of the officers -- delivered a harsh and unexpected rebuke. He accused the police of cowardice, saying that it is impossible to find a single officer out on the streets at night. His statement that "anyone who is afraid of the bullet shouldn't be a police officer" roused a particular furor in Ingushetia. Yevkurov's speech also made it clear that he does not consider all those currently being held on suspicion of cooperating with the resistance to be guilty, and he urged officials to examine each case carefully.



Another very popular initiative was Yevkurov's call for restoring state ownership of land around Nazran that has been illegally privatized by bureaucrats in recent years. The officials took advantage of the lack of a Land Code and clear regulations on land distribution to take ownership of the parcels, and this issue was particularly controversial because of a severe shortage of good land in Ingushetia.

Yevkurov also ordered the dismantling of a fence illegally erected by Ibragim Malsagov -- one of the richest and most influential people in Ingushetia -- around his house that was blocking an entire street in downtown Nazran. This story goes back to the presidency of Ruslan Aushev in

the early years of this decade. Local residents have been complaining constantly about the fence for years, but the authorities never reacted. Aushev simply did not want to cross the influential Malsagov family.

Yevkurov's most ambitious move so far has been his promise to help thousands of displaced Ingush from the Prigorodny Raion of Northern Ossetia return to their homes. With just these few phrases, he acquired tens of thousands of supporters from among the displaced and among other Ingush who have viewed the ban on return as a harsh and painful form of discrimination.

### **Taking His Message To The People**

Who is Yevkurov counting on for support? It seems clear that his statements have been directed primarily toward average citizens of the republic and to informal structures within Ingush society, going over the heads of the bureaucracy, the siloviki, and avaricious business. During meetings with the elders of Ingushetia, he spoke in fluent Ingush and spoke only about what he was sure of. And Yevkurov is sure that it is necessary to create the order that must prevail in the republic under his leadership.

The new president has achieved quite a lot in a short time. However, in the kaleidoscope of his words and deeds, one can see a genuinely harsh leader who tends toward an authoritarian style. He clearly doesn't give much credence to democratic ideas and values. He did not come to Ingushetia to give the people civil liberties (and, more, that isn't what they are asking for).

Ingushetia most of all needs security and the resolution of problems connected with corruption, unemployment, low living standards, and displaced persons. The opposition in the republic has not gelled into a political force with its own complex and finalized program. It remains an elemental force, criticizing the authorities and conveying the needs of the population. It is already becoming clear that it will not be difficult for Yevkurov to win the sympathies of such an opposition.



He will need strong methods to cope with two tasks: To suppress the active, armed underground (which Moscow demands) and to protect the populace from the whims of federal security units (which the people dream of). So far it is hard to say how he will cope with these tasks and what methods he will adopt. Will Yevkurov follow Kadyrov's path and replace federal violence with his own, more loyal to the local population? Or will he try to rely largely on the traditional institutions of Ingush society?

The program that he has articulated so far is largely conceptual -- outlining only the main goals. As for the means -- the new president of Ingushetia, it seems, will have to figure them out as he goes along.

*Andrei Babitsky is a broadcaster for RFE/RL's Russian Service. The views expressed in this commentary are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of RFE/RL*

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## **Chechen Leader Further Strengthens His Position**

by Liz Fuller

Two recent developments in Chechnya reflect the extent to which republic head Ramzan Kadyrov can still impose his will on Moscow to rid himself of any figure whom he perceives as a potential threat to his authority.



Visiting Grozny on November 8, Colonel General Vladimir Moltenskoi, who served from October 2001 to September 2002 as commander of the combined Russian forces in the North Caucasus and is now deputy commander in chief of the Russian land forces, announced that the controversial Vostok (East) and Zapad (West) battalions subordinate to Russian military intelligence (GRU) will be disbanded, and their personnel subsumed into the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division permanently deployed in Chechnya. The two battalions were the only Chechen-manned fighting units in Chechnya over which Kadyrov had no personal control, and the loyalty of whose personnel he therefore considered suspect.

Since an altercation in April between Vostok personnel and his own bodyguards, Kadyrov has been campaigning for the disbanding of the battalion and for criminal charges of murder and abduction to be brought against its commander, Sulim Yamadayev. Yamadayev was removed as commander in May, and on August 1 a warrant was issued for his arrest. He was demobilized at the end of August, and his current whereabouts are not known. Reports on November 8 that he had been named to head a military-intelligence detachment in Taganrog were denied on November 10 by the Defense Ministry.



Also on November 10, Kadyrov's press service named witnesses who it claimed have confirmed that Yamadayev personally ordered the abduction and subsequent murder early last year of businessmen Yunus and Yusup Arsamakov, brothers of Moscow Industrial Bank President Abubakar Arsamakov. The two men disappeared in southern Chechnya on February 8, 2007, together with their driver; their bodies were never found, and their family hoped they were still alive, but has recently held the statutory wake for them.

Yamadayev is said to have visited the Arsamakovs' parents and sworn on the Koran that he had nothing to do with the disappearance of the two men, according to [kavkaz-uzel.ru](http://kavkaz-uzel.ru) on November 11; the website quoted Abubakar Arsamakov as telling Russian media he believes Yamadayev's protestation of his innocence.

### **Legal Conflicts**

A second agency that over the past few years has repeatedly challenged actions or statements by Chechen government officials is the office of the republic's prosecutor-general. Over the past three years, since the appointment in December 2005 of Valery Kuznetsov as prosecutor-general, that agency has implemented a crackdown on corruption, of which the most prominent victim was Vakha Baybatyrov, the first head of the state committee tasked with allocating compensation to Chechens whose homes were destroyed, or relatives killed, during the fighting between 1994-2001. Also prosecuted during Kuznetsov's tenure was a senior Interior Ministry official whose subordinates systematically killed innocent Chechen civilians that he subsequently claimed were resistance fighters, according to "Kommersant" on November 12.

In June 2007, Kuznetsov's office lodged a formal protest with the Chechen parliament, noting that the recently adopted law on the human rights plenipotentiary contradicted the corresponding federal law. Four months later, in October 2007, it protested as violating the Constitution of the Russian Federation, which stipulates the separation of church and state, a Chechen government decree on establishing a State Islamic Institute.

In March 2008, the prosecutor's office identified a pattern of major financial irregularities within the Ministry for Property and Land Ownership, and in late May, several instances in which the State Committee for Architecture and Urban Construction approved the opening of shops and gas stations that failed to meet fire-regulation requirements. Also in late May, it registered widespread violations of prison-camp regulations (overcrowding and lack of adequate sanitary facilities).



In an implicit criticism of the prosecutor's office, Kadyrov said during a February 2008 meeting in Grozny with staff from the Moscow-based human rights watchdog Memorial that he does not control the activities of all law enforcement agencies. Many of them, he complained, continue to take orders solely from their central superior bodies, which is the reason why "representatives of the power bodies fail to take action with regard to many of the crimes committed in Chechnya," kavkaz-uzel.ru reported on February 23.

Chechen human rights ombudsman Nurdi Nukhadzhiyev, who is close to Kadyrov, criticized the work of the republic's prosecutor's office in general, and Kuznetsov personally, during parliament hearings in May 2007. Nukhadzhiyev asked the republic's authorities on that occasion to demand that the federal Prosecutor-General's Office replace Kuznetsov and open a criminal investigation into the work of his office. He also accused Kuznetsov's office of not doing anything to locate people who had been kidnapped or simply vanished without a trace.

Kuznetsov has now been transferred to Rostov Oblast, where he will serve in the same capacity, kavkaz-uzel.ru reported on November 11. During his confirmation hearings in the Rostov Oblast Duma on November 11, he described his time in Chechnya as extremely valuable to his professional development, noting that "I acquired experience in dealing with such powerful leaders as Ramzan Kadyrov." It is not yet known who will replace Kuznetsov in Grozny.