

Georgian Defense Minister Offers Modernization Plan in Face of Russia Threat

By Dodge Billingsley
OE Watch Commentary

Without mentioning Russia once, Georgian military analyst Irakly Aladashvili, who writes prolifically on Georgian security, analyzed a recent Defense Ministry plan to repel military threats “that have been threatening Georgian soil for decades.” According to the analysis featured in the excerpted article by Georgian private weekly *Kviris Palitra*, the Georgian military, now back from “the 12-year Afghanistan epic,” should put all its resources into building up the armed forces because “We know that no one else will die for Georgia. This was made obvious during the August [2008] war and has been confirmed many times during the last 13 years.”

According to the article, Georgia’s defense modernization program can be split into five categories: anti-tank, air defense, increased use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in a strike capacity, increased mobility of artillery and mortars, and mine warfare and engineering. It is important to note that the article was published during Exercise

Agile Spirit 2021, a long running biennial military exercise with NATO and U.S. military forces. Among the training that the Georgian military received from NATO and U.S. personnel was resistance warfare in the face of an overwhelming military attack. So again, without mentioning Russia by name, the article alludes how many in Georgia believe they cannot hope to withstand a dedicated invasion of Russian forces or to count on allies to come to their aid. Thus, the defense modernization has to work. The author is clear, “There is no other solution.”

“... It is time to pay special attention (including financially) to repelling the specific military threats that have been threatening Georgian soil for decades ...”

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Continued: Georgian Defense Minister Offers Modernization Plan in Face of Russia Threat

Source: Irakly Aladashvili, “5 მიმართულება 10 წელიწადში ქართული არმიის გასაძლიერებლად... (5 directions to strengthen the Georgian army in 10 years ...),” Kviris Palitra (Private Weekly newspaper published from Tbilisi), 30 July 2021. <https://www.kvirispalitra.ge/samkhedro-thema/80655-5-mimarthuleba-10-tselitsadshi-qarthuli-armiis-gasadzliereblad.html>

“The Ministry of Defense has published a list of the main priority areas that should be developed in the Georgian Army by 2030 ...”

Anti-armor capability, air defense, unmanned aerial vehicles for reconnaissance and strike capability, increasing the mobility of artillery and operational mining - these are the 5 main areas where the defense forces must succeed in the next 10 years ...

“Obviously, it is important to make optimal and rational use of the available resources, therefore, we have written a plan in all these priority areas, according to which the resources will be allocated for the next 10 years.

Focus, by age, on each major and general priority. Accordingly, we have developed a timeline for supporting the Defense Forces’ 2030 priorities. In general, we will be able to replace the existing Soviet weapons systems with modern weapons systems that meet the current requirements of the Defense Forces. It is noteworthy that we have already started working on each priority area.

In connection with the anti-armor direction, it is planned to purchase “javelins” from the USA; In the field of air defense, the procurement process and the strengthening of our troops will take place over the next ten to six years. For the development of intelligence capability, our special focus is on the development of operational and tactical unmanned reconnaissance and combat aircraft, as well as radio-electronic reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities.

To ensure quality and adequate volume, we start local production, therefore, we are actively cooperating with South African-Polish companies. We plan to sign a contract with them this year and we will start releasing it next year. In the direction of artillery development, from 2024 it is planned to develop Georgian-made mortars, as well as to purchase foreign-made artillery equipment.

Our fifth priority is the development of engineering mobility and countermeasures. “In this regard, the Defense Forces will focus on strengthening the areas of special operations, as well as strengthening management and control, communications and information systems,” - said Defense Minister Juansher Burchuladze.

The plan is really ambitious and strengthening the Georgian army, focusing on the priorities mentioned by the Minister of Defense was needed a long time ago, even before the August 2008 war, but the implementation of this ten-year plan is already a great effort from a state in difficult political, economic and pandemic conditions. Most importantly, it requires billions of GEL. However, there is no other solution. We know that no one will die for Georgia. This was made obvious during the August [2008] war and has been confirmed many times during the last 13 years.

The already banal phrase - those who do not take care of their army, will have to feed someone else’s army - is still relevant and therefore the only defender of the country - the Georgian army needs to strengthen its combat capability given the constant military-political threats in the world and especially in our difficult region.

In addition to the five priority areas, there are areas whose strengthening also did not bother the Georgian army - even the upgrading of armored vehicles, but since the country has chosen a total defense strategy as a priority, it is clear that in the near future it will be vital to defeat the enemy. - Massive attack with Georgian tanks.

None of these five priority areas is unfulfilled. The third generation of American “javelins”, which can be used with great success to blow up tanks and other armored vehicles, have been in the arsenal of the Georgian army for several years and their number will increase in the future.

Purchasing air defenses is a more expensive pleasure, but strengthening the air defenses of Georgian infantry units with Stinger-type or similar portable anti-aircraft missile systems to protect against low-altitude enemy aircraft and helicopters - real defense.

The use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) capable of carrying out point-to-point air strikes in addition to their reconnaissance functions has long been a reality, so their acquisition and even serial assembly on the ground is not a difficult task.

No one disputes that artillery units should change their firing position immediately after the volley (it did not happen so often during the August war, which had several tragic consequences for Georgian artillerymen). However, it is clear that towed artillery is much more expensive.

Mobility of Georgian artillery will increase significantly after the mass integration of the self-propelled 120 mm mortar “Didgori Warrior” among Georgian infantry brigades. As for the operative arrangement of minefields in the directions of the opponent’s attacks, this is not new either, and it is relatively cheap when acting with total defense tactics.

For the Georgian army, the 12-year Afghan epic is over and it is time to pay special attention (including financially) to repelling the specific military threats that have been threatening Georgian soil for decades ...