



For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE

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**JOINT PATROL TO KODORI VALLEY
05-07 MARCH 2007**

From 5 to 7 March the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and the Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS PKF) conducted another joint patrol of the lower and upper Kodori valley. The joint patrol was provided with the usual security guarantees and excellent cooperation from both sides.

The patrol followed up on two previous patrols, which took place in October and December 2006 after a 2-month break due to adverse weather and road conditions. It aimed at ensuring transparency in the deployment of security forces in the valley and observing its consistency with the Moscow agreement.

The joint patrol travelled extensively throughout lower and upper Kodori valley and was afforded full access to security personnel, posts and installations.

The patrol en route did not observe any change in the deployment of the Abkhaz militia checkpoints in the lower Kodori valley. In the upper Kodori valley, Georgian officials provided details of their security force deployment, under the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA). It included 284 personnel on rotational deployment from the Criminal Police and Special Tasks departments; and 100 locally-recruited border guards. The personnel from the Criminal Police and Special Tasks departments were armed with personal weapons. Section weapons (RPG launchers and machine guns) were available for deployment from armouries.

Ammunition stores, logistic and maintenance bases were open for inspection. The patrol saw boxes of 23mm ammunition, which had been declared during the December 2006 patrol. Georgian officials reiterated that there were no heavy weapons corresponding to this ammunition. The patrol recommended that, in accordance with the Moscow agreement, the ammunition be withdrawn from the valley.

In general, the patrol did not observe any deployment of heavy weapons.

The patrol observed that the two armoured recovery vehicles (MTLBs) that were inspected in December 2006 have been converted to provide a medical evacuation capability under the Red Cross sign. UNOMIG would propose that they be replaced with civilian vehicles once the Khida Pass is re-opened.

UNOMIG has taken note of the MIA's intention to align its presence in the upper Kodori valley with the manning levels elsewhere in the country, and will continue to follow this process.

UNOMIG expresses once again its appreciation for the cooperation it has received in relation to the monitoring of the Kodori valley. Transparency will undoubtedly remain a key factor in raising both sides' confidence about the commitments they have made to the full implementation of the Moscow agreement.

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