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ON JFFG INVESTIGATION

In response to the attacks reported in the upper Kodori valley on the night of 11 March 2007, the Chief Military Observer (CMO) of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) convened a Joint Fact-Finding Group (JFFG). The JFFG is headed by UNOMIG and includes representatives from the Georgian Government, the Abkhaz de facto authorities and the Peacekeeping Forces of the CIS.

Since 13 March, the JFFG has conducted two patrols to the upper Kodori valley, where it traveled extensively. It was afforded full access to security personnel, posts and installations. The patrols collected and examined evidence from ordnance involved in the attack to determine what type of weaponry was involved.

During these patrols, the JFFG has conducted numerous interviews with local residents and personnel of the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs in the upper Kodori valley; and with CIS peacekeepers in the lower Kodori valley, to establish the best possible account of the incident. Additionally, in an effort to determine the direction and distance from which the attacks were conducted, the JFFG conducted 'crater analysis' of 17 different ground impacts sites and inspected the damaged Chkhalta administration building.

In the course of four separate sessions, the JFFG was provided relevant information from joint working groups of experts on artillery, aviation and ammunition issues. All parties have presented information and arguments useful in interpreting the events. Consensus has been reached on a number of aspects of the incident. The JFFG has also agreed that further progress requires additional information, which it expects to be provided in the near future.

UNOMIG expresses its gratitude to the members of the JFFG for their support; and to the Georgian Government for allowing access to facilities, personnel and information shared with the JFFG. The Mission hopes that further cooperation by all sides will enable the JFFG to make a substantial contribution to understanding the 11 March incident.

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