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A Survey of Developments in Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine by the  
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#### UKRAINE

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#### IS UKRAINE ARMING GEORGIA AGAINST RUSSIA?

Since August, Ukraine and Georgia have sent out contradictory signals over the sale of anti-aircraft defense systems by Ukraine to Georgia. This became urgent for Georgia after planes -- Georgia has claimed they were Russian -- bombed Georgian territory in August, killing innocent civilians. The raid was allegedly targeted at Chechen guerrillas and their Muslim supporters in the Pankisi Gorge near the Georgian-Russian border.

In August-September, Russia threatened to launch ground and air assaults on the Pankisi Gorge to root out the Chechens who were allegedly using it as a safe haven before re-entering Chechnya. Russia pressured the United States for a deal whereby Washington would agree to Russian military intervention in Georgia in return for Russia's dropping its opposition to likely U.S. military action against Iraq. In the meantime, Georgian forces took back the lawless Pankisi Gorge in October and reported the presence of no Chechen guerrillas.

Ukraine and Georgia have cooperated in the military field since 1996 when they signed an accord on the creation of the Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Cooperation. Ukraine has trained 200 Georgian officers since then at its well-developed military academies, and such training remains a priority in Georgian-Ukrainian military cooperation. Besides Ukraine, Georgia has established military-cooperation programs with the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Turkey. Washington provides \$64 million in military assistance each year and is training elite Georgian forces.

Georgia and Ukraine are also linked through the regional CIS group GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova). As Ukraine has progressively realigned its multilateral foreign policy from a pro-Western to a pro-Russian neutrality since the "Kuchmagate" crisis began in November 2000, the strategic importance of the GUUAM group has declined for Ukraine. Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma visited Armenia, long suspicious of GUUAM, in October and signed military- and technical-cooperation agreements.

With Ukraine more closely aligned with Russia, it has become increasingly wary of publicizing its military links with Georgia, whose president, Eduard Shevardnadze, is widely disliked in Russia. An October Russian Public-Opinion Foundation poll found that

Shevardnadze was the most disliked CIS leader among Russians. Forty-four percent had a negative view of him while only 2 percent thought of him positively. This is coupled with the total lack of transparency that surrounds arms sales in Ukraine in particular and in the Commonwealth of Independent States in general.

Unlike Ukraine, Georgia has an interest in publicizing the acquisition of military technology that would increase its ability to defend its sovereignty. On 17 September, Georgian National Security Council secretary Tedo Djaparidze admitted that Georgia would soon possess a modern air-defense system that would prevent its territory from being bombed. This was a reference to Russia, which had first bombed Georgian forces in the Abkhaz conflict in the early 1990s and has done so sporadically since. The chief of Georgia's General Staff, Lieutenant General Djoni Pirtskhalaishvili, admitted that Ukrainian air-defense units consisting of surface-to-air missiles would be stationed on the Georgian-Russian border.

Djaparidze visited Ukraine recently, where successful negotiations were held on the purchase of an air-defense system for which the Georgian parliament had allocated \$12 million. On 28 September, Pirtskhalaishvili admitted that, "Georgia will soon receive anti-aircraft systems from Ukraine." He added that the training of Georgians to man these systems "has already begun."

On 1 October, Georgian Ambassador to Ukraine Grigol Katamadze denied his country had signed a deal with Ukraine to deliver air-defense units. It seems highly unlikely that somebody in this position would be kept in the dark over such sales. But, on the same day, Georgian Foreign Minister Irakli Menagharishvili contradicted the ambassador and confirmed negotiations were indeed taking place. He repeated the view of other Georgian officials that the air-defense units would be used against foreign planes "that strike at Georgian territory."

Although the Ukrainian air-defense units had not yet arrived in Georgia, the Georgians were possibly using their pending arrival to influence Russian military plans against Georgia, which became increasingly aggressive in tone in September-October. Menagharishvili stated that the air-defense units would "shoot down planes no matter who owns them, [whether they are from] Russia or alien planets." But, he added that he hoped their presence would discourage Russia from conducting another bombing raid on Georgia.

Ukrainian Defense Minister Volodymyr Shkidchenko planned to visit Georgia on 7-9 October to discuss arrangements for the delivery and installation of the air-defense units, but his visit was postponed. The unofficial reason for the postponement was the impending arrival of the U.S.-British team of experts in Ukraine to investigate the Kolchuga arms scandal that was first publicly raised by the United States in late September.

On 10 October, Prime Minister Anatoliy Kinakh was the first Ukrainian official to admit publicly that Georgia and Ukraine were negotiating an arms deal, although he refused to disclose any details. By this time, Georgia had already paid Ukraine \$3.6 million in advance of the \$12 million total cost of the air-defense units. Georgians were also being trained in Ukraine to use the units, and Georgian officials had disclosed in September what their country was

purchasing from Ukraine. Kinakh's circumspection was therefore surprising but fully in line with Ukraine's unwillingness to place arms sales within the new policy of transparency outlined in a presidential decree in August.