

US to Allocate \$35 Million to Strengthen Georgia's Defense



BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The United States will provide \$ 35 million to Georgia to strengthen its defenses against future threats from Russia. This will be part of another military assistance provided by the United States in response to the Russian-led war in Ukraine.

Two months after Russia's re-invasion of Ukraine, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin paid a visit to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Kyiv on April 25. During a rare visit to the war zone, US officials told a joint news conference that Washington would help Kiev win the war with Russia. They said the US would provide an additional \$ 713 mil-

lion in military assistance to strengthen the defense capabilities of Ukraine and its 15 allies and partners.

In an exclusive written commentary to Voice Of America's Georgian service, a State Department spokesman said \$ 322 million in foreign military funding (FMF) of \$ 713 million would be used to strengthen Ukraine's defense capabilities. The money allocated to Ukraine will be used for investment, which will strengthen the wide range of opportunities. The State Department says this includes 'non-NATO standard weapons systems; Assistance to the Ukrainian Armed Forces has been transferred to NATO long-range systems such as artillery fire; And air defense capabilities'.

The rest will be distributed to the Balkans and Central and Eastern European countries, including Georgia.

"Georgia will receive \$ 35 million, which includes a brigade of combat equipment, an anti-drone system, a tactical data system of advanced field artillery, mobility capabilities and cyber-defense," VoA quoted the Department of State from an exclusive written comment.

A diplomat also said that the State Department sent a notice to Congress on April 24 about the allocation of this amount. Its aim is to 'help NATO allies replenish the capabilities they have provided to Ukraine free of charge from their own reserves, so that NATO can maintain and strengthen its containment capabilities.'

Colomina: all NATO instruments are at your disposal, some of them valid only for Georgia

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Javier Colomina, the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia is paying official visit to Tbilisi. On April 27 he held meetings with Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia Shalva Papuashvili, members of Parliamentary Committee on Defense and Security as well as Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili.

The process of Georgia's NATO integration and the security challenges in the region were the main topics of discussion between the Gharibashvili and Colomina. According to the press service of the PM, Georgia has made significant progress on

the path to membership in the Alliance and focused on the reforms that the country is successfully implementing. NATO's important role in strengthening overall Euro-Atlantic security and stability was noted. Also, attention was paid to the upcoming Madrid summit. During the meeting, the sides discussed the challenges in the occupied territories of Georgia and the difficult humanitarian situation.

Javier Colomina reaffirmed the Alliance's strong support for Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. The meeting also focused on security challenges created in the region as a result of the war in Ukraine. The PM reiterated Georgia's solidarity with Ukraine, its

humanitarian assistance and its support, both politically and diplomatically, including in international formats. The Prime Minister stressed the crucial role of the international community and the need for effective steps to end the war as soon as possible. The meeting also focused on the importance of Black Sea security and the role of NATO-Georgia cooperation in this direction. After the meeting with the Speaker of the Parliament and then in the Committee on Defense and Security Colomina said that NATO highly values Georgia as a partner.

NEWS IN BRIEF

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

If Anyone Intervenes in the Situation in Ukraine the Answer Will be Lightning Fast, Putin Says

Russian President Vladimir Putin says the answer would be "lightning fast" if Ukraine intervened in the war. This is not the first time an aggressor has threatened a country leader.

"If anyone wants to intervene in the situation in Ukraine from the outside and pose an unacceptable strategic threat to Russia - the answer will be lightning fast."

Putin said Russia has all the tools no one else does. "Everyone should know about it," Putin told the Legislative Council.

In his speech, Putin spoke about the sanctions imposed on Russia. He is still trying to convince the Russian people that the global financial and economic sanctions have not caused large-scale damage to the country.

Bulgaria and Poland are talking about legal measures against Russia and Gazprom

Bulgaria and Poland say they are ready to take legal action against Russia and Gazprom after they cut off gas supplies. President of Poland, Andrzej Duda, notes that appropriate 'legal measures' will be taken against the Russian company Gazprom. According to him, they are demanding compensation from Gazprom for violating the contract. Bulgarian Energy Minister Alexander Nikolov told CNN that the government is open to legal action against Moscow.

"The state-owned company Bulgargaz made the payment and then the money was returned from Gazprom. If we are talking about breach of contract, then from a legal and legislative point of view, it is absolutely clear who breached the contract," Nikolov said.

Russia's state-owned Gazprom has cut off gas supplies to both countries after Bulgaria and Poland refused to buy gas in rubles. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen says gas is now supplied to Bulgaria and Poland by neighboring EU member states.

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EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.0368 | EURO - 3.2473 | GBP - 3.8637 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 4.1294 | SWISS FRANC - 3.1706 |

Ex-President Margvelashvili Denies Rumors about Becoming UNM Chairman



▶ According to the ex-president of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili, spreading the information could be an attempt to cover up the alleged recordings of Bidzina Ivanishvili and Russian oligarch Vladimir Yevtushenkov.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgian TV channel Rustavi 2 has reported that the fourth President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili is becoming the chairman of the United National Movement, stressing that Margvelashvili received the offer from Mikheil Saakashvili personally and the party has already agreed on this issue.

As Margvelashvili told Palitrane TV, there has been no such offer and he is not considering his candidacy for the post of UNM chairman. According to him, this information is a lie and nobody offered the chairmanship to him 'even

jokingly'. He stressed that this issue was not discussed at the meeting, which took place between him and Saakashvili a few months ago. The ex-president of Georgia believes that spreading this information could be an attempt to cover up the alleged recordings of Bidzina Ivanishvili and Russian oligarch Vladimir Yevtushenkov.

Nika Melia, the current chairman of the United National Movement has also denied the fact. According to him, this information was developed by the special services and then sent to Imedi TV, and Rustavi 2.

"it is not pleasant to watch a journa-



▶ According to Nika Melia, the chairman of the United National Movement, this information was developed by the special services and not by producers.

list, especially from Rustavi 2, voice a question from an employee of a department of SSG," he stated.

According to him, the mentioned topic was invented to cover the fact that Bidzina Ivanishvili is involved in an 'international scandal'.

Levan Bezhashvili, a member of the United National Movement, told reporters that the information is 'absurd', stressing that it has never been discussed or even put on the agenda. As for the recording between Ivanishvili and Evtushenkov, he assessed it as 'scandalous' and stated that it contains signs of crime and would be the subject

of an international investigation. Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili has spoken up about the recording that has been recently spread around the internet, saying that the recording is 'incomprehensible' whether it is an authentic conversation or not.

"We understand very well that the main goal and idea of the disseminators of these secret, falsified conversations is to start a war in Georgia. They are desperately trying to mislead the public, our international partners, with something like this," Garibashvili stated, adding that it is impossible for him to speculate on such conversations and recordings.

Colomina: all NATO instruments are at your disposal, some of them valid only for Georgia

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"NATO-Georgia has very good relations. We highly value Georgia as a partner. We have excellent practical cooperation. At your disposal are all the NATO tools we have. We must also emphasize that some tools are unique and work only for Georgia," Colomina said. According to him, NATO will provide Georgia with the specific tools it deserves due to its high level of trust.

"It has been decided to activate these tools in the past years and now we are in the process of providing Georgia with the specific tools it deserves, given the degree of trust that exists between NATO and you, the country. We talked about this

issue. We also talked about the political dialogue we have." He also emphasized that the war in Ukraine is a dramatic and tectonic change for everyone and NATO's response is to strengthen support and cooperation with all partners, 'especially those partners who we believe may be most affected by the threat posed by Russia'. According to him, most of the discussions in Tbilisi, and prior to that in Yerevan and in Baku, focus on the Russian war in Ukraine.

"We are now in the process of leading to the Madrid Summit, which will be held in late June. Decisions will be made to increase support, which will be tied to the needs of Georgia," Colomina said.



THURSDAY APRIL 28

Day Mostly sunny
High: 28°C

Night Showers
Low: 16°C

FRIDAY APRIL 29

Day Showers
High: 23°C

Night Partly cloudy
Low: 14°C

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