
Russian computer game acts out new Georgia war

By Denis Dyomkin

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A Russian computer game simulating a new war between Russia and Georgia, in which NATO-member Poland backs a fresh bid by Tbilisi to take back its rebel regions, is to hit shops soon.

Russia fought a short war with U.S. ally Georgia in August after Tbilisi sent troops to re-take the Russian-backed breakaway region of South Ossetia, sparking an outcry in the West.

In the computer game "Confrontation -- Peace Enforcement," which will go on sale in Russia next month, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili gets support from unnamed Western powers and decides to launch another attack to seize back South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

"NATO does not stay out of it, pushing Poland forward as its representative and Ukraine blockades the Black Sea fleet in Sevastopol," according to the description of the game supplied by its creators on Friday.

"Russia cannot remain out of it and launches a strike in response," said the game's creators, two Russian software and multimedia companies.

Russia's Black Sea fleet rents a base in Ukraine's Crimean port of Sevastopol, a source of tension with Kiev. The armies of Russia, Poland, Georgia and Abkhazia take part in the war game.

The title of the game is a reference to the way President Dmitry Medvedev described Russia's actions in Georgia -- an operation to enforce peace.

The war with Georgia, Moscow's biggest military operation outside its borders since the collapse of the Soviet Union, drove relations with the United States to a post-Cold War low.

The Kremlin complained that the West had supported and helped arm Georgia and thus undermined stability in the Caucasus, a key transport route for oil and gas from the Caspian Sea and an area Russia sees as its sphere of influence.

Since the war, tensions have remained high in Georgia with shooting incidents and explosions along the de-facto borders between the Russian supported rebel regions -- which Moscow recognized as independent states -- and Georgia proper.

But the makers of "Confrontation -- Peace Enforcement" said the game should not be taken too seriously.

"Politics are politics and a game is a game. These things should not be confused," Alexander Dmitrevsky, the business development director at one of the game's makers, Russobit-M, told Reuters.

More than 20,000 Georgians are still displaced from the fighting, though Amnesty International estimates that up to 200,000 fled from both sides last August. A final death toll from the conflict has not been independently established.
