
Saakashvili Stymied American Plans With Regards To Iran

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Was it that Georgia decided that there was nothing it couldn't try now that it made its territory available to the Americans for a strike at Iran?

DID WASHINGTON NEED GEORGIA FOR A STRIKE AT IRAN?; Saakashvili's escapade cost him dearly and jeopardized American plans regarding Iran.

Was Mikhail Saakashvili acting on his own or was he carrying out orders? What was the South Ossetian escapade for? Experts' comments suggest the following hypothesis.

It was anticipated more than once already that if a blow were to be delivered, it would be an American blow at Iran. The forthcoming election of the US president compelled the Republicans to place their stakes on a war - so as to take out Iranian nuclear and military sites first and foremost. Time was running out. An excuse was needed.

Launch of satellite by Iran was reported when Mikhail Saakashvili was up the South Ossetian creek without a paddle. Launch of a dummy, that was. Since it was a dummy that the Iranians launched, absence of a genuine satellite was quite clear. Why the hurry then? Satellite launch had been scheduled for late September or early October.

Military experts meanwhile advise to focus attention on the delivery means rather than on the payload. Tehran has proved that it possesses the delivery means that are essentially ballistic missiles. Specialists say that Iran has four of six of them.

Had Saakashvili kept a low profile, Iran would have launched the bona fide satellite in October and consequently invited an attack on its nuclear, military, and other vital sites. Launch of the dummy now failed to prompt a strike. Why? Because there is no place for the Americans to lash at Iran from.

To attack Iran, the United States needs a base or rather a territory 500-600 kilometers from the targets. What country could give the Americans the permit to use its own territory?

Not Azerbaijan because, among other considerations, of all the Azerbaijanis living in Iran. Turkey is out too because any such permit to the Americans would foment colossal problems with brothers in faith and stir the Islamists already eager to topple the secular regime in Ankara. Moreover, Ankara closed the passage to the Black Sea for the US Navy even on the humanitarian mission. It follows that Turkey is not going to wave American carrier battle groups through to where they will strike at Iran from. Armenia is out too, for obvious reasons. Israel is somewhat too far, and its readiness to become involved in so direct a manner is questionable in the first place.

With all these countries out, what is left? Georgia alone. It is the launch pad for the Americans, courtesy of Saakashvili. Plus Ukraine nearby, some experts point out.

Abkhazian volunteers returning from Georgia told Izvestia that Slav and namely Ukrainian mercenaries had fought in the war and not just in the Georgian infantry. Examination of the sites where Georgian antiaircraft

complexes had been stationed proved the latter manned by professional Ukrainian military.

This piece of the puzzle fits if we assume that Ukraine intended to assist the operation against Iran. It delivered anti-aircraft complexes to Georgia and posted them around the sites where US aircraft would have been stationed prior to launching salvos at targets in Iran. Moreover, Kiev graciously provided both the hardware and the personnel capable of putting it to use against Iranian efforts to retaliate against the US military in Georgia.

What do Ukraine and Georgia need it for? Victor Yushchenko and Saakashvili demanded Membership Action Plan (MAP) for their respective countries in return. Kiev and Georgia had been denied it in Bucharest earlier this year, but the United States - principal advocate of the MAP for these two Russia's neighbors - never actually abandoned the idea.

That was the general state of affairs at the moment when Saakashvili decided that he was indispensable for Washington and when he tried to solve his domestic problems as well. By and large, his reasoning was solid: in return for the use of the Georgian territory in the operation against Iran, official Washington would have to forgive Saakashvili an aggression against South Ossetia and Abkhazia and even support him if necessary. By all means available including military ones. Saakashvili probably counted on a blitzkrieg, he thought to pull it off over a day or two.

Tbilisi's tactical designs are clear as well. Moscow would be slow to react, and mass bombardment of Tskhinvali would send the survivors stampeding through the Rok Tunnel and making it impassable for the Russians. All of that would give Georgia time to overrun Tskhinvali defenders, hoist the Georgian flag above the city, install Tbilisi's puppet Sanakoyev, and proclaim South Ossetia under Georgian control again. Once that is accomplished, the international mechanisms will kick in and Washington will waste no time shutting up foreign objections to genocide and war crimes committed by the Georgian regime.

Russia in the meantime reacted swifter and more efficiently than Saakashvili (and probably his American curators too) expected. Moreover, the response was smart. The Russians never restricted it to driving the Georgians out of Tskhinvali environs. They hit elements of the military and transport infrastructure the Georgian regular army was using or could use to counter the Russian advance into South Ossetia. The Russians hit airfields (their runways) and seized the crossroads controlling transport arteries. It prevented Georgian reinforcement in the conflict area and therefore prevented procrastination of the conflict itself.

Hence the emotional reaction to the Russian deployment in Washington, a reaction which promptly deteriorated into hysterics. Saakashvili set himself up and jeopardized the American plans of a strike at Iran. Tehran in the meantime saw through the disguise and decided quite correctly that it was a perfect opportunity for the launch - even of a dummy. Needless to say, the Americans could not simulate wrath and lash at Iran from the Georgian territory at the moment. Moreover, any attempt to dispatch US troops to Georgia would have been seen in Moscow as a probable aggression against Russia with all that it would imply. It is clear that America could not afford a direct confrontation with Russia, in the state of hysterics (feigned in the first place) or not.

It is necessary to add a few words about US State Secretary Condoleezza Rice and her role in all of that. Rice kept telling whoever was willing to listen that she was firmly in control of thoroughly inadequate Saakashvili. This "eater of ties", however, proved her utterly wrong - much to Rice's chagrin.

Rice meanwhile had more riding on it than the presidential campaign currently under way. She apparently counted on vice presidency in four years (or twice four years). Or even presidency perhaps? In any event, Rice's dismal failure in Europe that obstinately refused to see the American stand on the matter as unconditionally and unquestionably correct might put an end to her political future. Hence garbled statements and nearly hysterical bouts.

Russia meanwhile should wonder what is going to happen should it withdraw the troops. Indeed, what will the Americans do if we bow to the demands and pull out? The Americans demand withdrawal of the troops in order to send some sort of contingent (NATO's or international) to the conflict area to block Russian peacekeepers there. Will they try to repair runways so as to move their aviation to Georgia and strike at Iran? Washington is running out of time. It has to lash out before the election, so that the current US Administration will shoulder all responsibility. Bush does not care. He is about to return to his family business. It is McCain who will have to continue along these lines - and will be happy to.

It is not as though Russia was out to make things lively for Washington at all costs. Decimation of Iran will be just a beginning of the process of rearrangement of the world order around Russia. It does not appear as if ordinary Georgians and Ukrainian guessed what their presidents were angling for or what colossal a folly Saakashvili and Yuschenko were cogs in.

American "relief aid" in the meantime is ferried to Georgia by the Pentagon and not through the usual channels (non-governmental organizations, that is). The shipments are not to be approached by non-authorized personnel. Does it mean that Operation Iran is not aborted?

P.S. Ruslan Pukhov (Center for Analysis of Strategies and Techniques): Charting an operation against Iran, the Americans more or less follow the scenario of their Iraqi operation. If it is ever to be launched or not is not clear at this moment, but preparations for the operation continue with zest. Since not all of the Iranian neighbors are prepared to make their territories available to the Americans, the latter need Georgia as this bridgehead. Particularly when Turkey flatly refused to participate in this escapade. Ankara's stand is understandable: the Americans are getting increasingly more pro-Kurdish. What with their plans to have sovereign Kurdistan established and all... Needless to say, Turkish society and the army (and the latter is playing an instrumental part in this country) cannot accept it. In 2003, the Turks denied the Americans the permit to advance on Iraq via their territory and thus prevented the second front against Saddam Hussein.

Azerbaijan is unlikely to desire involvement for approximately similar reasons. High oil prices allow for a steady economic growth. In a war, Iran may fail to reach out far enough to strike at the United States but create major problems for Azerbaijan it certainly will. Beginning with missile strikes and ending with the fact that the Azerbaijanis themselves belong to the same school of Islam. They are Shi'ah. And since Tehran backs and sponsors Shi'ah all over the world, it might even incite a turnover and Ilham Aliyev in Baku knows it.

Saakashvili on the other hand turned out to be a hothead with a fuse sufficiently short to sacrifice his own country in return for some preferences.
