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# Russian analyst points to link between Georgian attack and Iran

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A senior Russian military analyst said on Wednesday that the U.S. and NATO by arming Tbilisi used the conflict in Georgia as a dress rehearsal for a future military operation in Iran.

Col. Gen Leonid Ivashov, president of the Academy of Geopolitical Studies, told a news conference at RIA Novosti, "We are close to a serious conflict US and NATO preparations on a strategic scale are ongoing. In the operation the West conducted on Georgian soil against Russia - South Ossetians were the victims or hostages of it - we can see a rehearsal for an attack on Iran. There is a great deal of "new features" that today are being fine tuned in the theater of military operations."

He said the likelihood of a war against Iran was growing with each passing day, "As a result, the situation in the region will become destabilized," and added "causing chaos and instability" was becoming Washington's official policy line.

Ivashov said it was difficult to predict how other countries would react to a conflict with Iran, but according to him, "old Europe" would be reluctant for events to develop and to some degree would become Russia's allies.

With regard to the Georgia-South Ossetian conflict, he said that one of the principal goals of NATO's "geopolitical operation" was to neutralize Russia as a global player.

South Ossetia was attacked by Georgian forces on August 8. Hundreds of people died in the assault, and Russia subsequently launched an operation to expel Georgian forces from the republic. Moscow concluded its operation to "force Georgia to peace" on August 12.

President Dmitry Medvedev signed decrees on Tuesday recognizing Georgia's breakaway republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states.

Western political leaders have condemned Russia's decision leading to fears of a renewed Cold War. U.S. President George Bush said in a statement on Tuesday: "Russia's action only exacerbates tensions and complicates diplomatic negotiations."

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