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## International Crisis Group : offensive on Caucasus

By Andrei Areshev

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ICG, Abkhazia, Georgia, Kosovo, Dagestan Due to its geostrategic position the Caucasus region had always been of special interest to a group of western experts. But recently this attention has even intensified. From this point of view the work of the International Crisis Group (ICG) is very illustrative. The Group is "generally recognized as the world's leading independent, non-partisan, source of analysis and advice to governments on the prevention and resolution of deadly conflicts". Apparently, ICG has been working in close cooperation with the world's most authoritative politicians since many announcements made "on behalf of international community" were laid down by ICG experts. Kosovo is the most prominent example. The situation developed in accordance with the scenario proposed by the Group: first, all U.S and EU influential figures expressed their concern on the tensions in Kosovo, then they proclaimed that Kosovo`s independence was inevitable and made first steps in this direction. I suppose that Martti Ahtisaari, having worked a few years as the Chief of ICG Board of Directors, used some old schemes while working as UN special envoy to Kosovo.

It is remarkable that until recently the ICG, founded in 1995, has deliberately ignored Russia: still there is no special Russian section on their website.

(Though we all know it very well that in 1990s some other western bodies were very persistent in their attempts to use the situation in Chechnya for their own benefit). Now the situation has changed. In one of its recent reports presented by Vice-President Allen Deletroz, the ICG have unveiled its interest in the Republic of Dagestan, one of the most troublesome regions of the North Caucasus.

The facts provided by Mr. Deletroz during the presentation of the report headlined "Russia`s Dagestan: Conflict Causes" at Regnum press-center on June 3, did not come as something unexpected for Russian experts. After commenting on a poverty level, a big number of terror attacks in the region and on the escalation of street warfare and Wahhabism propaganda, Mr. Deletroz concluded that "police efforts to end the street war have been ineffective and in some instances counter-productive", adding that the idea of independence from the Russian Federation yet was not very popular among the people of Dagestan. Mr. Deletroz declined to answer whether the ICG had intentions to monitor the situation in other Russian regions. Yet the mere publication of the report looks like an attempt of the ICG to learn the reaction of the Russian government. If Moscow fails to provide adequate reaction to the work of the ICG, we may expect more announcements of the kind. But let us imagine how Washington would react to a report by a hypothetical non-governmental organization, comprising China, Iran, Russia and Mexico, that "the idea of separation from the U.S is not popular among the residents of Texas"...

The ICG has also focused on Abkhazian issue. It has been announced that a corresponding report is due to be presented soon (According to Mr. Deletroz, some amendments were being made to the document in view of recent events in Abkhazia, especially after the introduction of Russian railway troops there).

Evidently, the West is trying to change the format of the Georgian-Abkhazian negotiation process by ousting Russia from it. Recently Sukhumi has been witnessing an unprecedented political and diplomatic pressure as special groups from Tbilisi, Washington and Brussels, including those headed by U.S.

Ambassador to Georgia John Tefft and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Matthew Bryza, arrived in Abkhazia. Georgia is aimed at strengthening its military potential and continues its hypocritical policy calling for "bilateral" talks, which, if the West manages to implement its plan, will look more like a one-sided game. This very scheme was used!

at the 1999 Kosovo talks in Rambouillet (France) not long before NATO carried out air attacks on Yugoslavia. During the talks, Belgrade was left with humiliating offers from the West. The Yugoslavian authorities could not accept them, and the so-called western "mediators" knew this perfectly well. It seems that such kind of negotiations suits the ICG most, otherwise there would be no words about Kosovo as a "positive example" of western mediation. Neither would they accuse Russia of ignoring the situation in Abkhazia and failing to play mediation role in the process. Luckily, among those who attended the presentation, there were a few people who dared to correct Mr. Deletroz. They proved that Russia had been constantly making serious steps to prevent violence in the conflict region and also reminded that Georgia had been spending huge sums on military.

Vice-President of the ICG openly declared that the format of talks on the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict needed reforming. In such a way he voiced a consolidated position of U.S and EU. So, this is what Russian diplomats will have to do with in the near future.

There is already a wide range of instruments aimed at discrediting Russia's mediation role: they are references to Georgia, the country that initially ignored Russian peacekeeping forces, and to "Mikheil Saakashvili's peace plan", the ICG is going to rely on while developing its strategy in the region.

Georgian President unveiled his plan on South Ossetia in September 2004. Soon after this, former speaker of the Georgian government and close ally of President Saakashvili died under strange circumstances, Georgy Khaindrava stepped down and the whole negotiation process stumbled. So, it is very likely that the current "peace plan" on Abkhazia serves purely conformist purposes.

And there are very few people who trust the ICG as a "non-partisan" organization since its recommendations have long become quite straightforward...

Now it became clear that the ICG focuses not only on the Caucasian region.

Russia has to admit that such "partners" who seriously believe that Caucasus for Russia means the same as Cote d'Ivoire for France will only drag out the negotiation process. Moscow must be ready to timely provide adequate political, economical and military reaction to the western policies.

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