

Georgia Says 11 Militants Killed Who Crossed Border From Russia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The  **Moscow Times**

Georgian special forces killed 11 members of a militant armed group that crossed the border from Russia and freed about half a dozen hostages Wednesday, the country's Interior Ministry said.

Three Georgian officers also died and five others were wounded in the operation to free the hostages, the ministry said in a statement.

It was unclear how many hostages were freed. Interfax, citing the ministry, said there were three groups of hostages, each consisting of two to three local residents. All had been freed, it said.

Video footage released by Georgian police showed two of the freed hostages, young men, saying they had been captured while returning from a picnic by a group of around 15 people with submachine guns and other weapons, Interfax said.

Georgia's accusation that the armed group had come from across the border with Russia could further strain relations between the two countries, which have not had diplomatic relations since fighting an eight-day war in August 2008.

Russian authorities immediately denied that any illegal border crossings had occurred in recent days.

"In Tbilisi, they make such provocative statements from time to time that escalate an already complex situation on the Russian-Georgian border," an unidentified Russian law enforcement official told Interfax.

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