

Tensions Are Flaring Between Georgia and Russia-Backed South Ossetia. Here's What's Happened

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Sergei Bobylev / TASS

The international community has called for restraint as Georgia warned of a “serious confrontation” with the Russian-backed breakaway territory of South Ossetia last week.

Only Moscow and a handful of other states have [recognized](#) the independence of South Ossetia after Russia and Georgia fought a five-day war over the region in August 2008. Russian troops have been garrisoned in both South Ossetia and the other breakaway Georgian region of Abkhazia since the war.

Here's an overview of what has sparked renewed tensions between the two sides, how international observers are responding and what comes next.

What happened?

- Tensions came to a head when South Ossetia [demanded](#) that Georgia remove an observation post on their disputed border within 24 hours last week. South Ossetia's leader [ordered](#) the construction of its own checkpoint after the demand went unmet.
- South Ossetia's security service [announced](#) the deployment of its security and law enforcement units in response to what it said was Georgia's provocative actions on its territory.
- Georgia's foreign ministry on Friday [said](#) the buildup risks "escalating into a serious confrontation."
- On Sunday, South Ossetia [accused](#) Georgia of sending two dozen armed officers to the border and [shooting down](#) one of its drones.

What are Russia, the U.S. and the EU saying?

- Russia's Foreign Ministry called on the sides to "exercise restraint" and [accused](#) Georgia of "repeatedly refusing to begin talks on delineating and demarcating the border" with South Ossetia. Georgia, Russia added, has "over the past few months deliberately escalated tensions on the border through provocative campaigns and political propaganda campaigns supported by Western countries."

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- The United States said it was monitoring reports of the military buildup on the Georgian-South Ossetian boundary. The State Department [urged](#) Russia to "utilize all available channels to prevent further escalation."
- The European Union's ambassador in Tbilisi [said](#) it expects "all sides to show maximum restraint and use their influence" to avoid escalation. The envoy called "confrontational language" during mediated talks last week "unacceptable."

What are observers saying?

- The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which mediates Georgian-South Ossetian negotiations with the EU, [said](#) the buildup "negatively impacted the overall security situation."
- The head of the EU's monitoring mission in Georgia [said](#) its 24/7 patrol has reported that "everything [is] quiet so far."

Embed:

We continue monitoring Chorchana/Tsnelisi area at the ABL. 24/7. Tonight we have 9 [#EUMM](#) monitors from ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ out there supported by 2 ~~xx~~

colleagues.

According to regular updates from our patrols to HQ everything quiet so far.

pic.twitter.com/msnW7wuvRD

— Erik Hoeg (@erik_hoeg) [August 30, 2019](#)

What's next?

- The sides are [expected](#) to sit down for more mediated talks on Monday after “intense exchanges” [disrupted](#) discussions last week.
- Observers [say](#) present-day South Ossetia holds almost no value for Moscow other than as a military base close to the heart of Georgia.

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