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Military integration between Russia and South Ossetia: quo vadis?

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This article examines the concept of military integration as applied to the case of Russia and South Ossetia, analyzes the integration dynamics and durability in this region and models future developments. The author concludes that increased military presence and capabilities are undoubtedly destabilizing security in the Caucasus region.

Introduction

In late January 2014, the de facto Minister of Defense of the Republic of South Ossetia, Lieutenant General V. Yakhnovets, hosted a press conference in Tskhinvali. There he addressed a range of questions related to military cooperation with the Russian Federation, including recognition of military ranks, pensions, medical and social assistance, and financial aspects. He excitedly reported that the 4th military base of the Russian deployed in Tskhinvali would be in charge of air defense and air space control of South Ossetia (hereinafter referred as SO).¹ The military base would be equipped with all means of modern air defense to fulfill its tasks in a professional and timely manner.

This statement has sent a clear message to the international community on recent developments in the Caucasus region, which has been engulfed with conflicts and bloody skirmishes over the last decades. The 2008 war between the Russian Federation and Georgia resulted in many casualties, hundreds of thousands of displaced people, destroyed property, serious human rights vio-

lations, and an uncertain future. Without delay, the international community responded, sponsoring the Six Point cease-fire agreement; authorizing the deployment of the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia; and requesting the Russian Federation armed forces to withdraw to the positions held before hostilities had begun in South Ossetia. Since then, South Ossetia has been de jure recognized by the Russian Federation and has taken persistent efforts to make de facto “independence” irreversible. Over the last years the multiple processes of borderisation, fencing, passportization, restriction of freedom of movement, security measures and irreconcilable position have increased, which has driven an additional wedge in Georgian and South Ossetian relationships.²

Current military developments between the Russian Federation and SO complicate the implementation of the cease-fire agreement and the probability of any return to the negotiation table to bring about a resolution acceptable to both sides of the conflict. The increased military presence and capabilities are undoubtedly destabilizing regional security. The backlash can be volatile and un-

¹ Evgenij Krutikov, “Armiju Juzhnoj Osetii vtjagivajut v predvybornuju bor’bu” (The Army of South Ossetia is involved in pre-election campaign), Regnum.ru, (Feb.2014)// <http://www.regnum.ru/news/1764057.html>.

² Grazvydas Jasutis, “Forward-looking Solutions for the Georgian and South Ossetian Conflict: a Path towards Reconciliation”, *Baltic Journal of Law & Politics*, Vol. 6 No. 2 (2013): 24-49.

predictable and threaten peace and security in the region. It is true that SO acts as an independent state with its own governmental structure, legal system, educational program, social-welfare, armed forces, police, border guards; the budget is provided by Russia. Their intent to further develop armed forces (in cooperation with the Russian Federation) is logical, considering the political stream to unite with North Ossetia-Alania, which is a part of the Russian Federation. Moreover, the Russian Federation remains the only ally to cooperate with; the only country to be responsible for the development of the SO economy, policy and security; as well as the only country on its border besides Georgia.

With approximately 30.000 inhabitants, South Ossetia, sandwiched between Russian Federation and Georgia, can be considered rather like a small, dainty mountain town. The lack of study by scholars and practitioners of trends in its post-conflict development stems from limited access to the region, as well as a limited ability to gather credible and trustworthy information. Admittedly, the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict deserves more attention, particularly as to various aspects of the conflict, its development, the peace process, competing interests, the role of the international community, etc.³ However, SO military cooperation with Russian Federation stands as terra incognita, and SO post-conflict processes generally remain under-researched. Gerard Toal and John O'Loughlin presented the results of a public opinion survey of Ossetians living in the territory in late 2010. The survey investigated their trust in local institutions and leadership; ethnic Ossetian attitudes towards other groups, return, and property; as well as relations with Russia and Georgia.⁴ Vladimir Kolossov and John O'Loughlin, who analyzed the migration potential in South Ossetia, have indicated that less than one quarter of the current adult residents plan to leave the territories, despite the economic travails and political uncertainties.

The trauma of the 2008 war on both the Ossetians who still live in South Ossetia and on those who fled across the Caucasus to Russia was evident in our survey. This

suggests that the longer term likelihood of future residence is not yet fixed for many respondents.⁵ Some analysis of socio-economic aspects, reconstruction of the SO economy, and Russia's role in the SO economy can be found in the articles and analytical pieces of Aleksandr Gabuyev, Asa Tibilova, and Batradz Khaberov.⁶ The latter has thoroughly analyzed the economic situation in SO and proposed to prioritize and develop some sectors to reconstruct the economy of SO. The institutional developments of SO after 2008 were analyzed by experts in Tskhinvali, who suggested further enabling the SO administration and fostering their capacity for building.⁷ The rather meagre literature on SO AF and its current cooperation with Russian Federation includes only news or messages from Russian Federation or SO public information agencies or governmental institutions, several interviews, and information posted on some websites.

This article aims to analyze the direction of the military integration between Russia and South Ossetia in order to assess its dynamics and durability, and to predict future developments. The research consists of two major parts, covering research methodology and a case study. The first part is focused on the concept of military integration as regards its diverse perceptions, its applicability to the research, and its stages. The second part applies this methodological pattern to explore the level of military integration the SO and Russian Federation AF have achieved. It covers all its aspects including such variables as the legal framework, institutional context,

3 See more: Eva Miháliková, "Conflict Analysis of Georgia," *Slovenská politologická revue* Vol. 1, No. 10 (2010). Lincoln Mitchell and Alexander Cooley, "After the August War: A New Strategy for U.S. Engagement with Georgia," *Harriman Review* Vol. 17, No. 3-4 (2010): 65.; Susan Allen Nan, Archil Gegeshidze, George Tarkhan-Mouravi, and Revaz Gachechiladze. *Georgian-South Ossetian Conflict: Researching Peace* (Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, 2011).

4 Gerard Toal, John O'Loughlin, "Inside South Ossetia: Survey of Attitudes in a De Facto State." *Post-Soviet Affairs*. Vol. 29, No. 2, (2013): 136-172.

5 Vladimir Kolossov, John O'Loughlin, "After the Wars in the South Caucasus State of Georgia: Economic Insecurities and Migration in the 'De Facto' States of Abkhazia and South Ossetia," *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, Vol.5, No. 52, (September-October 2011): 631-654

6 Susan Allen Nan, Archil Gegeshidze, George Tarkhan-Mouravi, and Revaz Gachechiladze. *Georgian-South Ossetian Conflict: Researching Peace* (Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, 2011). Gabuyev Aleksandr, "Deystviye plana po vosstanovleniyu Yuzhnoy Osetii zaversheno. Zamglavy Minregion-razvitiya RF podvel itogi vosstanovleniya Yuzhnoy Osetii" (Action Plan to Rebuild South Ossetia Is Completed: Deputy Minister of Regional Development of Russia Summed up the Results of South Ossetia's Restoration), *Kommersant*, (March 17, 2011) // <http://www.kommersant.Ru/Doc/1601787>; Tibilova Asa, "Obshchaya kharakteristika natsional'noy ekonomiki respubliki Yuzhnaya Osetiya" (A General Characterization of the National Economy of the Republic of South Ossetia), *Mediacenter IR*, (March 4, 2009) // <http://www.mcir.ru/index.php?page=stat&id=55>.

7 "Dinamika razvitija demokraticeskikh institutov Respubliki Juzhnaja Osetija v pervyj god priznanija nezavisimosti: kruglyj stol, 6 maja 2009 goda, Chinval" (The Dynamics of development of democratic institutions of the Republic of South Ossetia a year after recognition of independence), *Knizhnyi mir*, Moskva (2009).

joint training, operations, units, and single command. It attempts to disclose its strength, potential, and durability by employing the methodology of military integration, divided into four stages indicating the level of durability and cooperation between Russian Federation and SO AF. Needless to say, the article is based on extensive open-source research as well as interviews with regional experts to better understand the role of Russian Federation AF in SO, including the author's two years' experience in the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia and responses from Susan Allen Nan, Gerard Toal and John O'Loughlin.

The article concludes that the SO-Russian Federation military integration has reached the fourth level. This implies a functional dependency between the Russian armed forces (at least for SO) and cost-effective implementation of military tasks and defense policy. It is influenced by external and internal factors supporting its further development, which includes the South Ossetian geo-political location and situation, the role of the ethnic Russian Minister of Defense of SO and his connections with the Russian Federation, a total absence of alternatives for SO defense policy and well-established military links with the Russian Federation. The research concludes that the military integration will proceed until the fourth stage of integration is complete.

A concept of military integration

The concept of military integration is applied in different contexts and various ways. Some US scholars and military analysts retrospectively consider American military integration as a process of abolishing racially segregated units, which was accomplished in 1954 when the Army deactivated the last black unit, the 94th Engineer Battalion.⁸ Conflict management experts tend to explore the concept of military integration as an instrument to incorporate former combatants into regular armed forces. It is commonly accepted that integration means that individuals are brought into new positions similar to the ones they occupied in prior organizations which were in combat with their own.⁹

R. Licklider underscores that negotiating a peaceful end to civil wars, which often includes an attempt to bring

together former rival military or insurgent factions into a new national army, has been a frequent goal of conflict resolution practitioners since the Cold War. Some civil wars result in successful military integration, while others dissolve into further strife, factionalism, and even renewed civil war.¹⁰ Katherine Galssmyer and Nicholas Sambanis have researched this concept of military integration. They have concluded that it has not been an effective peace-building mechanism, but that this is often due to poor implementation of the agreements.¹¹ Conflict management experts focus their attention and analysis on the creation of multi-ethnic armies, identity issues, the process of reintegration, and the role of the new armed forces in a post-conflict environment. However, the case study of military integration between South Ossetia and Russia does not correspond to this framework because rebels (SO forces) become integrated into their allies' structures (Russian Federation Armed Forces). Military analysts suggest studying military integration as a process of uniting administrative and defense structures for the armed forces under a single command. There are many regional and global military alliances that pursue the policy of uniting defense structures to make them more interoperable and efficient. Even in the Gulf States, the near-term objectives for the region should ultimately be to build a system that is interoperable with regional systems and resources; to establish a regional inter Russian Federation force that is activated only when needed and is combined in operational exercises. The revised regional defense key objectives now cover all domains - sea, land, air, space and cyber.¹² Namely, this concept of military integration is oriented to strengthen national and regional capabilities, so to counter threats by uniting and building joint elements, systems, and structures.

Military integration has experienced rather meager attention by scholars. Therefore, this article applies a broader and deeper view of military integration: as a multi-stage process, wherein defense structures increase military cooperation and gain a maximum degree of interoperability that gradually results in joint training, joint operations and units, as well as a single command structure. A key word is interoperability, which is de-

8 Morris J. MacGregor Jr, "Integration of the Armed Forces, 1940-1965". Gutenberg.org, (February 15, 2007) // <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/20587/20587-h/20587-h.htm>.

9 Mark Knight, "Security Sector Reform: Post-conflict Integration", Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform, (August 2009) // http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/5064~v~Security_Sector_Reform__Post-Conflict_Integration.pdf.

10 Roy Licklider, ed. "New Armies from Old: Merging Competing Military Forces After Civil Wars". Georgetown University Press (2014).

11 Katherine Galssmyer, Nicholas Sambanis, "Rebel—Military Integration and Civil War Termination", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 45 No. 3 (May 2008):365-384.

12 Awad Mustafa, "Experts at Abu Dhabi summit want GCC military integration", *thenational.ae*, (April 17, 2013) // <http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/experts-at-abu-dhabi-summit-want-gcc-military-integration>.

scribed as the ability of systems (units, or forces) to provide services to and accept services from other systems, units, or forces and to use the services to enable them to operate effectively together.¹³ In fact, national units seek to boost military cooperation, which initially includes training, elements of planning and the exchange of information, and then extending it to joint tasks and units.

The aim of integration is to form a joint unit of separate national elements that is able to successfully carry out its mission. Hence, practical military integration stages are related to the realignment of national armed forces to pursue common tasks. This should be implemented through common defense planning, the establishment of joint command and headquarters, common training, training of large military units, the creation of joint military units, and participation in joint operations.¹⁴ The process of integration is associated with standardization, which helps to harmonize military procedures, logistics, armaments, technical support and communication means. The goal is to enhance interoperability and improve the ability to act together. The aim of standardization is to increase the operational capabilities of the alliance by enabling interoperability between the armed forces of allied and partner armed forces, or forces of other states, in order to increase the effectiveness of available resources.¹⁵ Depending on the level of interoperability, military forces can be partly or fully integrated. The integration itself can be defined as a technical result.



Fig. 1. The stages of military integration

The first level encompasses an initial decision to form an alliance, and it is critically important to identify the scope, direction, and content of military cooperation. For example, The South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was an international organization for collective defense in Southeast Asia created by the US, UK, France, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, the Philippines, and Pakistan in 1954. According to the Manila Pact (Article 4), each Party recognized that aggression by means of

armed attack in the treaty area, against any of the parties or against any state or territory, which the parties by unanimous agreement might hereafter designate, would endanger its own peace and safety, and agreed that it would, in that event, act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes. Measures taken under this paragraph were to be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations.¹⁶ SEATO established its headquarters in Bangkok and organized annual military drills. The Manila Pact did not envisage any further elements of military integration, and military forces had not been employed (the US did request to use military forces in Vietnam).¹⁷ The elements of military integration can be found in peace agreements or in non-aggression pacts. The appropriate attention should be given to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization which unites Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. This organization was aimed at confidence building measures in the border regions and a reduction of military forces. Later on, the states started organizing military exercises and establishing institutions for the coordination of joint actions.

The second level of military integration is an institutional one, where potential allies establish joint working groups and prepare documents to implement and foster strategic military cooperation. It includes a heavy emphasis on defense planning that pinpoints capabilities, use of force scenarios, standardization, generation of forces, and evaluation of forces' preparedness. Danford W. Middlemiss and Denis Stairs underscore that the US has been able to devote a much larger portion of its overall military expenditures than its allies have toward equipment modernization and training improvement. This, in turn, has made it increasingly difficult for the other partners to keep pace with the qualitative improvements in American capabilities. The holy grail of interoperability within NATO is thus becoming notoriously hard to achieve.¹⁸ At the second stage, allies should work shoulder to shoulder to avoid serious gaps that prevent further integration and interoperability.

The third stage is instrumental, consisting of three elements: joint training, operations, and units. The allies turn from theory to action and systemically implement joint training plans; standardize the procedures on the

13 Anthony Faughn. "Interoperability: Is It Achievable?", Boston, Harvard University, (2001).

14 Grazvydas Jasutis. "Karinio aljanso patvarumo tyrimas: Rusijos ir Baltarusijos atvejais" (Research into the Durability of Military Alliance: the Case of Russia and Belarus). Vilnius University, 2011.

15 Standardization", Nato.int, (2006), <http://www.nato.int/issues/standardization/index.html>.

16 "Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty and Protocol", Isn.ethz.ch, (2008), // www.isn.ethz.ch.

17 "Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)", State.gov, (2008) // <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/lw/88315.htm>.

18 Danford W. Middlemiss, Denis Stairs, "The Canadian Forces and the Doctrine of Interoperability: The Issues", Policy Matters, Vol. 3, No 7 (June 2002) // <http://www.irpp.org/pm/archive/pmvol3no7.pdf>.

ground; improve the command and control of military units; participate in joint operations; and finally, they may craft joint units. States that integrate their military units must agree upon structure, personnel, logistics, command, jurisdiction, and aims. For instance, the Baltic States established a tripartite battalion (BALTBAT) in 1994. In the agreement they foresaw that, in order to prepare and train the soldiers of BALTBAT and to assure the work of the battalion in the future, the countries needed to form national peace keeping detachments of such structure and size that they could secure a permanent functional BALTBAT structure, provide for changes in personnel and for a regular issue of equipment. Until the national peace-keeping detachments were transferred to a BALTBAT commanding officer, they were dependent on national command.¹⁹

The fourth level leads to the final step in military integration: functional dependency. The allies are assumed to have been formed into joint units whose control should be transferred to a joint command. There are two options for joint command. The first option is partial subordination to joint command, which happens when armed forces are subordinated to operational HQ for specific tasks, and it is not considered that the allies have reached this level. The second option is the full subordination of allied armed forces. The research confirms that each stage of military integration adds value to the durability of the alliance; this can be assessed arithmetically.²⁰

Military integration stage	Indicators	Arithmetic value
1st stage	Agreement	1
2nd stage	Joint institutional framework Joint defense documents	2

19 Grazvydas Jasutis. "Karinio aljanso patvarumo tyrimas: Rusijos ir Baltarusijos atvejis" (Research into the Durability of Military Alliance: the Case of Russia and Belarus). Vilnius University, 2011.

20 For more detailed information refer to: Grazvydas Jasutis. "Karinio aljanso patvarumo tyrimas: Rusijos ir Baltarusijos atvejis" (Research into the Durability of Military Alliance: the Case of Russia and Belarus). Vilnius University, 2011.

3rd stage	Joint training Joint operations Joint units	3
4th stage	Joint command in navy, land and air forces Single command on all force components	4

Table No 1. Arithmetic value of military integration

In fact, military integration does not stop at the last stages once joint military units and joint commands have been established and security at lower cost been assured. National decisions are replaced by a consensus of joint command; armed forces become interoperable and armaments are harmonized. Therefore, the third and the fourth military integration levels reduce the negative effects and support a pro-alliance policy. This illustrates how military integration is quite reliable in the last stages, and therefore joint security implementation than appears as a more acceptable option for the allies.

Military integration between Russia and South Ossetia

The 2008 war between Georgia and Russia served as a means of infiltrating Russian Federation forces into some parts of the Caucasus region that had not hosted them before. In August 2008, the troops of Guards Regiment 693 from the North Caucasian Military District were directly involved in combat operations, and remained in SO. On 1 February 2009, the regiment was transformed into the 4th military base (in Russian: 4 гвардейская Вапнярско -Берлинская Краснознаменная орденов Суворова и Кутузова военная база) which was dispersed in SO and North Ossetia-Alania. Only after one year was it fully relocated to SO.²¹ On 4 October 2010, the Southern Military District was established in accordance with the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of 20 September 2010, "On the military-administrative division of the Russian Federation on the basis of

21 „Четвертая военная база Минобороны РФ полностью размещена в Южной Осетии“ (The fourth military base fully deployed in South Ossetia), Kavkaz-uzel.ru, (Nov. 2010) // <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru>.

the North Caucasian Military District”.²² Following this, all Russian Federation forces deployed in SO became a part of the Southern Military District, which covered the whole Caucasus area.

There is little information on the South Ossetian Armed Forces that were established in accordance with the 1992 Law on Defence. SO has not adopted a military doctrine, albeit required by the law.²³ The law was amended in 2009 to reflect the transformation of SO into a presidential state, wherein the president is chief commander of the Armed Forces.²⁴ Consequently, the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs are supposed to draft a military doctrine and present it to the president for approval. The military doctrine should clarify the number of personnel, military equipment and activities. The legal document, which create a framework for military integration between the Russian Federation and South Ossetia, dates back to 2009. On September 15, Russia and South Ossetia signed an agreement on cooperation in the military field which remains a framework document setting forth directions, as well as the scope, of military integration between the two parties. According to Article 2 of the agreement,²⁵ the parties have expressed an intent to cooperate in the following

areas: confidence building and military security, air-defense, military training, communications, military intelligence, logistics, military meteorology and topography. Technical support and other areas are to be agreed upon in separate documents. Furthermore, Article 8 provides a legal framework for using military infrastructure, hosting military bases, and establishing a joint military unit. The agreement may be considered a cornerstone of military integration, identifying the areas, methods and ambitions of this cooperation.

At the second level of military integration, Russia and SO worked towards establishing joint working groups and preparing documents aimed at implementing and fostering strategic military cooperation. Following the 2009 Agreement on cooperation in military fields, the parties agreed to establish an institutional framework to boost bilateral cooperation that promptly brought tangible results. On the 7 April, 2010, then Russian Federation Minister of Defense A. Serdiukov and the SO Minister of Defense A. Tanaev signed the agreement between the Russian Federation and SO on joint military bases in the territory of the SO.²⁶ The agreement went into effect 7 November, 2011. It clearly defines that Russian Federation forces deployed in the area in cooperation with the SO Armed Forces, will defend the sovereignty and security of the Russian Federation and SO (Article 4, Paragraph 1). This generic article implies a full spectrum of tasks for the deployed units. In case of a threat, the Russian Federation Armed Forces will act in accordance with the plans approved by a Russian Federation competent institution and agreed to by SO authorities (Article 4, Paragraph 2). In case of attack on either the Russian Federation or SO the deployed forces will be used following a Russian Federation decision (Article 4, Paragraph 3). In case of a terrorist threat to Russian Federation or SO objects, or to Russian Federation citizens, the commander of the military base may make a decision to act without further delay (Article 4, Paragraph 4). According to the commander of the 4th military base, the Russian Federation Armed Forces also supports Russian Federation border guards and monitors the Administrative Boundary Line between Georgia and SO. The document stipulates that the structure of the military base is defined by the Russian Federation in cooperation with SO. This is a long-term document, authorizing the deployment of Russian Federation troops on the ground for 49

22 Forces of the Southern Military District are deployed within the administrative boundaries of two Federal Districts (Southern and North Caucasian) in the territories of 12 subjects of the RF. In accordance with international agreements outside the RF there are four military bases of the District: in South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Armenia and the Ukraine (the city of Sevastopol). The District's staff is located in the city of Rostov-on-Don. It is worth noting that the commander of the Southern Military District operationally controls the military formations of the Internal Troops of the Interior Ministry, the Border Troops of the FSS, the Ministry of Emergency Situations and other Ministries and Agencies of Russia, performing tasks within the territory of the District. "Minoborony ob "javilo o sozdanii Juzhnogo voennogo okruga" (MOD announced the establishment the Southern Military District), top.rbc.ru // <http://top.rbc.ru>.

23 "Parlament Juzhnoj Osetii utverdil otchet ob ispolnenii zakona RJuO «O gosudarstvennom bjudzete RJuO na 2009 god" (Parliament of SO approved a report on implementation of RSO law regarding state budget in 2009), Cominf.org, (26.05.2010) // <http://cominf.org/node/1166483378>.

24 "Parlament RJuO rassmotrel proekt zakona RJuO "Ob obo-rone"" (Parliament of SO reviewed a draft law on defense), Cominf.org, (08.07.2009) // cominf.org/node/1166480425.

25 Soglashenie mezhdru Rossijskoj Federaciej i Respublikoj Juzhnaja Osetija o sotrudnichestve v voennoj oblasti (Agreement between the Russian Federation and Republic of South Ossetia regarding military cooperation), Mid.ru (15 September 2009) // http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/spd_md.nsf/o/DCC78815E2477CFA44257C9800381AF7.

26 Soglashenie mezhdru Rossijskoj Federaciej i Respublikoj Juzhnaja Osetija ob ob "edinennoj rossijskoj voennoj baze na territorii Respubliki Juzhnaja Osetija (Agreement between Russian Federation and Republic of South Ossetia regarding joint military base in the territory of Republic of South Ossetia), Mid.ru (7 April 2010) // http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/spd_md.nsf/o/E8C291B1DB0483FF44257C9800381B6A.

years, with automatic extensions for a period of 15 years unless the parties terminate the agreement. The military base is composed of seven military objects (Annex to the Agreement, Article 1, Paragraphs 1 and 2).

Military object	Location
1. Aviation base	Java
2. Radiolocation company of aviation base	4 km NW of Tskhinvali
3. Airport	Kurta
4. Military formation (Военный городок) № 12 б	Tskhinvali
5. Military formation (Военный городок) № 12 г	Tskhinvali
6. Military formation (Военный городок) № 47/1	District of Tskhinvali
7. Military formation (Военный городок) № 47/2	Java

Table No 2. The structure of the 4th military base

The force total strength can be compared to a brigade-sized motorized unit. Military personnel in the base are mixed and is composed of both professionals and conscripts. The base is manned to 95% of the TOE. Professional servicemen, (mainly command staff, tank commanders and BTR drivers) comprise 22% of its military personnel. The rest of the personnel are conscripts. There is even a decision that the number of professional soldiers in the Russian military bases will be increased, so that the number will reach as many as 900 people.

	Personnel	Tanks	Armored vehicles	Rocket launchers GRAD	Air defense system
SO AF	1250	18	38	0	10
4th Military Base	4000	43	120	18	18

Table No 3. Russian Federation and SO military strength²⁷

The build-up and structure of the SO Armed Forces remains unclear. Presumably, the total strength of the SO Armed Forces is 1,250 military personnel, based on a mixed-recruitment system (professionals and conscripts-- with conscripts serving for one year).²⁸ Infantry battalions might consist of 200-250 soldiers. In August 2012, SO Minister of Defence V. Yakhnovets visited Moscow and discussed the future of the SO Armed Forces. According to the president of SO, Tibilov, the SO will have well prepared armed forces and will reject any idea of reducing its strength or quality (there was a proposal to reduce the SO armed forces down to one battalion).²⁹ Moreover, SO should keep a reliable reserve, and it is necessary to conduct unit training. The president had a difficult time agreeing to this with the former Russian Federation Minister of Defence and believed it would be easier to reach an agreement with the new Russian Federation Defence Minister, Shoigu. At the present stage, it is planned to keep the same number of troops which will be gradually increased in the future. This is supported by de facto Deputy Minister of Defence I. Gaseev, who explained that SO had a very tough discussion with Russian Federation General Staff to preserve the current structure and numbers of SO Armed Forces.³⁰ Finally,

²⁷ Prepared by author, the information derived comparing the data various websites (in cooperation with military analyst Milcho Ignatov).

²⁸ "V Juzhnoj Osetii praznujot Den' zasitnika Otechestva" (South Ossetia celebrates the day of defender of fatherland)". Ridus.ru, (23.02.2012) // <http://www.ridus.ru/news/23076/>.

²⁹ "U Juzhnoj Osetii budet svoja deesposobnaja armija" (SO will have a capable army). Regnum.ru, (02.08.2012) // <http://www.regnum.ru/news/1557862.html>.

³⁰ "Ibragim Gasseev: Nam udalos' dostich' samogo glavnogo rezultata - sohranit' chislennost' Vooruzhennyh sil" (Ibragim Gasseev: we managed to achieve the main results – to keep the number of armed forces). Osinform.ru (28-12-2012) // <http://osinform.ru/38405-ibragim-gasseev-nam-udalos-dostich-samogo-glavnogo-rezultata-sohranit-chislennost-vooruzhennyh-sil.html>.

on both February 2013 and 2014 the de facto Minister of Defence reiterated that no reduction has been planned in the army.³¹ It is noteworthy that the Minister of Defense of SO is an ethnic Russian former soldier. He is the former chief of military intelligence of the Russian Federation MOD (Airborne Forces) and his vision is to push the creation of a mobile and deployable SO armed forces, and this plan is supported by the Russian Federation MOD. SO sources claim that the reforms are being carried out in the armed forces in order to create a combat-ready, well equipped army. The reforms will end in mid-2014. If, by that time, the reduction happens, it will be insignificant. Nevertheless, it is very likely that this structure will remain on paper and it might serve as the basis for the SO Armed Forces future. Some SO officials claim that the cornerstone of SO Armed Forces should be a battalion within the Russian Federation 4th military base.

The third stage of military integration is focused on practical cooperation, which includes three levels: joint training, joint operations, and joint units. It appears that the Russian Federation and SO forces have entered this stage and are employing large-scale cooperation in the domains of training, operations, and the creation of a joint unit. SO Armed Forces military training is conducted by the Russian Federation in accordance with the, “Agreement between the Russian Federation and Republic of South Ossetia on Cooperation in Military-technical Sphere” signed in 2010.³² Following Article I, the parties decided to cooperate to prepare military personnel, which is carried out in SO and the Russian Federation. There is a military training center “BARS” in the JAVA district, and the Dzartsemi training field where all SO soldiers and military specialists undergo training. Russian Federation forces take part in the training as well to ensure that similar standards and procedures are applied. The SO Minister of Defense assessed a level of preparedness of SO Armed Forces and openly admitted that

there are many officers without proper training.³³ Most of the SO soldiers have combat experience, but they lack theoretical experience. Every year, SO MOD sends officers, young specialists and experts to the Russian military schools to attend long and short term courses, to take part in military exercises, or obtain a complete military education. Joint training and studies at the Russian Federation military schools prepare SO specialists in line with Russian Federation standards and ensure familiarity with procedures and standards to be further applied in SO. The military equipment and armaments are compatible, and both Russian Federation and SO soldiers are familiar with them (except for some Georgian weapons that are SO military trophies).

According to the commander of the 4th military base³⁴, the SO armaments are not very modern. However, they are capable of fulfilling the missions they have. There are T-72 tanks, BMP-2s, 152mm self-propelled “Acadias” and “Hyacinth-Cs”, MLRS BM-21s, and 120mm mortars – hardly modern weapons. Snipers are equipped with SVD (Dragunov rifle 54mm 7.62). There is a separate division for tactical missiles, “Tochka-U”. Some experts, mostly from the Georgian side, comment on the presence of the S-300 anti-aircraft missile system in the region, but this is strongly denied by the Russian Defense Ministry. It seems that there is no need for the S-300 as the “Tunguska”, “Torah” or “Shilka” anti-aircraft and anti-missile systems should be enough. In the meantime, the SO Armed Forces faces significant problems with weapons and armaments that are old, outdated, and below Russian Federation military standards. The problem has been addressed by the highest political level of SO and it is assumed that new stocks will arrive in SO in the very near future.³⁵ The Minister of Defense of SO stated that rearmament will be undertaken with strong support from Russia. It is likely to be completed by mid-2014.³⁶ Currently, SO possess some tanks and armoured vehi-

31 “Valerij Jahnovec: Esli my ne budem horosho odnosit’sja k sobstvennym Vooruzhennym silam, to budem vynuždy kormit’ chuzhie” (Valerij Jahnovec: if we do not treat our AF well, we will feed foreign forces). Cominf.org (22.02.2013) // <http://cominf.org/node/1166496821>.

32 Soglashenie mezhdru Pravitel’stvom Rossijskoj Federacii i Pravitel’stvom Respubliki Juzhnaja Osetija o voenno-tehnicheskom sotrudnicestve (Agreement between the governments of Russian Federation and South Ossetia regarding cooperation in military-technical field). Mid.ru (4 August, 2010) // http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/spd_md.nsf/0/7FoCC8C7995D387644257C9800381B63.

33 “Valerij Jahnovec: Esli my ne budem horosho odnosit’sja k sobstvennym Vooruzhennym silam, to budem vynuždy kormit’ chuzhie” (Valerij Jahnovec: if we do not treat our AF well, we will feed foreign forces). Cominf.org (22.02.2013) // <http://cominf.org/node/1166496821>.

34 Viktor Litovkin, “Zastava vpered i pogranichnyh zastav” (A base in front of border guards bases), Ng.ru, (29 March 2013) // http://www.ng.ru/realty/2013-03-29/1_zastava.html.

35 “Minoborony: Juzhnaja Osetija gotova dat’ otpor ljubomu agressoru” (Ministry of Defense: South Ossetia is ready to fight any aggressor). Yuga.ru, (09.09.12) // <http://www.yuga.ru/news/272199/>.

36 “Valerij Jahnovec: Esli my ne budem horosho odnosit’sja k sobstvennym Vooruzhennym silam, to budem vynuždy kormit’ chuzhie” (Valerij Jahnovec: if we do not treat our AF well, we will feed foreign forces). Cominf.org (22.02.2013) // <http://cominf.org/node/1166496821>.

cles – T72, T55, BMP2, BTR80 and BRDMs; some pieces of artillery which include 122mm 2S1 “GVOZDIKA” SP Howitzer, 122mm BM21 MLRS, 2B11/2S12 120mm mortar and 82mm M69A Mortar; SO air defense is based on ZU 23-2, ZSU/23-4 (Close AD) and MANPADS 9K38 “Igla”.

So far, information that Russian Federation and SO forces participate in joint operations has not been proven, though it cannot be disregarded. SO military personnel lack theoretical training. However, this is compensated by their expertise in conducting operations in mountainous areas, their good knowledge of the region, their cultural and linguistic sensitivities, and direct combat experience. A high probability of participation in joint operations implies their cooperation in forming joint combat units. It is worth noting the initiative to create the Ossetian Battalion within the 4th Military Base of the Russian Federation.³⁷ In February, 2012, the SO Ministry of Defence announced a call to recruit professionals to set up the Ossetian battalion. The total strength of the battalion should be approximately 500 soldiers. Recruits were to be males, no older than 35 and in good health, either with relevant military experience, or else qualified for military service. By the end of 2012 the initiative to create an OSS battalion within the 4th Military Base of the Russian Federation had been substantiated. The SO Ministry of Defence has announced an additional call-up for military personnel for the Ossetian Battalion as a part of the 4th Military Base deployed in SO.³⁸

The fourth level of military integration is linked to functional dependency, when joint units are subordinated to a single command. SO has initiated the creation of an Ossetian Battalion within the structure of the 4th Military Base and this may well lead to its functional dependency and single command. It is more than obvious that Russian Federation Armed Forces cannot be subordinated to the SO Armed Forces command, and this is part of their bilateral cooperation agreement. Assuming that the

OSS battalion is a part of the 4th Military Base, its combat duties and chain of command should be the same as the 4th Military Base. Formally, the SO Armed Forces may be subordinated to the Russian chain of command. However, in practice it is not clear how this unit could be controlled or tasked.

In conclusion, concerning the SO-Russian Federation military integration, one recognizes the theoretical presumption that military integration increases at each stage. The current stage of military integration between SO and the Russian Federation is assessed as having reached 6,5 points because it includes a bilateral cooperation agreement (1), an institutional framework (2), training (1), joint operations(1), and a partly-prepared joint unit (0.5). One point is added in assumption that the joint unit is subordinated to a single command. According to the study of military alliances,³⁹ all alliances created after World War Two with a high degree of durability (exceeding 4 value points) have survived. Six and one half points for SO-Russian Federation military alliance demonstrates a high degree of durability and interoperability, which reduces negative effects and supports the policy towards integration.

This article studied the military integration between the Russian Federation Armed Forces and the South Ossetian defense establishments, assessing their legal frameworks, institutional cooperation, joint training, joint operations and units, and an evolving single command structure to rationally predict future developments. SO and Russian Federation military interaction remains a baffling research subjects.

The article applied and refined a concept of military integration encompassing a multi-stage process where defense structures increase military cooperation and gain maximum interoperability that gradually results in joint training, joint operations, joint units, and a single command structure. The SO-Russian Federation Armed Forces have undergone the first and second stages of integration. The 2009 agreement on military cooperation established a solid basis for integration, pinpointing clear directions to strengthen the alliance and, most importantly towards creating a joint unit. This is a cornerstone document that serves as a legal framework for continuing cooperation and assessing its ambitions and limits. This has led to more intense institutional cooperation and a decision to establish a joint military base on the territory of SO that authorizes the deployment of Russian Federation troops on the ground for 49 years with

37 Россия создает национальные батальоны. 30.03. 2012 <http://www.rusichi-center.ru/e/2943939-rossiya-sozdaet-natsionalnye-batalonyi>; “Osetinskij batal'on priveden k prisjage” (The Ossetian battalion took an oath). Rsoinform.com, (14.04.2012); “Osetinskaja rota nachala sluzhbu na voennoj baze RF” (The Ossetian battalion started the duties within RF military base), Vladikavkaz. bezformata.ru, (15.04.2012) // <http://vladikavkaz.bezformata.ru/listnews/rota-nachala-sluzhbu-na-rossijskoj/3858082/>.

38 “V Juzhnoj Osetii ob'javlen dopolnitel'nyj nabor v osetinskij batal'on pri rossijskoj voennoj baze” (South Ossetia announced an additional call for the Ossetian battalion within RF military base). Osinform.ru, (20.10.2012) // <http://osinform.ru/37450-v-yuzhnoy-osetii-obyavlen-dopolnitelnyy-nabor-v-osetinskiy-batalon-pri-rossijskoj-voennoj-baze.html>.

39 Grazvydas Jasutis. “Karinio aljanso patvarumo tyrimas: Rusijos ir Baltarusijos atvejis” (Research into the Durability of Military Alliance: the Case of Russia and Belarus). Vilnius University, 2011.

automatic extensions for a period of 15 years unless the parties terminate the agreement. The developments have positively affected bilateral cooperation between the SO and the Russian Federation Armed Forces and they have embarked on implementing strategic guidance related to training, operations and a joint unit. SO Armed Forces have been trained in full compliance with Russian Federation procedures and models, and it is presumed that any trained SO unit is compatible with Russian Federation standards. Their armaments and means of communication are compatible. The only issue remaining is the SO outdated army stocks that are planned to be replaced by mid- 2014. There has not been any information about joint operations conducted by Russian Federation and SO forces. However, their intent to create a joint unit is clear and participation in joint operations cannot be far off. In February 2012 the Ministry of Defence of South Ossetia announced a call for recruiting professionals to set up an OSS battalion within the 4th Military Base. Although the process of establishing a fully operational unit has not yet been completed, the SO and the Rus-

sian Federation intend to accomplish this task. SO and Russian Federation military integration has entered the fourth stage, which implies a single command structure. It would be complicated to organize and implement two commands within one military base, each obeying a Russian Federation chain of command. In fact, the SO-Russian Federation military integration has reached 6.5 points, and its durability seems to be credible and promising. It is driven by external and internal factors that support its further development and durability. The South Ossetian geo-political location and situation; the role of the ethnic Russian Minister of Defense of SO, and his connections with Russian Federation, a lack of alternatives for the SO defense policy, and well-established military links with the Russian Federation suggest that the military integration will thrive reach the fourth stage of integration. This implies a functional dependency between the Russian Federation-SO Armed Forces (at least for SO) and the cost-effective implementation of military missions and defense policy.

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