



Chairmanship: Estonia

544th PLENARY MEETING OF THE FORUM

1. Date: Wednesday, 30 April 2008

Opened: 10.05 a.m.

Closed: 11.20 a.m.

2. Chairperson: Ms. T. Parts

3. Subjects discussed — Statements — Decisions/documents adopted:

Agenda item 1: GENERAL STATEMENTS

None

Agenda item 2: SECURITY DIALOGUE

Incident involving an unmanned aerial vehicle in Georgia on 20 April 2008:
Chairperson, Slovenia-European Union (FSC.DEL/86/08), Croatia, Norway
(FSC.DEL/87/08), Canada, Ukraine, Iceland, United States of America (Annex 1),
Albania, Russian Federation (FSC.DEL/85/08 OSCE+), Georgia (Annex 2)

Agenda item 3: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

*Peace support training course on combating trafficking in human beings, to be held
from 26 to 30 May 2008: Austria (SEC.DEL/59/08)*

4. Next meeting:

Wednesday, 7 May 2008, at 10 a.m., in the Neuer Saal



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Forum for Security Co-operation**

FSC.JOUR/550
30 April 2008
Annex 1

Original: ENGLISH

544th Plenary Meeting
FSC Journal No. 550, Agenda item 2

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Thank you, Madam Chairperson,

This incident, involving the downing of a Georgian unmanned aerial reconnaissance vehicle, presumably by a Russian military aircraft, is very serious.

Tensions are rising, and could easily get out of hand. We call first and foremost for restraint by all sides. At the same time, we believe complete transparency in the investigation of this incident will support further easing of tensions.

We welcome every effort to determine accurately and rapidly what actually happened. The evidence so far presented by Georgia merits serious investigation. We also welcome any information that the Russian Federation could share on this issue.

The United States is prepared to assist with that examination, and has already dispatched military experts to Georgia at the invitation of the Georgian authorities to help evaluate the available evidence. We also support efforts by UNOMIG to conduct an investigation of this incident.

Our experts are willing to participate in any international effort to establish the facts. We urge other countries also to send experts to assist in an international effort, and call on all parties to co-operate in any investigations. The OSCE, through its Mission to Georgia, or through the good offices of the Chairman-in-Office, should also be prepared to assist in the review of the facts. The results of these investigations should be shared with the OSCE at the earliest opportunity.



544th Plenary Meeting
FSC Journal No. 550, Agenda item 2

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GEORGIA

Madam Chairperson,

First of all, let me express my gratitude to you as well as to the participating States for their efforts to identify the ways in which this Organization can best deal with the incidents that are endangering security in my country and in the OSCE area.

On 20 April 2008, at 09.53 a.m. local time, a Russian MIG-29 “Fulcrum” jet fighter shot down an unarmed Georgian reconnaissance drone (UAV) belonging to the Ministry of Internal Affairs over Georgian territory.

According to simultaneous NATO-standard radar data released by the Georgian Ministry of Defence, following the act of aggression, the Russian aircraft turned northward, entering Russian airspace at 10.06 a.m. Georgia has released high-quality video footage of the unprovoked attack, which clearly identifies the aircraft as Russian.

Allow me to briefly summarize the findings that we have right now:

- In the video footage from the downed UAV, the silhouette of the jet fighter is that of a MIG-29, as it has clearly identifiable characteristic features, namely, two air inlets under the double-fin hull;
- That the missile fired came from the MIG-29 can also be concluded from the white smoke trace that it is leaving, which is clearly identifiable on the video;
- The missile was launched from the last pylon of the left wing;
- The jet fighter appears near the Gudauta military base and on the way back, after downing the UAV, crosses the Georgian-Russian border;
- There are a number of other technical issues which also demonstrate that the jet fighter belonged to the Russian Federation.

Even though we have all the materials available to us that demonstrate beyond the shadow of a doubt the ownership of the jet fighter, we are still eager to conduct independent

verification of the video footage and the radar data. It is of the utmost importance to do so in the nearest future, as the Russian Federation and the *de facto* authorities of Abkhazia have already claimed that the jet fighter does not belong to Russia and was in fact an aircraft owned by the *de facto* ministry of defence of Abkhazia.

I would like to remind the Russian Federation, whose Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday issued a press release attempting to refute the ownership of the MIG-29, that we have asked the Russian side to provide us with the relevant radar data in order to verify the facts. Unfortunately, we have not received any response from them.

In order to verify the materials distributed by the Georgian side, we have requested the participating States of this Organization to send their qualified experts to Georgia to verify our materials. Some experts have already arrived in Georgia, and we are expecting some more in the nearest future. We are also waiting for the assessment of the materials by States in an individual capacity.

Last August, when we were discussing the Tsitelubani bombing incident in this Forum, many delegations expressed their willingness to employ various relevant OSCE mechanisms to deal with incidents of this nature. For this very purpose, the Finnish Chairmanship of the OSCE addressed a letter to the FSC Chairmanship asking it to provide its expert advice on the matter. For exactly the same purpose, we have sent a letter to the FSC Chairmanship asking the latter to activate the relevant OSCE mechanism.

In particular, the Georgian side would like to draw your attention to Ministerial Council Decision No. 3 adopted at the Ninth Meeting of the Ministerial Council in Bucharest in 2001, on fostering the role of the OSCE as a forum for political dialogue. Paragraph 8 of this decision deals with ways in which the Forum for Security Co-operation may be used to strengthen the politico-military dimension of the OSCE. We understand this paragraph to mean that the FSC could initiate an expert mission in the event of an emergency. Many delegations expressed a similar understanding of this paragraph at the time of the missile incident at Tsitelubani on 6 August last year.

Therefore, the Georgian side requests the Estonian FSC Chairmanship and the Forum for Security Co-operation of the OSCE to send an independent group of experts from the OSCE participating States to Georgia for the purpose of verifying available materials and establishing the facts.

Specifically, it is our firm belief that the independent group of experts should be able to establish:

- The authenticity of the radar data;
- The authenticity of the video footage;
- The technical parameters of the jet fighter;
- The place of take-off of the jet fighter.

At the same time, in order to ensure the impartiality of the work of the independent group of experts, we believe that it should be comprised of experts from OSCE participating States, except for the countries in question (the Russian Federation and Georgia) and from members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and GUAM, since both countries in question are members of these two organizations individually.

We understand that some of the delegations here think that, since the leading role in conflict resolution in Abkhazia, Georgia, is assumed by the United Nations, UNOMIG should be the lead agency in the verification of facts related to the incident on 20 April. We want to make it clear that Georgia does not oppose the participation of UNOMIG in the investigation. It is our firm belief that the work of UNOMIG can only be efficient provided that the parties in question, which are the Abkhazian side, the CIS Peacekeeping Forces, and Georgia, are not involved in the investigation. We would like to see an impartial investigation and not a mere fact-finding mission whose work drags on for months and which in the end comes up with a consensual statement, without any value, or fails to produce any kind of report at all. We will more than welcome an independent impartial investigation by UNOMIG in which none of the parties in question are involved, including Georgia.

We would also like to make it clear that the UN's leading role in the resolution of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, can by no means be interpreted to mean that what happens in Abkhazia, Georgia, cannot and should not be an issue of concern for the OSCE. Georgia, and all of its territory, is located in the OSCE area, every square metre of Abkhazia is a part of the OSCE area, which stretches from Vancouver to Vladivostok, and all incidents of a military and political nature, especially such alarming incidents as the shooting down of a plane by another State, must be the OSCE's business.

And what is most important here — the OSCE wields enough power to deal with it. Let us not circumscribe the limits of our possibilities.

After all, we are in the OSCE and we all agree that the OSCE already possesses a number of mechanisms and procedures that can be applied and activated in the case of incidents endangering security in the OSCE area. There are mechanisms for the prompt handling of incidents of this kind at the levels of both the Permanent Council and the FSC. Let me quote the CPC Director's remark made at the joint meeting of the FSC and the PC on 14 November last year that "... mechanisms ... were agreed upon by the participating States, and they require the commitment and political will of the participating States to be implemented during crises". And the lessons we Georgians learned after the missile incident last year is exactly that, in other words, if we are united, then no country's attempt can block the way towards establishing the truth.

Madam Chairperson, dear colleagues,

There is a real chance before us for truth to prevail; let us grasp this opportunity.

Thank you.