



GEORGIA

Flag Description: white rectangle, in its central portion a red cross connecting all four sides of the flag; in each of the four corners is a small red bolnur-katskhuri (or Maltese) cross; the five-cross flag appears to date back to the 14th century.

Background: Following the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917, Georgia declared itself independent of Tsarist Russia on 26 May 1918. Its independence was recognized by Russia through treaty in 1920. The Red Army invaded the

country in Feb. 1921 and the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic was declared. Georgia became part of the Transcaucasian federation and became a full member of the USSR in 1936.

The region of present-day Georgia contained the ancient kingdoms of Colchis and Kartli-Iberia. The area came under Roman influence in the first centuries A.D. and Christianity became the state religion in the 300s. Domination by Persians, Arabs, and Turks was followed by a Georgian golden age (11th-13th centuries) that was cut short by the Mongol invasion of 1236. Subsequently, the Ottoman and Persian empires competed for influence in the region. Georgia was absorbed into the Russian Empire in the 19th century. Independent for three years (1918-1921) following the Russian revolution, it was forcibly incorporated into the USSR until the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991. An attempt by the incumbent Georgian government to manipulate national legislative elections in November 2003 touched off widespread protests that led to the resignation of Eduard Shevardnadze, president since 1995. New elections in early 2004 swept Mikheil Saakashvili into power along with his National Movement party. Progress on market reforms and democratization has been made in the years since independence, but this progress has been complicated by two civil conflicts in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These two territories remain outside the control of the central government and are ruled by de facto, unrecognized governments, supported by Russia. Russian-led peacekeeping operations continue in both regions. The Georgian Government put forward a new peace initiative for the peaceful resolution of the status of South Ossetia in 2005.

Geography: Location, Southwestern Asia, bordering the Black Sea, between Turkey and Russia. Area: total: 69,700 sq km. Area - comparative: slightly smaller than South Carolina. Land boundaries: total: 1,461 km. Border countries: Armenia 164 km, Azerbaijan 322 km, Russia 723 km, Turkey 252 km. Coastline: 310 km. Climate: warm and pleasant; Mediterranean-like on Black Sea coast. Terrain: largely mountainous with Great Caucasus Mountains in the north and Lesser Caucasus Mountains in the south; Kolkhet'is Dablobi (Kolkhida Lowland) opens to the Black Sea in the west; Mtkvari River Basin in the east; good soils in river valley flood plains, foothills of Kolkhida Lowland. Natural resources: forests, hydropower, manganese deposits, iron ore, copper, minor coal and oil deposits; coastal climate and soils allow for important tea and citrus growth. Natural hazards: earthquakes. Geography - note: strategically located east of the Black Sea; Georgia controls much of the Caucasus Mountains and the routes through them.

Military: Georgian Armed Forces: Land Forces (includes National Guard), Navy, Air and Air Defense Forces (as of 2006). Relatively little of the military industry of the Soviet Union was located in Georgia. One Tbilisi plant assembled military training aircraft that were the basis of a small Georgian air force. Most weapons obtained by the various armed units operating in Georgia after 1990 apparently were purchased illegally from Soviet (and later Russian) officers and soldiers stationed in the Caucasus. As of 2006, total Active Armed Forces came to: 17,770. Reserves: up to 250,000. Army: 8,620; with 86 main battle tanks, mainly T-55 or T-72 and various scout cars and support vehicles. Navy: 2,000; 11 patrol and coastal vessels. Air Force: 1,350; with seven combat aircraft (mainly Su-25 and Su-17) and three armed helicopters. Border Guards: 5,400.

1992 Veh, Recce. BRDM-2.

An unknown quantity of ex-Soviet scout cars were received after partition.

2005 Carr, Pers, Armd, 4x4. RG-31 Nyala.

Two RG-31s were received from South Africa in 2005 (see South Africa for vehicle details).