

NATO Membership Behind Russia-Georgia Crisis

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Global Research, May 04, 2008

Prensa Latina 4 May 2008

Moscow, May 4 (Prensa Latina) Russian Foreign Minister Serguei Lavrov linked growing tension between Russia and Georgia to Georgia's plans to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Lavrov said Tbilisi has been unable to negotiate with Moscow theorny NATO issue, which Moscow regards as a threat to its border security.

Therefore, he called Georgia and those encouraging its NATO membership to draw the right conclusions from Russia's recent steps in the region.

The Russian chief diplomat recalled there is a 2006 bilateral accord for the gradual withdrawal of Russian military bases operating in Georgia since the Soviet era.

Tbilisi promised not to operate foreign military bases and set up a shared anti-terrorist center, but Georgia ignores its commitment and lacks a law banning foreign bases from its territory.

Tensions peaked at the Georgia-Abkhazia territory when a spy plane was downed and Moscow deployed between 2,000 and 3,000 additional peace-keeping troops in Abkhazia. Georgia claimed opposes but do not exceed the quota of the UN-sponsored 1994 bilateral accord.

In addition, Tbilisi has issued several communiqué followed by actions that may lead to more provocation although it has denied intentions to attack Abkhazia.

Amid bilateral tension, Moscow called Georgia to resume negotiations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

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