

Russia to detain any ship violating Abkhazia's maritime border

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MOSCOW – Russian border guards will detain all vessels that violate Abkhazia's maritime border, a senior border guards official said on Tuesday.

Tbilisi considers Abkhazia and its waters part of Georgian territory, and has declared any unauthorized maritime shipments of goods to be illegal.

Georgia seized the [Panama-flagged Buket tanker](#) and its cargo of gasoline and diesel fuel for Abkhazia last month as it sailed from Turkey to the tiny republic on the Black Sea.

Abkhaz Foreign Minister Sergei Shamba said in early September that Abkhazia was ready to resort to force as President Sergei Bagapsh had given the order "to open fire on Georgian ships if they continue their acts of piracy."

Russia recognized Abkhazia and another former Georgian republic of South Ossetia last August after a five-day war with Georgia over the latter, which was attacked by Tbilisi in an attempt to bring it back under central control. Most residents of both Abkhazia and South Ossetia have held Russian citizenship for several years.

Under mutual assistance treaties signed last November, Russia pledged to help Abkhazia and South Ossetia protect their borders, and the signatories granted each other the right to set up military bases in their respective territories.

Russia's Defense Ministry has said it plans to open a base in Gudauta, in the west of Abkhazia, and staff it with at least 1,500 personnel by the end of this year.

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