

US, Georgia to hold security talks

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TBILISI — The United States and the ex-Soviet republic of Georgia will hold talks on security cooperation later this month, the US embassy in Tbilisi said Thursday.

Alexander Vershbow, the US Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Affairs, will lead a US delegation on a visit to Georgia on October 19-20 to “launch the first round of working group meetings under the US-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership,” the embassy said in a statement.

Georgian defence reform, the country’s contribution to NATO operations in Afghanistan and regional security will be discussed during the talks, the embassy said.

Last year Georgia and its giant neighbour Russia fought a brief war over the Moscow-backed breakaway region of South Ossetia.

Georgia’s pro-Western government has sought to bring the country into the NATO military alliance, angering Moscow, which is deeply suspicious of any military cooperation between Georgia and the West.

The United States strongly supported Georgia during the war.

US and Georgian officials will also meet in November and December to discuss other issues including democracy and economic development, the embassy statement said.

Former US president George W. Bush’s departing administration signed a strategic partnership accord with Tbilisi in January 2009.

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