

Transcript of Medvedev's speech on recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia

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Steal an oil corridor, Kosovo; lose a pipeline, Georgia!

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on Tuesday signed decrees recognising the independence of Georgia's breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Following is the Reuters translation of his statement, which was posted on the Kremlin web site:



Putin and Medvedev

"Respected Russian citizens!

You without doubt know about the tragedy in South Ossetia. The night-time artillery attack of Tskhinvali by Georgian troops led to the deaths of hundreds of our peaceful citizens. Russian peacekeepers, who carried out their duty to defend women, children and elderly people to the end, died.

The Georgian leadership violated the U.N. Charter, their obligations under international treaties, ignored common sense, and launched a military conflict in which civilians became the victims. A similar fate awaited Abkhazia. Apparently, Tbilisi counted on a blitzkrieg, which would hand the world a fait accompli: the most inhumane means to achieve their goal of taking over South Ossetia at the price of exterminating a whole people.

This was not the first attempt. In 1991, Georgian President Gamsakhurdia gave the order to storm Sukhumi and Tskhinvali under the motto "Georgia for Georgians". Just think about these words. It was Russia which then stopped the extermination of the Abkhaz and Ossetian people. Our country has become a mediator and peacekeeper which was looking for a political settlement. But we always proceeded from a recognition of Georgia's territorial integrity.

The Georgian leadership has chosen a different path. Undermining talks, ignoring signed agreements, political and military provocations, attacks on peacekeepers - all this flagrantly violated the regime in the conflict zones established with the support of the United Nations and OSCE.

Russia has shown restraint and patience. We have more than once called for a return to the negotiating table and did not depart from our position even after the unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence. But our insistent calls to the Georgian side to sign agreements on the non-use of force with Abkhazia against South Ossetia remained unanswered. Unfortunately, they were ignored by NATO and even by the United Nations.

It is clear now: a peaceful solution of the conflict was not part of Tbilisi's plans. The Georgian leadership has been methodically preparing for war, while political and material help from outside mentors only strengthened its feeling of impunity.

On the night of August 8, 2008, Tbilisi made its choice. Saakashvili chose genocide to solve his political tasks. Thus he killed with his own hands all hopes for the peaceful coexistence of Ossetians, Abkhazians and Georgians in one state. The peoples of South Ossetia and Abkhazia have more than once spoken out in referendums in support of the independence of their republics. We understand that after what had happened in Tskhinvali and what was planned in Abkhazia, they have the right to decide their fate themselves.

The presidents of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, basing (their arguments) on referendums and decisions by regional parliaments, have appealed to Russia asking it to recognise the state sovereignty of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The Federation Council and the State Duma have voted in support of these appeals.

In the current situation it is necessary to make a decision. Taking into account the free will of the Ossetian and Abkhazian people, proceeding from provisions of the U.N Charter, the 1970 declaration on principles of international law referring to friendly relations between the states, the 1975 Helsinki Final Act of the conference on security and cooperation in Europe and other basic international documents, I have signed decrees on the recognition by the Russian Federation of the independence of South Ossetia and the independence of Abkhazia.

Russia calls on other states to follow its example. This is a difficult choice, but this is the only chance to save peoples' lives."

(Editing by Jon Boyle and Christian Lowe)

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