

Annex E.8.45

Public

Army Chief of Staff Arrested

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Chief of Joint Staff of the Georgian Armed Forces, Brigadier-General **Giorgi Kalandadze**, was arrested in early hours of November 7 in connection to an ongoing investigation into the alleged case of exceeding official powers.

Bacho Akhalaia, former minister of defense, was **arrested** hours earlier in connection to the same case.

Commander of the fourth brigade of the Georgian armed forces, Zurab Shamatava, was also detained, according to the chief prosecutor's office.

The case concerns a period when Bacho Akhalaia served as Defense Minister, chief prosecutor Archil Kbilashvili said on November 7.

He said that in October, 2011 then Defense Minister Bacho Akhalaia, together with Giorgi Kalandadze, who at the time was deputy chief of joint staff of the armed forces, and Zurab Shamatava, commander of the 4th Brigade, "insulted verbally and physically six servicemen in the office of the Defense Minister."

"Akhalaia hit one of the servicemen with a handle of a knife in his head. Afterwards, Bachana Akhalaia transferred the above mentioned servicemen to the base of 4th brigade in Vaziani [outside Tbilisi]. They again insulted physically and verbally the servicemen in a briefing room; later they continued insulting the servicemen physically and verbally in front of about 20-30 personnel from the 4th brigade," Kbilashvili said.

He also said that the prosecutor's office would make public testimonies of five servicemen who had been allegedly insulted by Akhalaia, Kalandadze and Shamatava.

"There is other evidence too, but we mainly were reacting on these testimonies by the servicemen," Kbilashvili said without giving details about "other evidence."

Giorgi Kalandadze, 32, was appointed as army chief of staff by President Saakashvili a week after the October parliamentary elections. Brig. Gen. Kalandadze was commander of the fourth infantry brigade in 2007-2009; he was promoted to the post of deputy commander of the land forces in 2009 and a year later became first deputy chief of joint staff.

After the new government, led by PM Bidzina Ivanishvili, took office, new Defense Minister Irakli Alasania said on October 31 that consultations were ongoing with the President's office about replacement of Kalandadze. Alasania reportedly wanted his ally Vakhtang Kapanadze to take the post of chief of army staff; but on November 2 Alasania announced that Kapanadze, who was chief of army staff for six months in 2004, was appointed as deputy chief of joint staff of the Georgian armed forces.

Defense lawyer, Davit Dekanoidze, who also represents arrested Bacho Akhalaia, said that Giorgi Kalandadze deemed his arrest to be "groundless".

"Giorgi Kalandadze was arrested personally by Justice Minister Tea Tsulukiani in the Ministry of Defense where Kalandadze was summoned," lawyer Davit Dekanoidze said. "Giorgi Kalandadze is very insulted; he thinks his arrest is completely groundless."

Lawmakers from President Saakashvili's United National Movement party condemned the arrests as "politically motivated".

PM Bidzina Ivanishvili said on November 7 "these are not political arrests."

"If illegal acts have been committed – and I think they have been, law enforcement agencies will continue restoring justice in the country," PM Ivanishvili said.

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