

Annex E.8.46

Public

New Army Chief of Staff Appointed

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President Saakashvili has appointed vice-colonel Vladimer Chachibaia as new chief of staff of the armed forces, replacing Zaza Gogava on November 4.

Gogava has been appointed as chief of Border Police, replacing Badri Bitsadze, who has announced resignation last week.

President Saakashvili said late on November 4, that the August war, as well as [hearings](#) in the parliamentary commission studying those events had revealed "serious flaws" and told the new chief of staff to work over the matter.

"Those flaws should be eradicated," he said. "Artillery has done a good job; large part of officers has also done a good job, but there also were some commanders who have seriously failed."

At the same time he thanked the former chief of staff and hailed the Georgian army's "furious resistance," which he said had stopped the advance of the Russian army.

"Neither Bush, nor Sarkozy and Merkel nor anyone in the world could have stopped [Russian Prime Minister] Vladimir Putin, if he did not have a deep conviction that he would have met a furious resistance of the Georgian army in case of attempting to advance towards the Georgian capital and in case of attempting to overthrow the Georgian government."

"I want to remind everyone – those who are saying that Georgia has been defeated - defeat was in 1993 when our armed forces and economy collapsed and the government was totally disorganized," Saakashvili said. "Nothing of this kind has happened now my brothers and it is thanks to our people and thanks to you [referring to top military leadership present at the meeting]."

"The 4th brigade [of the Georgian army] has destroyed the [Russia's] 58th army's major attacking force and forced badly wounded [Russian] general, the commander of the 58th army, to run away," he continued. "The fact that we have preserved the entire ammunition and practically entire armament – not counting several tanks and several artillery systems – the fact that we have saved practically the entire armament is thanks to you."

"The fact that Georgia functions as an independent state and it has democratically elected government; the fact that our people continue existence freely – except in the occupied territories – this is first and foremost because of our armed forces and no one should have any illusions about it"

"Now we need modernization of the armed forces; education is the most important, we have to send our officers to various leading education centers," Saakashvili said and added that military education system should "now be built properly."

New chief of staff, Vladimer Chachibaia, was in charge of the education programs in the armed forces before this promotion. He also served as deputy chief of staff before spending a year in the [U.S. Army War College](#) in 2006, according to the Georgian Defense Ministry.

President Saakashvili also told the senior military officials that he has never overestimated the Georgian army's capabilities as it was impossible to build a perfect system in four years.

"I did not expect miracles from you," he said. "We knew that Russia's attack was theoretically possible and in general we have all managed to save the country."

"But Georgia's territories remain under occupation; Georgia has people who have been expelled from their homes; Georgia should strengthen and Georgia should get united and no one should have any illusion that Georgia will ever tolerate annexation and occupation of its territories and legalization of results of ethnic cleansing."

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