Russia, Caucasus allies to form 'security outline' to counter NATO

03/09/2014

South Ossetia's ambassador to Abkhazia, Oleg Botsiyev, told popular Russian daily Izvestia that the planned coalition would be modeled on NATO's structure and be allied with another Moscow-led military alliance on the post-Soviet space – the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which includes Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (with Serbia and Afghanistan holding an observer status).

The diplomat said that the talks on the possible three-party union were still in process and it was yet undecided whether it would be a joint treaty or two separate agreements between Russia and the two Caucasus nations. He stressed, however, that in any case the military component would be prioritized in these documents with measures for economic and informational security of the region staying behind.

Abkhazian Vice-President Vitaly Gabniya has confirmed the fact of talks and also specified that the future bloc will be "*modeled on NATO to counter NATO.*" The official added that his country favored the three-sided option with South Ossetia joining the existing treaty between Abkhazia and Russia.

The Abkhazian official also noted that the treaty that can be signed within months would be a correct reply to the policies of Georgia that still pursues NATO entry and had recently signed the association agreement with the EU.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Abkhazian leader Raul Khadzhinba met in Moscow in late

August and both politicians pledged to deepen the cooperation between the two nations with possible signing of the major cooperation treaty before the end of the year.

Russia introduced free trade regime with Abkhazia and South Ossetia in December 2013.

The nations of Abkhazia and South Ossetia emerged with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent civil war in Georgia. The republics were not officially recognized, but the post-Soviet bloc CIS deployed peacekeeping forces to the region to prevent further bloodshed.

In 2008, the pro-Western Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili attempted to take South Ossetia by military force, starting the operation with an attack on Russian peacekeepers. Russian army had to intervene, repelling the Georgian attack and re-establishing peace. After the 2008 conflict, Russia and a few other countries recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states.