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Russia Invades, Bombs Georgia

A former Soviet republic, Georgia gained nominal independence in 1991 with the formal dissolution of the USSR. It then joined the Russian-controlled Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). However, Russia has kept Georgia's provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in turmoil ever since by backing — militarily, diplomatically, and economically — breakaway separatist forces in those areas.



A major reason for Russia's intrigues in the region is its concern over Georgia's challenge to Moscow's former monopoly over the development and transport of the vast oil and gas deposits from the Caspian Sea region. The completion of the 1,000-mile long Baku Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline in 2005 and the natural-gas South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP) in 2006 along the same route through Georgia have provided a transit route outside of Russian control for gas and oil to international markets from Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan.

The *Telegraph* of Britain and other news sources reported on August 11 that Russian jets had fired over 50 missiles at the BTC pipeline, but apparently none had scored a direct hit.

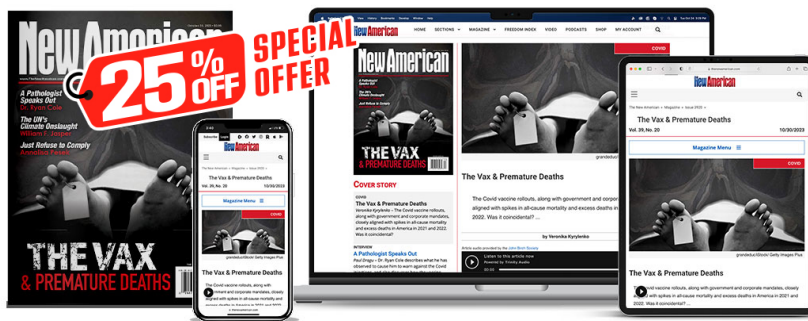


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