



Field Office Gori...

In the heart of Georgia

The European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM) operates three Field Offices located across Georgia. The Field Offices deliver the operational capacity of the Mission. From here, the Mission's monitors conduct their patrols and cooperate with local partners and interlocutors.

Field Office Gori is located in Central Georgia – in the very heart of Georgia – 80 kilometres northwest of the capital Tbilisi in the town of Gori, the country's sixth largest, with a population of around 77,000.

When the monitors of the newly established Mission arrived in Gori in October 2008, they moved into the current Field Office facilities in central Gori.

The buildings, which previously served as bank and restaurant, were undamaged by war and were instantly found suitable to accommodate the EUMM Field Office.

From the central location in Gori and in cooperation with the Field Office in Mtskheta, Field Office Gori undertakes the Mission's activities along the Administrative Boundary Line with South Ossetia. In fact, the Gori Field Office is situated less than 35 kilometres south of Tskhinvali, the capital of the *de facto* Republic of South Ossetia.

Small in size, large in numbers

In comparison to the Area of Responsibility of the two other EUMM Field Offices, Field Office Gori's is relatively small.

Despite its lesser size, the Field Office in Gori has attached the highest number of mission members with 61 internationals and 22 nationals currently serving in the Field Office. This correlation relates predominantly to the nature and intensity of the tasks and incidents within this particular Area of Responsibility.

The monitors in Gori Field Office conduct annually over 1,800 patrols.

Monitors in front of the Field Office in Gori preparing to depart for a patrol to the Administrative Boundary Line to South Ossetia. The monitors from Gori conduct annually over 1,800 patrols.

Active in outreach and social life

Field Office Gori is exceptionally active in its outreach activities towards the residents of Gori and the conflict-affected population living along the Administrative Boundary Line. The activities include school visits and presentations on the EU and the Mission's mandate as well as sports events and tournaments. Furthermore, within the framework of its outreach activities, the Mission also carries out university lectures on a regular basis to students at the Sukhishvili University and the National Defence Academy of Georgia, both located in Gori.

The Field Office is also renowned for its vivid social life. Monitors and national staff regularly take part in numerous social gatherings such as salsa dancing, basketball, football and card games. Farewells for departing mission members as well as birthdays, and even name days, are regularly celebrated by all staff.

This is... Central Georgia



An armored patrol vehicle from Field Office Gori descending from a high observation point near the South Ossetian Administrative Boundary Line.

Kartli is the central region of Georgia. Following historical developments and its location encompassing upper, central and lower streams of the main river Mtkvari, Kartli was divided into three regions – Zemo Kartli, Kvemo Kartli and Shida Kartli.

The Shida Kartli region is Field Office Gori's main Area of Responsibility. This region has always been referred to as *The Heart of Georgia*. It covers approximately 6,200 km² and consists of six municipalities: Gori, Kaspi, Kareli, Khashuri, Tskhinvali, and Java, as well as the self-governing city of Gori.

4,800 km² of the region under the jurisdiction of the authorities of the Tbilisi Administered Territory.

The country's orchard

Due to the favourable weather conditions and soil, Shida Kartli is famous for its juicy fruits – apples, peaches and plums. The climate is moderately warm and humid with an average yearly temperature around 11°C, ranging from maximum at 42°C, and minimum -32°C.

The region is also rich in natural springs, rivers, and irrigation infrastructure. Because of the flourishing agricultural sector, the area is densely populated.

Gori's place in history

Gori is the regional capital of Shida Kartli, the centre of what was known as the historical Kingdom of Iberia – not to be confused with the Iberian Peninsula. In the 4th century, after Christianization by Saint Nino, Iberia became **one of the first kingdoms embracing the faith of Jesus**. Later Iberia played a vital role in the ethnic and political consolidation of the Georgians during the Classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

Today the area administered by the City of Gori represents **the heart of Georgia that held together Christian religion, culture and Georgian language for centuries** in the crossroads of the Ancient Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Iranian influences.

In recent history, Gori became notorious as **the birthplace of the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin** (1878-1953). Stalin was an ethnic Georgian with the Georgian birth name Ioseb Besarionis dze Jughashvili.

In the 2008 August War, Gori came under attack by the Russian Air Force. Airstrikes hit military targets and residential districts in Gori. By 11 August 2008, Georgian military and government personnel and most residents had fled the city, which was then captured by the Russian Federation military, South Ossetian forces, and North Caucasus volunteers. They withdrew from the city on 22 August 2008, i.e. 10 days after the Six-Point Ceasefire Agreement, facilitated by the EU, was signed by the Georgian and Russian presidents.

THE REGIONS OF CENTRAL GEORGIA

ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT	POPULATION	KM ²
GORI MUNICIPALITY AND CITY*	125,900	2,310
KASPI*	43,771	802
KARELI*	41,316	1,099
KHASHURI*	52,603	585
JAVA (ESTIMATED BEFORE THE CONFLICT)	10,000	1,448
TSKHINVALI (ESTIMATED BEFORE THE CONFLICT)	30,000	7
TOTAL	303,590	6,251

*2014 Census

Following the 2008 August War, the Tbilisi Central Government lost control of the northern part of the region, namely Tskhinvali, Java and the northern territories of Kareli and Gori (altogether an area of approximately 1,400 km²), currently leaving approximately



390 km of boundary separates the breakaway

390 kilometres of Administrative Boundary Line in Central Georgia separates South Ossetia from the rest of Georgia (Tbilisi Administered Territory).

The Line extends in a U-shape south from the border to the Russian Federation then east and then north again to the Russian Federation border. Monitors from the Mission's Field Offices patrol

the area adjacent to the Administrative Boundary Line.

The western and southern part of the Line, adding up to 280 kilometres, is the responsibility of Field Office Gori, whereas the eastern part, the remaining 110 kilometres, is the responsibility of Field Office Mtskheta.

The part of the Line for which Field Office Gori is responsible is divided into two sectors:

The north-western sector which is predominantly mountainous and the southern sector which is renowned for its particularly fertile land and thereby a place of numerous farms and orchards.

There are two Controlled Crossing Points (CXP) in each sector. Nevertheless, people cross the Line at various locations other than the Controlled Crossing Points.

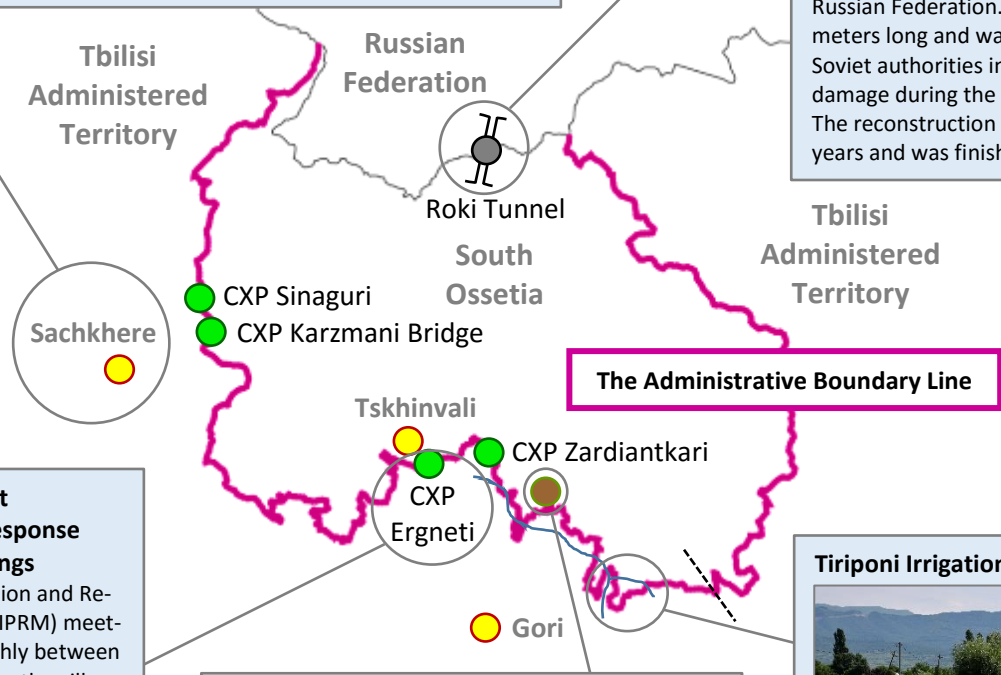


Forward Operating Base Sachkhere

Field Office Gori maintains a Forward Operating Base in Sachkhere. This base is frequently, but not permanently, manned. It is used as base for the mountainous patrols in the north-western sector of the Field Office's Area of Responsibility.

The Roki Tunnel

The Roki Tunnel is a mountain tunnel at about 2,000 meters altitude on the Transkam highway through the Greater Caucasus Mountains. This is the only road connecting the de facto Republic of South Ossetia with North Ossetia in the Russian Federation. The tunnel is 3,750 meters long and was opened by the Soviet authorities in 1984. It suffered damage during the 2008 August War. The reconstruction took two and half years and was finished in October 2015.



Site of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism meetings

The Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) meetings take place monthly between two Check Points near the village of Ergneti. These meetings are co-facilitated by the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and is attended by participants from the Tbilisi Administered Territory, the Russian Federation, and South Ossetia.



Russian Federation Border Guard bases



Between 2009 and 2012, 19 Russian Federation Border Guard bases were erected along the Administrative Boundary Line to South Ossetia. These form part of a complex of Russian Federation Border Guard facilities inside South Ossetia. The bases, such as the depicted Adzvistavi Base, are manned by Russian Federation Border Guards who, together with South Ossetian *de facto* Border Guards, regularly patrol the Administrative Boundary Line in vehicles, by foot or via surveillance

Tiriponi Irrigation Canal



The Tiriponi Canal is indispensable to the agriculture along the Administrative Boundary Line. Thousands of farmers and their families are depending on the canal as their only access to irrigation. The canal was constructed during the Soviet times and is an example of significant infrastructure crossing the Administrative Boundary Line several times. As part of its efforts to normalize the lives of the conflict-affected population, the Mission takes great interest in contributing to continuous operation of cross-boundary infrastructure.

SIGNS OF BORDERISATION

The “Republic of South Ossetia” is neither recognised by the European Union and its Member States nor the vast majority of the international community. Consequently, the line between Tbilisi Administered Territory and the *de facto* Republic of South Ossetia is not recognized as a state border.

Borderisation is a term introduced by the Mission to describe the physical markings and activities on the ground to make visible or obstruct passage of the Line.

This is referred to by the Mission as the ‘Administrative Boundary Line’, by the authorities of the Tbilisi Administered Territory as the ‘Occupation Line’ and by the Russian Federation and the *de facto* South Ossetian authorities as the ‘State Border’.

Along the entire Administrative Boundary Line to South Ossetia, Russian Federation Border Guards are erecting, maintaining and renewing signs and obstacles. Borderisation activities of any kind are neither undertaken nor supported

by the authorities of the Tbilisi Administered Territory.

These borderisation measures separate local communities on both sides of the Administrative Boundary Line and impede the freedom of movement.

In many cases, borderisation cut through orchards and fields, thus preventing the owners from cultivating and harvesting their plots. This has negative effect on the livelihood of the farming families living on both sides.

In the Gori Field Office Area of Responsibility, various borderisation features can be observed on the ground. Below are the most common.

Currently only four UN Member States recognize the Republic of South Ossetia: The Russian Federation, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Nauru. Two UN Member States have withdrawn their recognition, namely Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Green “State Border” signs

More than two hundred green signs have been erected along the Administrative Boundary Line since the 2008 War. Older signs (right) are regularly being replaced by new signs (left).



Green security fences

There are several types of fencing along the Administrative Boundary Line. The most typical fence is the green security fence. Fencing is mostly observed in the southern populated areas, where there are long stretches of green security fences. More than 55 kilometres of the Administrative Boundary Line is fenced. Whilst the majority of fencing took place between 2009 and 2013, maintenance and refurbishment works are ongoing.

Barbed wire and concertina wire

To reinforce or replace fencing, barbed wire and concertina wire barriers are erected. Concertina wire is razor wire formed in large coils which can be expanded like a concertina.



SIGNS OF BORDERISATION



Ground lines

Ground lines are broad lines, either ploughed or graded by a road grader, to mark the Administrative Boundary Line. These lines, often referred to as firebreaks, are usually observed on open fields used for cattle grazing or agricultural purposes. They are maintained regularly and occasionally used by Russian Federation Border Guards or South Ossetian de facto Border Guards as patrol paths. Recently also deeper ditches have been observed.



Observation posts and patrolling

The Russian Federation Border Guards have a number of observation posts along the Administrative Boundary Line. The observation posts are usually placed in high terrain and often covered with seasonal camouflage nets. Border guard patrols between the different observation posts are frequently seen, although not all observation posts are manned at all times.

Surveillance technology

Different types of surveillance technology used by Russian Federation Border Guards have been observed along the Administrative Boundary Line. The equipment ranges from surveillance camera pylons to movement detectors placed in bushes or trees.



Forward Operating Base Sachkhere

To enable effective patrolling in the remote mountainous region located in the north-western sector of Field Office Gori's Area of Responsibility, a Forward Operating Base (FOB) has been established in the north-eastern corner of the Imereti Province near the small town of Sachkhere.

The Forward Operating Base is not permanently manned, but used regularly all year round by monitors as base for the mountainous patrols.

The area, including the Crossing Points (CXP's) at Sinaguri and Karzmani Bridge and observation points in Perevi, Oni and Chonto, features hills and mountains, gorgeous landscapes, historic towns and places that are a must to visit for anyone with interest in Georgia, its people, history and culture.



The Forward Operating Base in Sachkhere is installed in containers in a fenced and guarded compound.



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This issue of The EUMM Monitor is dedicated to Central Georgia, the Administrative Boundary Line there and the European Union Monitoring Mission Field Office in Gori.

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What, why and how... Cross-boundary related detentions



The southern boundary of South Ossetia cuts through some of the most fertile and densely populated farmland in Central Georgia. In this excess of people, farms, livestock and plots the Administrative Boundary Line represents an ongoing challenge to the conflict-affected population on both sides of the Line. It impedes their freedom of movement; restricts efficient cultivation of farmland and separates friends and families.

Commuters possessing valid documents can cross the Administrative Boundary Line into South Ossetia and vice versa using the Controlled Crossing Points. Crossing the Administrative Boundary Line to South Ossetia elsewhere – deliberately or accidental – leads to detention by Russian Federation Border Guards or South Ossetian *de facto* Border Guards.

Administrative Boundary Line from Tbilisi Administered Territory into South Ossetia.

In most cases, the release of detainees was enabled through the Hotline. Based on the Hotline activations, the Mission has registered the number of annual detentions depicted below:

2016 detentions

According to open sources, the *de facto* South Ossetian authorities reported that in 2016 they opened 549 detention cases relating to so-called "state border crossings", of which 413 related to *de facto* South Ossetian residents attempting to cross into Tbilisi Administered Territory or entering the *de facto* Restricted Border Zone on the South Ossetian side. The remaining 136 involved residents of the Tbilisi Administered Territory crossing into South Ossetia.

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Average
Detainees	91	96	172	148	160	137	134

Average annual detentions

Detention cases are common – in average, the Mission facilitated Hotline (see The EUMM Monitor Issue #3) registered 134 annual detentions on or near the Administrative Boundary Line when commuters attempt to cross the

This number virtually corresponds to the number of detentions (137) registered by the Mission facilitated Hotline. In 2016, the most common reasons for cross-boundary related detentions were:

2016 DETENTIONS OF TBILISI ADMINISTERED TERRITORY RESIDENTS

Ranking	Reason	Detainees
1	Cattle herders	20
2	Seasonal picking of jonjoli (a Georgian delicacy)	13
3	Firewood collection	9
4	Family visits and celebrations	9
5	Agriculture and land plots	7
6	Hunting	4
7	Religious (Church and cemetery visits, participation in funerals or religious services)	2
8	Other	73
	Total	137

Cross-boundary related detentions

Nine steps: From detention to release



Usually detentions occur on the actual Administrative Boundary Line or very near to it, but there are also examples of detentions taking place at some distance from the Line. Experience gathered by the Mission over recent years reveals a typical pattern following cross-boundary related detentions:

1.

The detention

In most of the instances, Russian Federation Border Guards carry out the detention. After being detained, the mobile phone, identity papers and values of the detainee are removed. If the detainee is carrying a hunting weapon or an axe for chopping trees, it will be permanently confiscated.

2.

Immediately after the detention,

the detainee is transported to the nearest Russian Federation Border Guard base. Here the detainee will have his photo and fingerprints taken and will be interviewed. Usually the detainee will also be informed about the follow-on process as well as the expected fine and release procedure.

3.

Activation of the Hotline

Usually, the Russian Federation Border Guard Hotline Holder will activate the Hotline to inform the Georgian authorities about the circumstances of the detention. If the detainee is not able to present identity papers, the Russian Federation Border Guards will ask the Georgian authorities to provide these.

4.

Hand over

to the South Ossetian de facto Security Actors. After completion of the Russian Federation Border Guard formalities, security actors of South Ossetia collect the detainee for transport to the Tskhinvali Detention Centre.

5.

Arrival at the Detention Centre

On arrival to the Tskhinvali Detention Centre, the detainee will go through a pre-trial interview. The detainees are normally offered water and food, access to toilet facilities and, if required, medical attention. Former detainees describe the conditions as reasonable, but international organisations have virtually no access to these facilities to verify this information.

Nine steps: From detention to release



6.

Court proceedings

As soon as possible after arrival at the Detention Centre, the detainee will appear in the *de facto* Tskhinvali court. Typically the detainee will be given the option to plead guilty to the charges of “illegal crossing of the State Border” and accept a fine of 2,000 Russian Roubles* (32 Euro) or plead not-guilty, in which case he will be detained for an indefinite period until a full investigation has been completed. If the detainee is in possession of a cash amount equal to the fine, he will pay the fine. If not, the fine is typically paid by family residing in South Ossetia or by relatives from the detainee’s hometown.

7.

Release

Once the fine has been settled, the Hotline is activated by the *de facto* South Ossetian authorities to ensure that security actors from the Tbilisi Administered Territory are ready to receive the detainee upon release. Before his release, belongings taken from the detainee are returned.

8.

Hand over

The Controlled Crossing Point at Ergneti is routinely used for release of detainees by the *de facto* South Ossetian authorities. At the crossing point, the detainee will be received by security actors from the Tbilisi Administered Territory. Immediately after his return, he will be interviewed by the Regional Georgian Police.

9.

Mission interview

Within 10 days after release, Mission monitors, typically from the Compliance Team of Gori Field Office, will offer to conduct a voluntary post-detention interview with the previously detained individual.

* Second time offenders are usually fined 5,000 Russian Roubles.
Third time offenders usually receives a month long prison sentence and a fine.



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The European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia is the EU's only current mission that is specifically dedicated to monitoring. On 12 December 2016, the European Council extended the mandate of the Mission until 14 December 2018. EUMM's Head of Mission is Kęstutis Jankauskas (Lithuania). He succeeded Toivo Klaar (Estonia), Andrzej Tyszkiewicz (Poland), and Hansjörg Haber (Germany).

Patrolling is not always... A walk in the park

All monitors receive Off-Road and Winter Awareness Driving Training.



The terrain in Field Office Gori's Area of Responsibility is known to be particularly diverse. It ranges from mountainous areas in the north-west to vast agricultural lands with fields and orchards in the southern parts.

In day and night, in snow and mud, in the fields and in the mountains – the monitors from Field Office Gori patrol seven days a week from early morning until late evening as well as during the night.

When monitors from Field Office Gori embark on their patrols to provide accurate observations,

they are equipped with a wide range of equipment to accomplish their mission (see The EUMM Monitor Issue #1) and to enable them reach even the most remote areas; be it dry summers, rainy autumns or snowy winters.

To perform their duties the monitors have identified observation points that are known to be particularly useful to observe the activities and features along the Administrative Boundary Line. To reach them, monitors on patrol often have to cross roaring rivers or conduct foot patrols in remote hillside areas as well as in forests and mountainous areas.

Careful planning, excellent map reading skills and the use of various navigation devices are important in the challenging terrains where location of the Administrative Boundary Line is rarely marked.

Also in the dark hours, the patrols perform their duties, making sure their presence is visible.

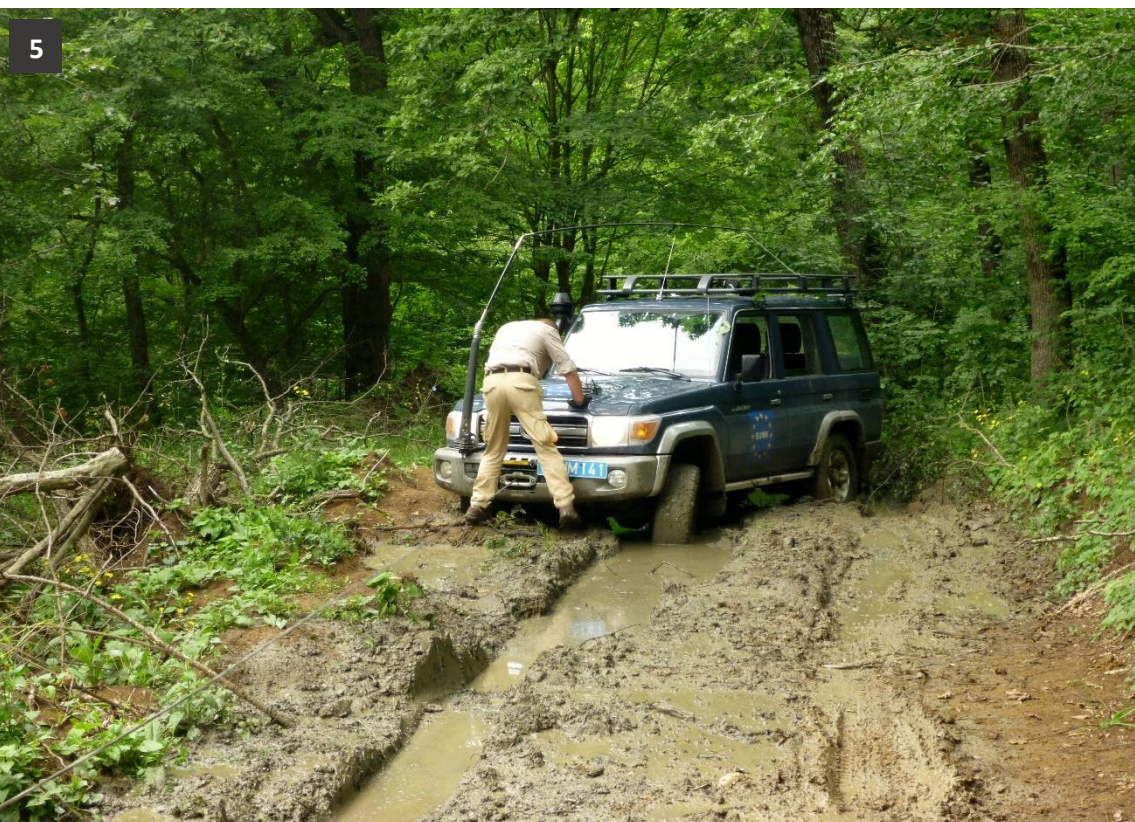
Despite the harsh terrain conditions, the landscape is breathtakingly beautiful, multiplied by the fact that Georgia has four distinct seasons.



Monitors from Field Office Gori conducting mountainous patrol activity.

Gorgeous sights in the Gori Field Office Area of Responsibility.





1. Patrolling in the mountains occasionally requires river crossings.
2. Monitors checking their location and map grids on a night patrol.
3. MAST – a high performance camera mounted on a telescopic mast – mounted on the tail of a Toyota Land Cruiser parked in a village near the Administrative Boundary Line.
4. Monitors on a foot patrol to reach a high observation point in one of the mountainous sections of the Area of Responsibility.
5. For good reasons, all patrols comprise minimum two patrol vehicles.

The Ins and Outs of Human Security Patrols

A team of five monitors are responsible for conducting Human Security patrols within the Field Office Gori's Area of Responsibility.

Their primary task is to monitor the Human Rights situation including freedom of movement as well as to speak with NGOs, local officials and villagers on both sides of the Administrative Boundary Line.

The patrols observe and report on everyday life, which people elsewhere take for granted. From drinking clean water from the tap, cooking a meal with a reliable gas supply, accessing healthcare when ill, gathering the harvest, and placing flowers on their grandmother's grave.

According to the leader of the Human Security Team in Field Office Gori, Robert Mangham, this task may sound detached from the 2008 War. "But, a resumption of hostilities is unlikely to be triggered by actions of the formal security actors. It is more likely to be sparked by an annoyed farmer, unexpectedly separated from his orchard by a barbed wire fence. Such incidents remain commonplace and can quickly escalate", he says.

The focus of the Human Security Team varies with the season. For example in the early spring, monitoring agricultural work and irrigation canal repairs enables identification of potential hot spots during the coming harvest. In the same manner, the team

maps locations where access to churches and cemeteries causes tensions during religious holidays.

Also, close relations with school and health clinic staff enables early identification of potential problems related to children crossing the Administrative Boundary Line to attend school, or South Ossetian patients seeking medical treatment in Tbilisi Administered Territory.



Access to irrigation is crucial for the livelihood of the farmers. The Human Security patrols monitor the irrigation channels in the Area of Responsibility.

Leader of the Human Security Team in Field Office Gori, Robert Mangham and a colleague engaging with a local farmer before the agricultural season commences.

