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U.S. Humanitarian Aid Brought Into Georgia

By David Rising The Associated Press

ABOARD THE USS MCFAUL — A U.S. Navy destroyer loaded with humanitarian aid reached Georgia's Black Sea port of Batumi on Sunday, bringing baby food, bottled water and a message of support for an embattled ally.

Before the warship arrived, a Russian general suggested U.S. ships moving across the Black Sea would worsen tensions already driven to a post-Cold War high by a short but intense war between Russia and Georgia.

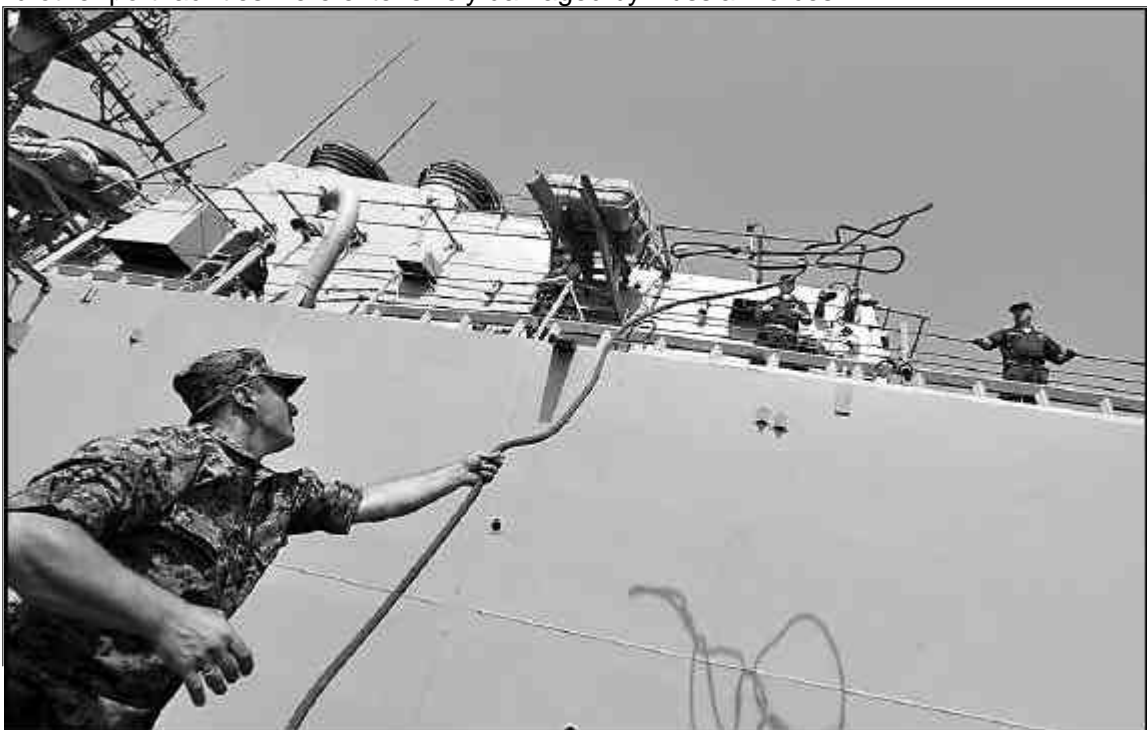
Russia pulled the bulk of its troops and tanks out Friday under a cease-fire brokered by French President Nicolas Sarkozy, but built up its forces in and around South Ossetia and Abkhazia, another separatist region. They also left other military posts at locations inside Georgia proper.

The U.S. and EU say both those moves violated Russia's commitments.

The guided missile cruiser USS McFaul, carrying about 55 tons of humanitarian aid, is the first of three American ships scheduled to arrive this week. It brought baby food, diapers, bottled water, milk and hygiene products.

A U.S. official said the American ship anchored in Batumi, Georgia's main oil port on the Black Sea, because of concerns about damage to the Georgian port of Poti — not because Poti is closer to Russian forces in Abkhazia and Georgia proper.

Russian troops still hold positions near Poti, and Georgian port officials say radar, Coast Guard ships and other port facilities were extensively damaged by Russian forces.



BELA SZANDELSZKY/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS A Georgian navy officer throws a rope to dock the guided missile destroyer USS McFaul anchored in the harbor of Batumi, western Georgia on Sunday. The USS McFaul is the first of three U.S. Navy ships to carry supplies to Georgia.