

The Report of the State Security Service of Georgia

2020



Foreword

The primary objective of the State Security Service is to protect national interests of the state and promote democratic development of Georgia through detection, prevention and due response to both internal and external threats facing the country.

Providing of secure, stable and peaceful environment in the country is associated to a number of significant challenges.

The report represents activities carried out by the State Security Service throughout 2020. The document also sums up basic threats and challenges of the last year.

In 2020, activities of the foreign special services to the prejudice of national interests of Georgia was still a major challenge. Attempted covert operations, application of cyber capabilities and so-called hybrid warfare tools in order to seek political, military, socio-economic, ideology and other types of levers of influence were detected.

Russian occupation, increasing militarization of occupied territories and ongoing military exercises on the ground remain existential threat to Georgia as a state.

Expansionist policy of the Russian Federation in the Black Sea and Caucasus regions hampers stable development of the country and damages Georgia's security, as well as security of the countries in the region and Europe.

Regional developments affected domestic security of the country. Combat activities unfolded between Armenia and Azerbaijan represented a particular challenge. In the event of crisis, one of the major objectives of the State Security Service was maintaining peace in Georgia and providing peaceful co-existence of citizens.

The pandemic of Novel Coronavirus has substantially changed global processes. Apart from healthcare systems, social field, economy and international policy, the pandemic affected such fundamental matters as national and global security.

For Georgia, as well as a number of western states, development of the capabilities to carry out a "hybrid warfare" is being outlined as an increasing threat.

Taking into consideration a multi-faceted manifestation of "hybrid warfare" and a rapid changeability of security environment, the threats stemming from it is difficult to predict and they cover almost all aspects of state authority and social life.

In parallel to technological progress, a sustainable system of cyber security, protection of information space and critical infrastructure against cyber-intelligence operations of foreign special services, as well as cyber attacks gain a particular significance for national security of the country.

Throughout 2020, terrorism-related threats remained actual. Furthermore, in parallel to widely known terrorist ideologies, challenges stemming from far-right extremism intensified.

State Security Service of Georgia, in the course of carrying out of its activities, acts in accordance to the principles of the rule of law, political neutrality, impermissibility of discrimination, and proportionality taking into consideration human rights and freedoms protection-based approach.

At the same time, Service's efforts are directed at enhancing of institutional capabilities and human resources. International practice-based approaches are being actively introduced. Active communication with population and civil society are given priority as well. The Service has taken significant steps towards communication and close cooperation with security experts and non-governmental organizations working in the field.

Throughout the reporting period, the Service has positioned itself as a significant contributor to international and in particular Euro-Atlantic security architecture. Active cooperation with counterpart services of strategic partners and friendly states was underway in this direction.

Lastly, I would like to highlight the role of every single officer of the Service in the process of providing state security. In order to effectively protect the country against the threats in various directions, the employees of the Service, on multiple occasions carried out their functions and obligations at the expense of their lives and health, which, for the greater part was connected to implementation of highly difficult, complex tasks. In the course of this process, support expressed by society and state is of the utmost importance for our officers.

Grigol Liluashvili

Head of the State Security Service of Georgia

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Occupied Territories

Occupation of Tskhivnali and Abkhazia regions by the Russian Federation remained major challenge and threat for Georgia in 2020. The official Moscow continued the policy of de-facto annexation of the occupied regions, their isolation from the Central Government-controlled territory and the process of alienation of the population divided by the occupation line. The occupied regions were actively militarized and hosted numerous military drills. Throughout 2020, on the background of new coronavirus pandemic, the fundamental rights of the ethnic Georgians were further restricted, which resulted in additional deterioration of their conditions.

Processes directed at annexation

In the context of the de-facto annexation process implemented by the Russian Federation has to be underlined the “adoption” of the so-called program for establishment a common social and economic space between Russia and the occupied Abkhazia on November 12, 2020. The so-called program aims to “harmonize” the so-called legislation in financial, economic and social spheres and also creates the opportunity for the Russian citizens to “obtain” the so-called Abkhazian citizenship and to “purchase” private property, including the so-called strategic facilities.

Presumably, the Russian Federation used the issue of financial support to pressure the occupied region to sign the aforementioned so-called document, in the wake of economic crisis caused by the pandemic.

It is noteworthy that in the reporting period, the Russian Federation once again triggered the issue of “belonging to the Russian Federation” of the village Aibgha, occupied Gagra district located in the depth of the occupied Abkhazia at the Russian-Georgian border, which is also a part of annexation policy.

The direct threat of annexation of occupied Tskhinvali region remained the substantial challenge through 2020, as the Tskhinvali de facto regime has openly supported the integration into the Russian Federation.

The simplification of so-called customs procedures between the occupied Tskhinvali region and the Russian Federation represents yet another step towards the aforementioned direction. In December 2020, the so-called customs point of the occupied Tskhinvali region on the Roki segment of the Russian-Georgian border had been abolished and the “relevant procedures” are being jointly implemented solely in Russia, at the “Lower Zaramag” checkpoint. The mentioned act aims at gradual abolishment of so-called structures and their integration into the Russian institutions.

Militarization of the occupied regions

Similarly to the recent years, the occupation forces intensively conducted military drills in the occupied territories. According to the available data, with the purpose of improvement of military capabilities and

coordination, more than 120 various types of exercises had been held by the divisions of 7th and 4th military bases of the Southern Military District of the Russian Federation. In addition, the planned rotations and upgrade of armament and military-technical equipment took place at the mentioned military bases.

The Russian occupation forces and heavy military equipment, illegally deployed in the occupied regions, deteriorate the security environment on the ground as well as represent the regional threat and an international challenge.

In the reporting period the official Moscow, in accordance to its strategic objectives, was totally involved and controlled the military, socio-political and social-economic processes in the occupied territories, including the functioning of the so-called agencies (so-called border security, so-called customs synchronization, work of so-called defence and “law-enforcement agencies”).

Ongoing processes in the occupied regions

Apart from the Russian occupation, the occupied regions of Georgia faced so-called internal political and economic challenges.

In the beginning of 2020, as a result of the demonstrations amid grave social-economic and deteriorated criminogenic situation and the direct involvement of the Russian federation in the process, the so-called government was changed in the occupied Abkhazia. The aim of the Kremlin was to halt the military confrontation in the occupied Abkhazia and to manage the crisis on the expense of the weak player, which at that time turned out to be the then so-called president **Raul Khajimba**, who left his “position”.

Since the so-called governmental change, the so-called opposition composed by the former so-called government officials, started to take active measures after approximately half a year. The so-called opposition forces criticized **Aslan Bzhaniya`s** team in its statements towards Tbilisi, blamed him for ineffective management of the Novel Coronavirus pandemic and the worsening of economic situation, thus creating the sentiments of protests in the occupied Abkhazia.

The so-called political environment had been also unstable in the occupied Tskhinvali region. On August 28, 2020, the so-called suspect **Inal Jabiev** died allegedly as a result of torture in the so-called “isolator”. The aforementioned fact resulted in a long-term so-called boycott from the “opposition” and several large-scale demonstration in the occupied Tskhinvali city. Amid the protest of the “opposition parliament members”, “quorum” was not met in the so-called parliament for the several months. As a result, the so-called government composition could not have been approved and the so-called budget could not have been discussed.

During the reporting period, the representatives of the occupied regions held active meetings with the political elite of the Russian Federation and with the Kremlin policy-makers in the direction of occupied regions. The so-called presidents and the de-facto delegations of the occupied regions paid dozens of visits in the Russian Federation during which the issues of “domestic politics”, energy, economic, agricultural, air traffic, etc. had been discussed.

Special attention should be paid to the statements made by the representatives of the occupied Abkhazia regarding the restoration of the Sokhumi Airport. The Federal Air Transport Agency of the Russian Federation “Rosaviatsiya” also demonstrated particular interest towards the issue.

Overall, in 2020 the situation was not stable in both occupied regions in terms of so-called domestic politics. Anti-Georgian sentiments had been often expressed in this process. Both direct and indirect involvement of the Russian Federation in the so-called political crisis was clearly visible.

In the wake of Novel Coronavirus pandemic the so-called economic situation dramatically deteriorated in the occupied regions, which resulted in cash deficit and created problems in all spheres, including in terms of payment of “salaries” and “pensions”. Food and medical products became scarce in the occupied Tskhinvali region.

The occupied regions’ financial dependency on the central budget of the Russian Federation was high. According to the information available, the financial assistance delivered to the occupied Abkhazia amounted to 4,5 billion Russian Rubles (63 million USD), which filled about 50% of the so-called budget. As for the occupied Tskhinvali region, Russian financial aid constituted 6,2 billion Russian Rubles (86 million USD), representing 82% of the so-called budget. Aforementioned assistance represents the significant leverage of impact of the Russian Federation over the occupied regions of Georgia.

In parallel with the so-called economic difficulties, a severe energy crisis was also developed in the occupied Abkhazia. Large-scale crypto mining resulted in the electricity deficit. Intensive so-called mining further overloaded the outdated power grids and gave rise to frequent accidents, periodically leaving significant segment of the population without electricity.

The so-called health care system in the occupied regions became completely dependent on financial and material assistance provided by the Russian Federation amid Novel Coronavirus pandemic. Nevertheless, severe problems were persistent in the fight against the Covid-19. Such challenges were particularly evident towards the occupied Abkhazia.

During the reporting period, occupied Abkhazia actively continued to deepen the relations with the Russian satellite regime in the Syrian Arab Republic. So-called embassy was opened in Syria and Damascus was visited by the so-called Abkhazian delegations.

“Hybrid Warfare” and the illegal activities of the occupation forces

During the occupation, the Russian Federation continued active use of “hybrid warfare” instruments, aimed at discrediting Georgian state institutions, fueling nihilism and pessimism in the society and creating obstacles to the country's Euro-Atlantic integration.

The Russian Federation used occupation forces and the de-facto regimes as the instruments of the “hybrid warfare” in active coordination with another tool of “hybrid warfare” – the so-called information warfare. Georgian citizens were illegally detained by the occupation forces and the de-facto regimes, the so-called illegal borderization process was being carried out together with other illegal activities. Aforementioned was accompanied by disinformation campaigns and the spread of fake news.

Throughout 2020, the State Security Service of Georgia identified 64 cases of illegal detention carried out by the Russian occupation forces for so-called illegal border crossing towards the occupied Tskhinvali region, while 13 cases were identified in the direction of the occupied Abkhazia.

In certain cases, the occupation regime sentenced the illegally detained citizens of Georgia to long-term illegal imprisonment. In this regard, the cases of illegally detained **Zaza Gakheladze** and **Irakli Bebu** has to be underlined in particular. The occupation regime used especially unfair and inhumane approach towards these individuals and sentenced them to imprisonment for multiple years. **Genadi Bestaev** and **Lasha Khetereli** remain in the so-called prison in the occupied Tskhinvali. In the reporting period, through the efforts of the Central Government of Georgia and the international partners, dozens of Georgian citizens were released from the illegal detention. The illegal detention of the Georgian citizens by the Russian occupation forces mostly aims to intimidate the local population and foster a sense of insecurity in them, to mark the occupation line as a so-called border, to infuse protests in the society and to increase the pressure on the Central Government.

Special attention has to be paid to the illegal detention of **Khvicha Mghebrishvili** on the absurd so-called charges, used by the occupation forces for spreading the disinformation to discredit the Richard Lugar Center for Public Health Research.

It is noteworthy that the occupation regime constantly spread disinformative statements against the Central Government in the context of the so-called information warfare, mainly aimed at demonizing state institutions and misrepresenting the socio-economic and epidemiological situation on the territory controlled by the Central Government.

The Central Government of Georgia continued to use all the formal and informal mechanisms and legal leverage to ensure immediate and unconditional release of the illegally detained persons.

Despite the efforts made by the Central Government, the situation has not changed regarding the punishment of offenders who are guilty of murder of Georgian citizens **Giga Otkhзорia** and **Archil Tатunashvili**, also in relation to **Davit Basharuli** and **Irakli Kvaratskhelia**, who died as a result of the occupation. Regardless of the involvement of international partners and the consistent approach of the Central Government, the Russian occupation regime has prevented the individuals from being brought to justice.

In the reporting period, the Russian occupation forces continued to carry out the process of illegal so-called borderization, reflected in installation of artificial barriers, fences, barbwires, so-called border signs, land trenches and so-called anti-fire dividing lines. Throughout 2020, the State Security Service of Georgia identified 16 cases of illegal so-called borderization in the direction of occupied Abkhazia, while 60 cases were reported towards the direction of the occupied Tskhinvali.

Illegal detentions, so-called borderization and restrictions imposed on the freedom of movement, together with the extremely destructive and dangerous daily activities carried out by the Russian occupation forces, grossly violate the rights of the local population, aggravate their economic situation and deteriorate the security environment on the ground.

Due to the destructive approaches of the occupation forces, the so-called crossing points were closed, which significantly worsened the daily lives of people living in the occupied regions, especially of those residing in the occupied Gali and Akhgori. As a result of this, fundamental human rights of the local population including freedom of movement, access to quality healthcare and education, etc. were restricted. The residents of the occupied Tskhinvali region were additionally restricted from access to pensions and social assistance.

The aforementioned problem persisted regarding both occupied regions. The constructive dialogue on the issue of relevant aid failed due to the pressure applied by the Russian Federation over both occupied regions. In relation to the occupied Abkhazia, with the assistance of the international organizations, singular humanitarian projects had been made possible.

Hereby, it must be denoted, that the representatives of the occupied Tskhinvali regime artificially connected the closure of the so-called crossing points with deployment of the standard police checkpoint adjacent to the village Chorchana, Khashuri Municipality and the Central Government was issued a groundless ultimatum for its dismantling, otherwise, they categorically refused to open so-called checkpoints.

The Central Government of Georgia still acutely faces the problem of deliberate discrimination of the ethnic Georgian population, including the restriction of right to education in the native language and the policy of assimilation and changing the ethnic identity of the population. Ethnic Georgians residing on the Central Government-controlled as well as occupied territories are also restricted from having

access to property rights. The aforementioned aims to erase the traces of the Georgian population in these regions and to prevent the return of the internally displaced ethnic Georgians.

International mechanisms

The aforementioned issues, as well as the immediate and unconditional release of Georgian citizens were critically addressed both, within the framework of Geneva International Discussions (GID), as well as the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) meetings. In addition, the EUMM Hotline was actively applied as an effective tool to resolve specific issues, especially in the wake of the Novel Coronavirus pandemic.

The meetings of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) in the direction of the occupied Tskhinvali region, which were halted due to the destructive activities of the Russian Federation and the occupation regimes run by them, resumed on July 30, 2020, after a break of almost a year.

Within the mentioned meetings, the representatives of the State Security Service of Georgia discussed in details all the significant incidents reported in the occupied region and its vicinities, which extremely damage the security environment, endanger the safety of the local population and restrict free movement along the occupation line. Special attention was paid to the vicious practice of illegal so-called process of borderization and illegal detentions. The immediate and unconditional release of Georgian citizens illegally detained by the occupation forces was categorically demanded. Furthermore, special attention was paid to the lack of access to quality healthcare and education for the people living in the occupied region, especially for the occupied Akhalkalaki population, including amid Novel Coronavirus pandemic.

As a result of deliberate provocative actions conducted by the occupation regime, IPRM meetings had been halted since June 27, 2018 in the direction of the occupied Abkhazia.

Throughout 2020, increasing dynamic of attempts of the occupied forces aimed at politicizing “Hotline” mechanism has been observed. In particular, instead of engaging humanitarian approaches to solve the relevant issues, the mechanism has been used for the political statements. The deliberate attempts of damaging “Hotline” has also been noticed. However, due to the efforts of the State Security Service and international partners, aforementioned mechanism remains as the only effective tool of cooperation along the occupation line.

For the rapid resolution / mitigation of the incidents, reported along the occupation line and in occupied regions of Georgia, the “Hotline” operated with the direct involvement of EUMM and the State Security Service, has been activated 2836 times in the reporting period: 1736 times in the direction of the occupied Tskhinvali region and 1100 times in direction of the occupied Abkhazia.

In the reporting period, the co-chairs have paid several visits to Georgia and communication has also been conducted in online format. Due to the Novel Coronavirus pandemic, 51st round of the Geneva International Discussions had been held on 10-11 December 2020.

Russian Federation has been trying to distance itself from the consequences of the Russian-Georgian war of 2008, as well as the occupation among them. The occupation force maintained efforts not to be considered as “a party to a conflict” and was trying to portray itself as neutral, third party. The mentioned activity was observed during the Geneva International Discussions as well within the IPRM meetings and while communication via “Hotline”.

Cooperation with international partners

The State Security Service, together with other relevant state agencies, opposed the aforementioned attempts of the Russian Federation with the active involvement of international partners. The Service, along with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, effectively cooperated with the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM) which is the only monitoring mission operating in Georgia, and which together with the state authorities, plays an important role in maintaining peace and stability across the occupation line. It is noteworthy, that the mandate of the Mission covers the whole territory of Georgia, however, during the reporting period its representatives were still unable to enter the occupied territories, for which the responsibility lies with the Russian occupation regime.

Cooperation regarding the occupied territories with the representatives of the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe (CoE) has been actively pursued. In terms of humanitarian issues, the cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has to be underlined in providing emergency medical care to persons living in the occupied Tskhinvali region and their transportation to the territory controlled by the Central Government. It is noteworthy that in the wake of the Novel Coronavirus pandemic, an online "Tripartite Coordination Meeting" organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), was held for the purpose of finding the missing or killed persons during the conflict in 1990s and August Russia-Georgia war in 2008.

During the reporting period, the State Security Service cooperated effectively with the Georgian state agencies and international partners and constantly provided them with the information in order to identify and maximally neutralize the threats emanating from the occupied territories and to oppose the intensified processes of annexation by the Russian Federation. Also, in accordance to the mandate, the State Security Service shared information with senior officials of partner countries, international or local organizations, and media representatives regarding the situation in the occupied regions and the territories adjacent to the occupation line.

State Security and Counterintelligence Activities

Throughout 2020, the efforts of the State Security Service were directed at protecting country's constitutional order, sovereignty, territorial integrity, military potential and economic interest against unlawful activities carried out by foreign special services, organizations acting under the auspices of the latter or separate individuals, as well as suppressing other crimes of attempted breach on national security, providing protection of state secrets and strategic facilities and maintaining secure environment in the country.

In the course of implementation of the mentioned activities, Service's operational, operative-technical and analytical capabilities were widely applied in full compliance with the legislation for the purposes of early identification, prevention and providing respective response to activities and attempts containing threat to state security.

The State Security Service took significant steps and carried out appropriate countermeasures to protect the state against intelligence activities and possible destructive acts of certain countries.

In 2020, in order to reveal, examine, suppress and investigate the facts and signs of the intelligence activities carried out by the foreign special services, as well as illegal activities conducted by foreign or local organizations, certain individuals and groups of individuals who are in alleged contact with them, control over the operationally significant objects of interest was actively carried out and the counterintelligence activities envisaged by the legislation were conducted towards them.

Throughout the reporting period, fields of interest and aims of foreign special services were outlined, methods and modus operandi applied to reach the latter were identified, their contacts and targets were detected.

The major objective of the activities against Georgia by foreign special services and organizations was to gain political, military, socio-economic, ideological and other types of leverage for influence.

These services were striving to directly or indirectly interfere into domestic political processes and social life, disturb the constitutional order, cause disturbances, undermine the fundamentals of state and forms of governance, hamper functioning of institutional systems of the country and restrict their development through activities and campaigns directed and/or funded by them. Active attempts to affect significant processes through manipulating social opinion, dividing and polarizing population, have been detected.

Throughout the reporting period, activities envisaged by legislation were being actively carried out into several hundreds of cases of operative records managed by the State Security Service.

The Counterintelligence Department of the Service launched investigation into 12 criminal cases. Out of which 6 cases were heard at the court in relation to 16 individuals. 7 individuals were found guilty, while court trials continue in relation to 9 individuals.

Throughout the reporting period, at the State Security Department of the Service investigation was ongoing into 5 criminal cases.

Furthermore, operational information obtained by the relevant structural units of the State Security Service was sent to other investigative agencies in accordance to the investigative jurisdiction, where the investigations were launched into dozens of the criminal cases.

Attempts to influence Georgia's foreign policy course occupied an important place within the activities of foreign special services and individuals or groups of individuals influenced by them. Notwithstanding resolute support towards Euro-Atlantic course attested by the population on multiple occasions, the mentioned actors, through various disinformation or propagandistic methods, continued to fuel distrust of population towards western partners of Georgia, diminish democratic values and systems and disseminate the worldview adjusted to the interests of particular countries as a counterbalance. Furthermore, attempts to portray Georgia on international arena as an unreliable, unstable partner, have been detected.

In the course of Euro-Atlantic integration and bringing defence systems close to the NATO standards, Georgia's military capabilities, activities ongoing in the field and future plans represent a subject of particular interest from foreign special services. Certain countries and groups influenced by them aimed at restricting NATO's activities in the Black Sea region and Georgia and were carrying out destructive activities in this direction.

The State Security Service continued to provide Georgia's Defence Forces and other law-enforcement authorities with counterintelligence support and neutralize attempts directed against their successful functioning. Within the authority defined by legislation, respective monitoring of operationally significant persons was being carried out in order to suppress possible anti-state activities stemming from them.

In the course of providing state security, the most significant part of the Service's activities is to protect secret and security regime at state authorities and facilities of strategic importance. In accordance to the Law of Georgia on State Security Service of Georgia and Law of Georgia on State Secrets, as well as in compliance with other legal acts, throughout the reporting period operational and counterintelligence support was permanently provided to facilities with high risk in terms of state security.

The Service was actively providing the mentioned facilities, considering their specifics, with proper recommendations and was carrying out implementation monitoring. Possible interest from the foreign special services towards them was detected, preliminary information was obtained and relevant activities were elaborated and implemented.

In 2020, 38 organizations/institutions were granted facility security clearance, while 5 organizations/institutions were denied on the basis of detected factual circumstances, low level of reliability and trustworthiness. Furthermore, 34 organizations/institutions were subject to commission scrutiny in the protection of secret regime and conducting secret document processing. In addition, security background investigations were carried out in relation to 4 539 natural persons for granting personnel security clearances.

One of significant directions of the Service's activities is facilitating economic development of Georgia and prevention of interference by foreign special services in economic processes. Certain states, through various infrastructure and economic projects were actively seeking economic superiority in the region and striving to apply this in favor of their own geopolitical objectives.

In order to provide economic security of the country, the Service actively continued to carry out analysis into trade and economic agreements and to detect potential risks affiliated to them. Possible threats in existing and/or planned bilateral and multilateral economic relations were being outlined. For their minimization, recommendations were being elaborated and relevant preventive measures were implemented.

Throughout the reporting period, the State Security Service has been actively carrying out the measures and activities aimed at reducing threats of proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction. Respective divisions were continuously controlling operational situation related to illicit trafficking of nuclear and radioactive materials, relevant investigative activities were being carried out. Also, in order to provide radiation and nuclear safety at the state border, active coordination was ongoing with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia.

In order to provide security of the state border, throughout the reporting period, the State Security Service has made significant steps in the direction of further development of border technologies, enhancing the capabilities of electronic monitoring system, border operations management and communications. The Operative-Technical Agency operating under the Service, has equipped certain sectors of the state border with modern information-technology means.

With the support of international partners, in 2020 technical implementation of Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Records (PNR) system was completed. This will considerably

facilitate the fight against terrorism, as well as fight against other serious crimes, and will enhance efficiency of border and illegal migration control systems.

Within the framework of monitoring migration channels, in 2020 the State Security Service, on the basis of information obtained as a result of operational activities, detected individuals, who were trying to enter Georgia and obtain residence permit through various means. Certain individuals and organizations operational in Georgia and facilitating their activities, were also detected. In order to further respond to the mentioned facts, the Service had an active coordination with the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as with other relevant authorities and continuously carried out the monitoring of movement of foreign citizens at border-crossing points of Georgia.

The State Security Service, within the authority granted by legislation, carried out monitoring over the cases received from relevant agencies of Georgia, which concerned entry of foreign citizens to Georgia and receiving residence permits. Throughout the reporting period, the Service provided positive recommendations on up to 8 000 applications on receiving citizenship of Georgia and up to 18 000 applications on receiving various types of residence permits. Furthermore, due to the interest of state security, negative recommendations were provided on more than 200 applications on requesting Georgian citizenship and up to 2 400 applications on residence permit. Information of the Service, as well as the information shared by the partner countries in the course of international cooperation, served as the basis for the above-mentioned decisions.

Influence of international and regional developments over the security situation

Security processes developed in the region

Long-term strategic objectives of the Russian Federation in relation to Georgia and the region have not changed and its expansion policy remains a major threat.

From the standpoint of security, in 2020 military confrontation between the two countries neighboring Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, and related threats have been a particularly difficult challenge. By deploying its military contingent in Nagorno-Karabakh, Russia strives to strengthen the levers of politico-military and economic influence over the region, which may significantly affect the security situation of the region.

In 2020, on the background of developments unfolded in the conflict zone, interested groups have become particularly active in Georgia in the direction of regions densely populated by ethnic minorities. The mentioned groups were actively striving to tense the situation between ethnic Azerbaijani and Armenian citizens of Georgia, transfer the conflict to the territory of particular municipalities and deteriorate peaceful environment on the ground.

Furthermore, sentiments damaging Georgian-Azerbaijani and Georgian-Armenian relations were deliberately encouraged. Fake information on Georgia's involvement through various forms in the ongoing developments, were disseminated in order to facilitate destructive processes. One of the major purposes of disinformation and propaganda was to portray Georgia as a country supporting any confronted parties and for this reason, they actively exploited various media outlets and internet.

On the background of the situation, the State Security Service has had a close communication with relevant authorities of Armenia and Azerbaijan. All decisions related to security matters were taken by considering the best interests of settling down the processes ongoing in the region.

The Service was permanently controlling operational situation and identifying individuals or groups participating in certain processes.

The State Security Service continuously provided decision-makers within the Georgian authorities with the information on possible scenarios of the developments, risks outlined in the direction of security and their possible outcomes.

Throughout this period, the Service successfully carried out preventive measures to avoid transfer of possible provocations or hostile sentiments to the territory of Georgia, as well as to avoid further aggravation of ethnic confrontation, de-escalation measures were implemented.

In order to minimize the threats, proper recommendations were provided to relevant agencies and senior officials of both central as well as municipal authorities.

Novel Coronavirus pandemic

Apart from the above-mentioned challenges, in 2020 Coronavirus pandemic was new and immensely different challenge for Georgia, as well as to the whole world, and evolved or increased tendencies in terms of security on this background. Global spread of Novel Coronavirus affected not only countries' healthcare systems, world economy or policy, but also fundamental aspects, such as national security.

Population's social health, product safety, vulnerability to biological terrorism, countries' preparedness for emergency situations and other matters gained more significance, in terms of security.

In this situation, Security Service was engaged in 24/7 mode in state's effort to combat Novel Coronavirus pandemic, in order to limit its influence over security environment. Various divisions of the Service provided Interagency Coordination Council created with the aim to tackle pandemic, with operational, information and analytical support.

In 2020 developments that evolved in connection with the pandemic, created additional space for authoritarian regimes and leaderships to become more active in some directions. Certain states exploited

the situation for gaining influence on international arena and achieving certain geo-political and economic goals. For this very purpose, they actively resorted to disinformation and propaganda tools, encouraged fueling populist, anti-democratic and radical sentiments in society.

At the same time, manipulating fear factor created among people, as well as medical, health safety matters within so-called “soft power” and disseminating various conspiracy theories, myths or conspiracies, became actual.

In parallel to this, difficulties developed in 2020 in terms of pandemic, restrictions connected to emergency situation, socio-economic challenges and discontent originated from them in certain part of population, was effectively applied by various followers of ultra-right ideology or radical groups. Anti-state and in certain cases radical narrative was broadly disseminated, using fake news and fabricated stories created on the basis of deliberately altered facts.

The State Security Service, as a result of investigative activities carried out on the basis of intelligence information, detected certain individuals and groups of individuals who, in order to hinder the functioning of state institutions engaged in management of Novel Coronavirus pandemic, strived to intentionally disseminate fake information through various means of mass-communication and create fear, sense of insecurity and panic among the population. Concerning the mentioned fact investigation into the criminal case has been launched under the article envisaging sabotage.

Disinformation and other threats of “Hybrid Warfare”

“Hybrid threats” directed against Georgia by foreign countries and their special services and applying disinformation, so-called soft power and covert operations in this process have had substantially negative influence on security situation in 2020.

The so-called soft power and covert operations

The so-called soft power policy and attempts towards its implementation remain a significant challenge to the state security. Throughout the reporting period, contacts of the organizations, funds and certain individuals acting abroad and in Georgia, with possible affiliations to special services, have been outlined with social, cultural, expert, charity or business projects.

Notwithstanding restrictions imposed due to the spread of Novel Coronavirus, projects planned and elaborated allegedly by foreign special services within the so-called soft power, were actively implemented. The real objective of various seminars and meetings via online platforms was to spread among the participants the ideology in relation to geopolitical, military, economic, historic and other matters relevant to their own interests. Furthermore, educational projects, including language and exchange courses for the youth have been given a particular focus.

The states seeking to obtain influence over Georgia were periodically striving to confront, incite discord and facilitate radical sentiments in various ethnic, religious or social groups residing in the country.

In 2020, there were active attempts to incite radical views on ethnic and religious grounds among the target groups, and with this objective various matters of daily life were displayed through ethnic and religious lenses, were manipulated and anti-Georgian sentiments were fueled.

In order to exert negative influence over peaceful co-existence, destructive powers were seeking to ideologically influence certain religious and ethnic groups through various socio-economic, cultural, educational or charity activities and trying to distance them from the state.

The State Security Service was constantly controlling the operational situation. On the basis of collecting and analyzing preliminarily obtained information, attempts to implement damaging activities for the country have been suppressed, including in the direction of spreading propaganda and encouraging destructive sentiments among the citizens of Georgia. Relevant counter-measures, including border control mechanisms have been carried out in relation to certain individuals.

During the reporting period, in parallel to anti-western narratives, strengthening of rhetoric against Georgia's neighboring countries – Azerbaijan, Turkey and Armenia, as well as attempts to damage bilateral partnership by doing so, have been outlined. Within the mentioned context, in 2020 special foreign services have actively exploited developments taking place around Mountainous Karabakh.

The Service has identified individuals taking part in such processes, fake social media accounts, particular organizations and mass-media outlets affiliated with them. It has been established that the mentioned actors acted beyond the borders of the country, basically in the Russian Federation, from where discreditation of the image of neighboring countries among the Georgian population was actively carried out.

Furthermore, there have been attempts to transfer a number of matters and processes into the “lens of occupation”, which clearly was aimed at deactualizing aggression directed from Russia towards Georgia, in terms of occupation.

In parallel to the abovementioned, in 2020 in order to aggravate some matters significant to the Georgian population, particular groups exploited patriotic motives and disseminated radical views through populist appeals in relation to ethnic and religious minorities. Moreover, certain part of the mentioned powers was seeking to bring down a rift among various groups of citizens of Georgia.

The State Security Service, during the reporting period, as a result of conducted activities, suppressed such activities aimed at damaging Georgia's interests, avoided possible provocation and implemented de-escalation measures.

In 2020, the Service launched investigation into the fact of discrimination on ethnic and national grounds to incite national rivalry and discord.

Disinformation

During 2020 active attempts to influence both various groups of Georgia's society and important processes were underway, by means of applying covert activities and open disinformation methods against the state interests.

For the purposes of disinformation, in 2020 application of media resources, internet and cyberspace gained even more significance. In the direction of so-called "information warfare" carried out against Georgia, using of new information-technologies, including various online applications, as well as their broad popularization among the population in order to enhance their effectiveness, has been seen as an increasing tendency, in the course of implementation of ideological and propaganda campaigns.

In the context of fighting disinformation, as a "hybrid threat", for Georgia as well as for leading western democracies, close regional and international cooperation, sharing of experience and developing of relevant strategies through the examples of various countries, gain particular relevance. Given the specifics of "hybrid threat" as a hard-to-predictable and multifaceted one, active interagency coordination on national level and permanent studying and analysis have been carried out into the various manifestations of the mentioned threats.

Throughout the reporting year, in order to detect organizations, individuals and groups funded, directed or otherwise supported within the frames of the "hybrid warfare" and to reduce and neutralize threats originating from them, the State Security Service continued to carry out constant monitoring, as well as operational and analytical processing of certain processes, detecting interconnections between various actors, the area of their activities, entrusted tasks and applied instruments.

The Service carried out constant control over the persons who facilitated such activities on the territory of Georgia.

Furthermore, during the reporting period, one of the targets of disinformation and destructive rhetoric was the Service itself. Certain actors have been actively exploiting individuals' family and personal tragedies in an attempt to discredit the State Security Service and its employees.

Deliberate damaging campaign was carried out against the Service, its employees and security sector in general through using groundless, misinterpreted and in frequent cases, fictitious facts.

Absurd and damaging accusations, such as murdering of people, cooperation with foreign special services and spying in favor of them, have been disseminated in relation to the employees of the Service. Fake information on alleged unlawful engagement by the Service in various processes, has been spread.

Fueling distrust in population through such means, towards state institutions and in particular towards the agency responsible for security of the country, definitely constitutes an anti-state goals and apart from the damage created on the current stage, this produces results that are difficult to fix. In this direction, it is necessary to have the legal mechanisms in place for protecting important national security authorities and their representatives.

Cybersecurity

Cyberattacks and cyber-intelligence operations carried out by foreign special services and the actors related to them, represent a part of covert activities implemented against Georgia. The goal of the mentioned is to undermine national security, hinder functioning of state structures of Georgia and various organizations and thus creating tensions and insecurity in the society.

In 2020, on the background of global crisis created in relation to the Novel Coronavirus pandemic, cyber operations managed by the special services of foreign countries acquired differently radical and aggressive nature. Numerous facts of cyberattacks and cyber espionage have been detected against healthcare and scientific institutions of various countries in the world.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning the cyberattack carried out in September 2020, against computer system of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, which led to unlawful appropriation and uploading on one of the foreign web-sites in an available format, of medical documentation, as well as documentation related to the management of pandemic, including significant information from Richard Lugar Public Health Research Center's database.

Alongside the mentioned authentic documentation, deliberately forged documents were uploaded on the web-site as well, which aimed at misleading both international, as well local society with regard to laboratory's activities, damaging Georgia's image and discrediting cooperation with the United State of America.

It is significant, that on the background of pandemic the mentioned attack was preceded by enhanced disinformation campaigns and destructive processes against the agency, including the statements of the occupation forces of the Russian Government and representatives of de-facto regimes.

During the reporting period, the Service had close cooperation with relevant state authorities and elaborated consultative and advisory directives upon their request, as well as provided them support in minimizing negative outcomes stemming from the cyber incidents.

Apart from the abovementioned, during the recent years, numerous cyberattacks have been carried out against critical public information systems, including web-pages and e-systems of Administration of the President of Georgia, the Parliament, various ministries, municipal councils, common courts, as well as media organizations and other institutions have become the targets of the attacks.

Within the frames of cyber operations directed against Georgia, special services of certain countries studied the architecture of critical information systems, in order to discover vulnerable areas. Cyber actors exploited refined and well-camouflaged methods, including so-called fishing, malware codes encrypted by complex algorithms and their control panels, as well as their encrypted network channels and infrastructure existing in foreign so-called hosting-companies.

The mentioned incidents definitely indicate the need to reform information and cybersecurity system in the country, what should imply adoption of legislative regulations responding to new challenges, as well as increasing the capabilities of relevant agencies engaged in the cybersecurity field.

Herewith, it should also be mentioned that the State Security Service, within the current legislation, does not hold clearly defined powers and obligations in the field of providing of information and cyber space security. Correspondingly, reform of the cybersecurity system should be based on best international practice, as well as functions and obligations of the state authorities responsible for this field should be clearly regulated on legislative level.

In this regard, the initiation process of the legislative amendments to the Law of Georgia on Information Security by the Defence and Security Committee of the Parliament of Georgia, is important. Currently, the draft law is being reviewed in the Parliament.

Adoption of the package of the mentioned legislative amendments will ensure timely implementation of essential reforms in the field, and increase the sustainability of the cybersecurity system of the country.

Fight against Terrorism

In 2020, threats originating from terrorism still remained unchanged in the agenda of the contemporary world. Throughout this period, the terrorist organization “Daesh” was able to demonstrate its vitality.

“Al-Qaeda” suffered certain losses, however its local units remained active. “Taliban” still mostly acted on the regional level and it managed to further strengthen its positions.

On the background of restrictions introduced due to the Novel Coronavirus pandemic, opportunity to carry out terrorist attacks in the places of public assembly has considerably decreased, however terrorist and extremist attacks still occurred in various countries worldwide. The basic motive of violence initiated by supporters and groups of far-right ideology was racial, ethnic and religious intolerance again.

During the reporting period, the State Security Service continued its active work in the direction of fight against terrorism, which envisaged, *inter alia*, revealing international terrorist threats, terrorism prevention activities, improving of mechanisms directed against terrorism challenges.

Terrorism threats response mechanisms and capabilities were being developed. With respect to information exchange, close cooperation with international partners continued. Work in relation to identification of places of public assembly, as well as other possible targets and locations with high risks of terrorist attacks was underway, activities aimed at enhancing security on the ground were carried out. The officers of counterterrorism units were constantly enhancing their qualifications.

Georgia’s counterterrorism and counter-extremism efforts were given a positive assessment in the annual Country Reports on Terrorism by the State Department of the United States of America, according to which, the State Security Service as a lead agency handling terrorism-related incidents and investigations, is well equipped and well trained. The document also highlights country’s effective capabilities in the direction of responding, detecting and deterring of terrorism incidents.

Georgia’s counterterrorism activities are given a positive assessment in the EU Annual Report on implementation of Association Agreement, which highlights that Georgia pays due attention to the fight against terrorism and extremism.

According to the Global Terrorism Index annual report published by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), Georgia is still placed in the list of countries with “very low” impact of terrorism. Georgia’s ranking in the respective list has improved by 10 steps in comparison to 2019.

International terrorist organizations and threats originating from them

“Daesh”

During the previous year, “Daesh” managed to maintain its fighting capabilities. The terrorist organization managed to adapt to the new reality conditioned by the global pandemic and proposed pandemic-adjusted narrative to its supporters.

Notwithstanding significant difficulties, “Daesh” has improved its positions in Syria and Iraq where the number of terrorist attacks was increased. Also, the organization continued to mobilize finances. It is

worth noting that international coalition continued to neutralize respective targets of the terrorist organization.

In 2020, family members of fighters of the terrorist organizations, placed in the camps in the north of Syria, remained a significant challenge. There are thousands of people including the citizens of European countries on the ground. During the reporting period, they represented a considerable local threat – they carried out attacks on the ground and in some cases also managed to escape.

During the reporting period, “Daesh”-related group in the North Caucasus was being observed in becoming more active to some extent, however as a result of counterterrorist operations, large part of the group members were liquidated.

In 2020, “Daesh” regional units acting in Africa and local groups connected to them, became considerably active. Their targets were both security forces, as well as peaceful citizens of some countries of the continent.

“Daesh” remains a major actor in international terrorism and a significant challenge for the civilized world. The terrorist organization has thousands of supporters who are present in various countries almost in every continent of the world. In case of receiving respective tasks, they are still capable to carry out terrorist attacks.

“Al-Qaeda”

In 2020, “Al-Qaeda” suffered a considerable loss, which was conditioned by eliminating leaders of various regional units. Nevertheless, the terrorist organization continued to vigorously act in the Middle East and the continent of Africa. The western world still remained to be its target.

Relations considerably aggravated between “Hurra al-Din” which is the Syrian unit of “Al-Qaeda” and acts in the North-West of Syria, and “Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham” which is the Islamist group affiliated with the same terrorist organization in the past. At the same time, the latter was vigorously confronting the ideology of “Al-Qaeda” and stood out for its repressive measures towards the latter’s supporters. As a result of assaults of the international coalition in the mentioned territory of Syria, leaders of “Hurra al-Din” were liquidated.

During the previous year, regional units of “Al-Qaeda” in Africa have become significantly active. Their major targets were international missions operating on the continent and local governmental forces, however the attacks were also carried out against the peaceful civilians. An armed confrontation between “Daesh” and “Al-Qaeda” local groups operating in Africa was observed.

The terrorist organization was actively disseminating various propagandistic materials tailored to the Novel Coronavirus pandemic.

“Al-Qaeda” maintains a position of influential terrorist organization. It should be considered, that apart from being active on regional level, “Al-Qaeda” has the capabilities to carry out terrorist attacks in various countries of the world, including in the European ones, which represent a global terrorist threat.

“Taliban”

In 2020, the number of attacks carried out by “Taliban” in Afghanistan has significantly increased. The major target of the terrorist organization were security forces of the country, however the number of civilians who lost their lives due to “Taliban” terrorist attacks is also high. In certain cases there were confrontations between “Taliban” and “Daesh” unit operating in Afghanistan. There is an assumption, that the terrorist organization maintained contact with “Al-Qaeda”.

“Taliban” still remains a major terrorist organization operating in Afghanistan. Allegedly, it will maintain its capabilities in the future and will cause significant difficulties in the region.

During the last year, there were no attacks carried out by “Taliban” against the Georgian Defense Forces deployed to Afghanistan. However, Georgia still reviews as a major threat the possibility from the mentioned terrorist organization to carry out terrorist attacks towards the units on the ground under the NATO Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan.

Far-right extremism

During the last year, threat emanating from far-right extremism has reached a new - one can say a critical level in the world. Groups following various ideologies in this direction were able to exploit difficulties stemming from the global pandemic in favor of their interests. On the background of the restrictions introduced in order to prevent the spread of Novel Coronavirus, as a result of increased dependency of citizens on Internet, the extremist groups managed to increase the number of their supporters. There have been multiple manifestations of the mentioned challenge worldwide, including attacks against selected targets on racial, ethnic, religious and other grounds.

It is worth mentioning that in 2020 global spread of the Novel Coronavirus has revealed particular vulnerability of the world to challenges with regard to bioterrorism. Various terrorist and extremist groups have spread appeals and instructions on applying Novel Coronavirus as a biological weapon.

Taking into consideration the mentioned international trends, the State Security Service has been constantly assessing and analyzing challenges, detecting possible threats and carrying out relevant preventive measures in this direction.

Terrorist threats and challenges facing Georgia

Threats and challenges facing Georgia emanating from terrorist organizations:

- Attempted entry into the territory of the country of citizens of Georgia fighting in the ranks of “Daesh” and “Al-Qaeda”;
- Attempted crossing of the border of Georgia including for transit purposes by foreign terrorist fighters, individuals affiliated to terrorist activities;
- Attempted recruitment of citizens by the terrorist organizations in Georgia;
- Possible financing or other assistance of international terrorist activities;
- Possible attempt to carry out terrorist attack in Georgia by alleged supporters of the terrorist organizations.

Possible return of citizens of Georgia fighting in Syria and Iraq in the course of combat activities in the ranks of “Daesh” and “Al-Qaeda”

For Georgia, as well as for other countries in the world, return of alleged supporters of the terrorist organization who are in Syria and Iraq, and/or fighters in their ranks, as well as their family members, in the country remains a problematic issue.

In Syrian Arab Republic allegedly there are 15 citizens of Georgia who took part in combat activities during various times, and their family members.

In 2020, within the frames of ongoing investigation into the cases under the State Security Service, the work continued in order to obtain additional evidences against individuals who are staying in the zone of combat activities and are engaged in the terrorist activities.

During the reporting period, one of the leaders of “Daesh”, a citizen of Georgia - **Tsezar Tokhosashvili** was detained in Ukraine and was extradited. **Tokhosashvili** was sentenced by the court of Georgia to 10 years of imprisonment for the membership of terrorist organization.

The issue of return of the family members of the citizens of Georgia fighting in the ranks of terrorist organization is considered, taking into account the best international experience.

Attempted entry of foreign terrorist fighters, individuals related to terrorist activities and/or use of the country's territory for transit purposes

Attempted entry in Georgia and/or use of the country's territory for transit purposes by foreign terrorist fighters, as well as individuals otherwise related to the terrorist activities represents another challenge for Georgia.

The large part of individuals acting in the conflict zone, managed to leave the territory of Syria and Iraq from where they attempted to enter various countries through the transit via certain states. During the reporting period, through coordination of the State Security Service, the possibilities of entry into Georgia by the mentioned individuals using the similar routes were still restricted, possible channels and corridors that could be used for the mentioned purpose were constantly controlled, and also the counterterrorism screening was enhanced at the state border.

In accordance with the international commitments undertaken in terms of fight against international terrorism, the State Security Service has been actively working in the direction of implementation of relevant UN Security Council Resolutions related to terrorism.

It is worth noting that within the frames of activities carried out in the direction of implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions, the State Security Service has submitted the information on two citizens of Georgia to the Working Group of the Government Commission on Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions.

Attempted recruitment by terrorist organizations of individuals staying in Georgia

Amidst the pandemic, in parallel to growing dependency of the citizens on the Internet, vulnerability of people towards terrorist and extremist narrative has been increased significantly. During the reporting period, the State Security Service has been actively monitoring the radical content in the cyber space, some of the identified facts of dissemination were followed by respective response.

Terrorist ideology dissemination hubs have not been detected in Georgia.

Also, similarly to recent years, in 2020 not a single fact of travel of the citizens of Georgia to Syria and Iraq has been detected.

Possible financing of terrorist activities or providing of other assistance

During the reporting period, the State Security Service continued to carry out relevant measures in order to suppress financing and providing other support to international terrorist organizations. Respective

operational and investigative activities, as well as monitoring of financial operations/transactions possibly related to terrorism, were carried out. In certain cases, complex examination of various operations has become necessary. Furthermore, modern, most recent methods and tendencies of terrorism financing were studied. As a result of close cooperation with relevant state authorities and partner countries, in 2020, no facts of financial support to terrorism in Georgia or from Georgia were detected.

Georgia's effort in fight against terrorism financing has been positively assessed by Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL). According to the Report, Georgia has effective system for identifying and responding to terrorism financing.

Possible attempt to carry out terrorist attack in Georgia by alleged supporters of the terrorist organizations

As a result of active work carried out by the State Security Service a number of possible supporters of terrorism has reduced substantially in Georgia while their capabilities have been cut down to minimum. In particular, they have not been given the opportunity to form a structured network, as well as to prepare and accomplish terrorist activities. During the reporting period, terrorist attacks were not carried out in Georgia.

The Service continued to carry out operational control of persons loyal to ideology of terrorist organizations, their supporters and individuals implementing the propaganda. During the reporting period, several foreigners who were possible supporters of terrorist ideology had to leave the territory of Georgia as a result of activities carried out in coordination with relevant authorities.

It is significant that Georgia is not a favorable location for the activities of terrorism supporters. As a result of activities carried out by the State Security Service and other relevant authorities, their range of activity, opportunities to seek financing and supporters, are restricted to minimum.

During the reporting period, situation in the occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region, un-controlled by the Central Government, still created a favorable environment for the terrorist activities.

Criminal cases

During 2020, the State Security Service of Georgia continued to investigate the crimes envisaged by the Chapter on Terrorism of the Criminal Code of Georgia. Investigative activities were carried out into the newly established facts of crime, as well as the cases launched in previous years.

The Counterterrorism Center of the Service launched investigation into 9 cases. The court passed guilty verdicts on 3 cases. Intensive investigative activities are ongoing into the rest of the cases.

National Strategy of Georgia on Fight against Terrorism

During the reporting period, relevant activities envisaged by the Action Plan of 2019-2021 of the National Strategy on Fight against Terrorism were carried out by the state authorities of Georgia, while active cooperation was ongoing with the civil sector.

The composition of the Permanent Interagency Commission on Elaboration and Monitoring of Implementation of the National Strategy on Fight against Terrorism and its Relevant Action Plan has been amended. The leaders of the respective authorities have been defined as the members of the Commission which resulted in increasing of the legitimacy of the mentioned Commission.

Fight against Corruption

One of the important directions of the activities of the State Security Service is fight against corruption and carrying out measures conducive to its prevention. In order to prevent, detect and suppress corruption crimes, the Anti-Corruption Agency of the State Security Service continued to carry out operative-investigative, investigative, analytical and preventive activities during the reporting period.

The existence of corruption in public authorities damages the interests of the state in many ways and poses risk to the national security. Civil servants involved in malfeasance and corruption crimes might become vulnerable to foreign special services and / or be the subject of interest to various criminal groups or individuals.

Corruption significantly hinders democratic processes, hampers the effective functioning of public authorities, inflicts damage on the activities of the private sector and the economic progress of the country. It considerably affects social and material well-being of society, reduces citizens' trust towards state authorities and systems.

In order to eradicate corruption and ensure national security, during the reporting period, the efforts of the Service were focused on ensuring of the implementation of prevention-based measures and early detection and suppression of facts of corruption.

Hence, one of the main priorities was to strengthen effective and proactive anti-corruption mechanisms and to establish a solid institutional framework in this regard. In 2020, the process of further development of the Corruption Prevention Unit created within the Anti-Corruption Agency and staffing it with professional employees was ongoing.

In 2020, the mentioned Unit took significant steps to facilitate public participation. Domestic and international mechanisms of citizens' appeals on possible corruption offences committed by public servants and ways to respond to them, as well as challenges existing in this regard have been analyzed. Work to introduce new approaches of communication with public was ongoing. Considerable attention was paid to taking into account the best international practices and the experience of partner countries in this process.

Furthermore, during the reporting period, the State Security Service, as one of the agencies responsible for the implementation of the Action Plan of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy of Georgia for 2019-2020, was actively involved in the work of the Anti-Corruption Interagency Coordination Council .

In order to pursue an effective preventive anti-corruption policy, the Anti-Corruption Agency of the Service defined as a priority organizing of awareness-raising activities on corruption issues for vulnerable groups and sectors, including state and local self-government bodies. Relevant subject matter has been prepared in this direction, target audience has been defined and organization of awareness-raising activities in the course of 2021 have been planned in cooperation with international partners.

As a result of the activities carried out by the State Security Service to prevent corruption, the citizens' participation in the fight against corruption crimes has significantly increased. In 2020, the Anti-Corruption Agency received 55 notifications on possible offences from citizens. Out of this, as a result of active communication with the citizens, criminal investigations were launched on the basis of 12 notifications, 12 of them are being examined, 23 notifications were forwarded to other authorities taking into consideration the scope of competence, while 8 applications did not contain elements of crime.

Criminal cases

As a result of operative-searching and investigative activities, a number of officials and public servants were detained and charged in 2020. Among them, the current mayor of a municipality and chairperson of the city council have been detained on the fact of bribe taking, who had demanded a large amount of money from the entrepreneur as a bribe, a certain part of which was taken in advance.

In addition, the former head of administration of the Non-Profit Legal Entity - Municipal Services Development Agency of Tbilisi City Hall was detained on the facts of unlawful appropriation of another person's property in large quantities, assistance in unlawful appropriation and fraud committed in large quantities by using the official position. The chairman of the mentioned Agency and his deputy were also charged.

The head of the unit of the service of economy and property management of Ninotsminda Municipality was detained for bribe taking in large quantities. In cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs,

border patrol-inspector of the Patrol Police Department was charged for bribe taking and illegal transfer of a migrant across the state border of Georgia committed by an organized group.

The representative of the Mayor of Gardabani Municipality was also detained for bribe-taking in large quantities, who took GEL 30,000 as a bribe from the citizens of Turkey for transferring a state-owned land for use and providing official patronage.

The employee of Kakheti Regional Division of the Department of Environmental Supervision of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia was charged for abusing official powers, who facilitated the illegal extraction of minerals by persons associated with him/her and thus generating large quantities of income.

Furthermore, the head of the Land Management Service of the Division of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Autonomous Republic of Adjara, was detained for bribe taking in large quantities and assistance in bribe-taking, while one of the employees of the LEPL National Forestry Agency was detained on the fact of bribe-taking by a group with prior agreement.

During the reporting period, as a result of relevant activities carried out by the Service, the employees of the Anti-Corruption Agency detained citizens of the Islamic Republic of Iran residing in Georgia on the fact of illegal entrepreneurial activities, who, as a result of illicit cash transactions and conversion-transfers of funds, had earned income in especially large quantities.

In 2020, fact of attempt of fraud committed in large quantities by a group was detected, when a group of citizens, in exchange for assistance in purchasing a plot of land through an auction and obtaining a relevant construction permit, requested USD 350,000 from a foreign investor interested in constructing a hotel in Kobuleti. While carrying out the mentioned illegal activities, the members of the criminal group acted illegally on behalf of the Minister of Finance and Economy of Autonomous Republic of Adjara and fraudulently promised the investor to provide official patronage.

In 2020, the Anti-Corruption Agency of the State Security Service launched investigation into 66 criminal cases, and 72 individuals were charged, including on the facts of bribe-taking and/or aid in bribe-taking, abuse of official powers, neglect of official duty, fraud in large quantities, misappropriation-embezzlement, illegal entrepreneurial activities and etc.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Anti-Corruption Agency of the Service carried out complex anti-corruption measures effectively, the Novel Coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on the conduction of investigative activities.

Development of Legal Framework and Relationship with Courts

In order to ensure proper functioning of the Service and full implementation of its activities envisaged by the legislation, due attention is paid to the development of the legal framework and elaboration of relevant normative acts.

In 2020, up to 170 new legal acts were prepared and issued by the State Security Service. While the Service has stated its position within its competence on more than 200 draft acts elaborated by various state agencies.

In the direction of elaboration of classified normative acts, the Service, in accordance to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament, has proactively sent the relevant classified normative acts issued by the Head of the Service to the Trust Group for review.

During the reporting period, a number of internal regulations were elaborated and / or enhanced, including an updated procedure and methods for pre-employment tests for the applicants were approved. In relation to the Novel Coronavirus pandemic, specific obligations have been defined for the staff and instructions have been issued in connection to the transition of the State Security Service to a special mode of operation.

In addition, the Code of Ethics for the Employees of the Service has been amended, which has fully reflected the recommendations provided by the Interagency Commission for ensuring free and fair elections.

Within the scope of structural reforms, the Training Center of the State Security Service of Georgia has been created having the status of a new Legal Entity of Public Law, and respective regulatory framework has been prepared.

In order to protect the rights of the individuals placed in the Temporary Detention Isolator operating at the Service, relevant normative acts have been amended, including medical protocols with higher standards for detection of torture and ill-treatment have been adopted. Also, procedures for the administering of a unified electronic database have been defined and periods for retaining of video surveillance records have been changed, what provides relevant supervisory institutions with more effective opportunities for identifying possible facts of ill-treatment committed towards individuals placed in the Isolator.

During the reporting period, the Order of the Head of the Service on Establishing the Sub-Registry of the Classified Information of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) at the State Security Service of Georgia was adopted, which ensures the security of NATO classified information. The persons responsible for the mentioned activities have also been defined.

Within the control assignments by the Administration of the Government of Georgia, in 2020 the Service conducted smooth delivery of the relevant information on the progress of measures to be implemented under the transitional regulations of the legal acts of the Government.

Furthermore, during the reporting period, with the active participation of the Service, within the framework of the activities of the Governmental Commission on Migration Issues, multiple new regulations aiming at improving migration management systems and related security issues have been elaborated.

At the same time, the activities of the State Security Service in terms of relations with the common courts of Georgia during the reporting period, are noteworthy.

Based on the relevant ruling, the Service provided the common courts with both classified and non-classified information / evidences (in total, 1108 information / evidences) required for the consideration of cases, without hindrance. In addition, more than 600 documents submitted by the courts, were processed.

In 2020, the State Security Service had more than 30 civil and administrative court cases, out of which 14 cases were completed in various instances. In each case, the court considered the position of the Service as well-founded, which was reflected in the relevant decisions.

In regard to relationship with the courts, facilitating the investigation of the case considered under the International Criminal Court is also worth noting. The Service conducted declassification of number of documents (evidences), *inter alia* submission of the materials related to the incidents of the Russia-Georgia war via the Ministry of Justice of Georgia.

Protection of Personal Data, Oversight, Accessibility of Public Information

Protection of personal data

The competence of the LEPL – Operative-Technical Agency of Georgia includes carrying out covert investigative activities and electronic surveillance measures on the territory of the country in compliance with the legislation.

In the course of exercising these powers, the protection of human rights and freedoms, including protection of personal data and privacy, is crucial.

In accordance with the requirements envisaged by the legislation, the State Inspector and several public institutions carry out oversight of the activities of the LEPL - Operative-Technical Agency. Oversight by the Parliament, the Prime-Minister, Judiciary, the Prosecutor's Office and State Audit is carried out among others.

During the reporting year, the Agency ensured unhampered provision of the information to the State Inspector requested in compliance with the legislation and all conditions necessary for effective implementation of Inspector's powers were provided.

During 2020, in total 1774 court rulings were submitted by authorized investigative bodies at the LEPL – Operative-Technical Agency, on the implementation of covert investigative activities and 205 motivated motions of the prosecutor on conducting the covert investigative actions as a matter of urgency.

The State Inspector carries out oversight of the mentioned activities of the Agency through the special electronic systems of control which allows him / her to conduct real time monitoring of the covert

investigative actions of telephone tapping and their compliance with the legislation. This is a rare and unique opportunity to carry out control in real time.

The LEPL – Operative-Technical Agency of the State Security Service prepared an annual report on performed activities, covering the period from January 1, 2020 to January 1, 2021, for submission to the Prime Minister of Georgia and the Parliamentary Trust Group.

The Service has paid special attention to the analysis of the best practices with regard to the protection of human rights and personal data, studying recommendations of international organizations and introducing appropriate approaches.

Oversight

During the reporting period, the State Security Service, within the framework of accountability defined by the legislation, has submitted various reports and information on conducted, as well as planned activities in the direction of security, to the Government and the Parliament of Georgia in a proactive manner as well as in compliance with the request.

Internal control mechanisms have been actively applied. The efforts of the State Security Service in the direction of improving of the functioning of the Temporary Detention Isolator, including in terms of advancing its regulatory framework should be highlighted. During the reporting period, high standards of medical service have been ensured, as well as preventive measures related to the Novel Coronavirus pandemic with regard to the individuals placed in the Isolator have been taken into consideration.

As a result of internal monitoring, no facts of torture, inhuman, cruel or degrading treatment (ill-treatment) committed by employees of the Isolator towards the individuals placed therein have been observed, also no complaints have been submitted by detainees on any deficiencies and / or violations.

Furthermore, as a result of interim monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plan 2019-2020 on Combating Torture, Inhuman, Cruel or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and respective recommendation, in 2020, the Service started administering statistics on public and private lawyers' visits in relation to the individuals placed in the Isolator.

Proper fulfilment of the requirements of the legislation of Georgia, the basic principles and rules of conduct established by the Code of Ethics of the Employees, disciplinary norms and official duties, have been ensured within the system of the Service. The Service has continued to actively apply the internal control mechanisms over the activities of its employees and in accordance with the rules established by the legislation of Georgia, the General Inspection of the Service has systematically exercised control over employees' activities.

In 2020, as a result of the official inspection carried out by the General Inspection of the Service, the facts of disciplinary misconduct committed by employees were detected, to which an appropriate response was ensured. In particular, based on the findings of the General Inspection of the Service, 75 disciplinary sanctions were imposed on the employees, including 10 dismissals, 15 strict reprimands, 20 reprimands, 18 warnings and other measures of disciplinary responsibility. Until the final decision is

made on the case, one employee was temporarily dismissed from the moment he was found accused in a criminal case.

In 2020, the General Inspection of the Service launched investigation into 7 criminal cases, in 2 cases guilty verdicts were issued against 3 individuals, while 1 individual was brought to justice.

Accessibility of public information

One of the priority directions of the State Security Service is public relations and increasing its efficiency. Informing and communicating with the public on issues of national interests and security challenges represent a necessary precondition for raising public awareness. During the reporting period, through the official website of the Service (ssg.gov.ge) and other channels of communication, the public was constantly informed on current developments or conducted measures and their consequences.

At the same time, during the reporting year, the Service has ensured in due course the provision of public information, requested in compliance with the legislation. From January 1, 2020 till December 31, 2020, the Service has received 65 requests for public information, 62 of them have been satisfied, while 3 requests have been sent for further response to other public agency, according to the scope of competence. The information received through the hotline ("123") was given due response on systematical basis. The information submitted via the electronic platform of the Service (info.ssg.gov.ge) was also processed. Overall, 431 electronic requests have been responded. The Service has responded to more than 2700 correspondences received from citizens, different agencies and organizations, including the Public Defender.

On December 10, 2020 the Service submitted to the President of Georgia, the Government and the Parliament a relevant report on providing of public information, in accordance with requirements of the legislation. The mentioned report was also sent to the LEPL – Legislative Herald of Georgia.

International Cooperation and Interagency Coordination

International cooperation

In the light of current global developments, close and effective cooperation with strategic partners and friendly states, regional and international organizations is of crucial importance in the course of ensuring national security. In 2020, multiple significant activities have been conducted by the Service both in bilateral and multilateral formats to strengthen partnership.

During the reporting period, the Service continued successful cooperation with attachés of various countries accredited in Georgia and other representatives of the diplomatic corps. Expert and high-level meetings for the development of bilateral cooperation were held with representatives of relevant agencies of Georgia's strategic allies, as well as with high-ranking officials of the international organizations.

Within the framework of cooperation, the leadership of the Service has been systematically providing the partners with information on the security environment in Georgia and the ongoing processes in the occupied territories, also, in parallel with the developments unfolded in Nagorno-Karabakh, on the possible emerging threats and challenges outlined in terms of security of Georgia and the region. In this regard, the meetings held in 2020 with the heads of diplomatic missions of the United States of America, Great Britain, EU member states, other countries as well as the NATO Liaison Office are noteworthy.

In terms of prevention, detection and suppression-neutralization of existing and expected threats and challenges, exchange of information with international partners in a timely and secure manner and developing of appropriate communication tools and legal mechanisms is of crucial importance. The Service intensified its active work on the international level in this regard, during the reporting period. Through the efforts of the Service, the number of countries with which international agreements on the exchange and mutual protection of classified information are concluded, has expanded.

In 2020, upon an initiative of the State Security Service, the Memorandum of Understanding on interagency cooperation with the French Republic, as well as Implementing Arrangement pursuant to Article 12 of the Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on Security Procedures for Exchanging and Protecting Classified Information, were signed and entered into force.

During the reporting period, the relevant procedures for the entry into force of the Agreement and Protocol on the exchange and mutual protection of classified information with Cyprus and Spain, were completed.

Overall, similar international agreements on the exchange of information are concluded with the EU and 24 countries (most of them are the NATO and EU member states), while draft agreements have been initiated with other partner countries in 2020 and active consultations are underway.

Active participation of the Service in various international formats and the activities of analytical centers in the field of security, as well as in the process of elaboration of international documents, where the Service is properly reflecting / considering the issues of state security, should be emphasized.

In 2020, from the legal and security perspective, the Service analyzed and provided response on more than 50 draft international agreements, including in the fields of fight against crime, law-enforcement cooperation, exchange and mutual protection of classified information, defense, as well as migration, air traffic, and in other areas.

On the basis of strategic partnership between the United States of America and Georgia, the State Security Service conducts cooperation on wide range of security matters, with the relevant agencies of the US Government, as well as the US Embassy in Georgia. In 2020, cooperation and close coordination was underway with the strategic ally in various formats. Taking into account the specific nature of the Service's activities, active work continued in terms of exchange of operational and analytical information, identification of existing risks and threats in Georgia and in the region, as well as in terms of sharing information on the mentioned matters.

In addition, various projects, trainings, training programs and technical assistance for equipment of certain divisions of the Service, conducted with the support of American partners should be underlined. Within the framework of cooperation, dozens of representatives of the Service have been

trained/retrained in various matters which fall under the competence of the Service, including in fight against corruption, terrorism, CBRN threats, cybersecurity and other fields. With the US support, the employees of the Service have been engaged in long-term master programs in the field of security and defense, as well as participated in the trainings, seminars and re-training courses organized by George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Budapest, the FBI Academy, and the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies.

In the scope of cooperation with NATO, during the reporting period, the State Security Service actively participated in the activities carried out within the framework of Annual National Program (ANP) and Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP). In 2020, in order to further deepen cooperation on security matters, the Service held a meeting with members of the NATO delegation visiting Georgia.

In 2020, representatives of the Service participated in events on various matters within the framework of the NATO Partnership Cooperation Menu (PCM). In addition, with the support of the NATO-Georgia Professional Development Programme (PDP), training was provided to State Security Service employees on sharing best practices of NATO member countries on disinformation and propaganda issues and countering hybrid threats.

During the reporting period, significant steps were taken to deepen cooperation in the direction of law enforcement and security fields with the European Union. Multiple high-level meetings were held with representatives of the EU and EU member states.

Respective divisions of the Service, in accordance to their competence, were actively involved in the process of implementation of National Action Plan for the implementation of the Association Agreement and Association Agenda, as well as in preparation of relevant documents and reports. The Service also participated in the meeting of the Sub-Committee on Justice, Freedom and Security under the Association Agreement framework and in the 6th meeting of the EU-Georgia Association Committee. The involvement of the Service in the implementation of the Visa Liberalization Action Plan between Georgia and the European Union is also noteworthy.

At the same time, the State Security Service continued to cooperate successfully with the EU CBRN Risk Mitigation CoE Initiative. Since January 2020, the Regional Secretariat for South East and Eastern Europe of the mentioned initiative is directly hosted by the Service.

The European Union has positively assessed Georgia's efforts in the field of CBRN security cooperation, in the annual 2020 Report on Implementation of Association Agreement.

During the reporting period, the Service was one of the initiators and co-authors of the Georgia-Ukraine-Moldova trilateral project, which aims to deepen cooperation between the countries of the Black Sea region in the field of nuclear and radiation security. Within the project framework the partner of the Service is the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), while the financial support is provided by the governments of the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Norway.

During the reporting period, the Service was systematically providing and sharing with the international community information and experience on counter-terrorism activities, anti-corruption measures and activities directed at non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In fight against international terrorism, the State Security Service continued its active engagement in bilateral and multilateral cooperation formats. In 2020, the representatives of the Service participated in various regional and international conferences and events on counter-terrorism issues, under the auspices of the United Nations, the European Union, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and other international organizations. In this regard, the Global (Virtual) Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of the United Nations Member States ("Strategic and Practical Challenges of Countering Terrorism in a Global Pandemic Environment"), OSCE-wide (Virtual) Counter-Terrorism Conference on Terrorism, Violent Extremism and Radicalization ("Effective Partnerships against Terrorism and Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism"), as well as the meetings of the Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism (CDCT) are worth mentioning.

Furthermore, in terms of cooperation with the EU and the Council of Europe, the State Security Service was actively involved in the activities under the joint project of these organizations - "Enhancing the Systems of Prevention and Combating Corruption, Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing in Georgia". In 2020, a two-day seminar on corruption prevention in public sector was held and jointly organized by the Service and the Council of Europe Office in Georgia.

During the reporting period, in the process of preparing relevant report on Georgia, the Service actively cooperated with the evaluation mission of the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (Moneyval).

Moneyval Committee has positively assessed the efforts of the State Security Service of Georgia in combating terrorism financing. According to the Report, Georgia has reached a "substantial" level of efficiency in the investigation and prosecution of terrorism financing.

With regard to fight against international terrorism, the State Security Service is involved in multilateral cooperation formats, including in the activities held within the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS/Daesh. In 2020, the Service effectively applied the cooperation resources and opportunities with Interpol, both in terms of information exchange, as well as sharing of experience.

Documents issued by international organizations on matters falling within the competence of the State Security Service, including the UN Resolutions, relevant OSCE and Council of Europe documents, were implemented in due course. In addition, within the framework of the obligations under various international agreements as well as multilateral conventions, a number of reports were prepared during the reporting year on the directions and relevant activities falling under the competence of the Service.

During the reporting period, the participation of the Service leadership in the Georgia's Cyber Security Forum was important, during which Service's vision and approaches on developing cybersecurity system, eliminating legislative gaps, reducing cyber threats and increasing preparedness capabilities, have been shared with the international partners and state authorities.

Interagency cooperation and coordination

In the process of preventing and responding to the threats facing the country, mutually agreed activities and coordinated measures with respective state authorities are often of a crucial importance. Effective interagency cooperation on national level is significant for the Service in order to ensure successful implementation of its activities envisaged under the legislation.

Close cooperation of the State Security Service of Georgia with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Finance, the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia, the Georgian Intelligence Service, the Special State Protection Service of Georgia as well as other state structures, is worth mentioning during reporting period. Mechanisms for exchanging information with these agencies have been enhanced and coordination with them has been further strengthened.

The Service has been continuously conducting operational and analytical processing of information obtained from open and covert sources, and ensured proper briefing of senior government officials on expected threats, risks and challenges as well as provided relevant recommendations, including within the framework of National Security Council of Georgia.

The State Security Service has been actively involved in the work of various interagency commissions and councils, including in the activities of the Interagency Coordinating Council for Combating Organized Crime, the Anti-Corruption Council, State Commission on Migration Issues, the Joint Maritime Operations Center, the Inter-agency Council on Elaboration of Foreign Policy Strategy and Action Plan, the Interagency Commission to search for and transfer the bodies of persons missing after armed conflicts, as well as in the NATO and EU integration commissions of Georgia, the Government Commission on Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions, and other interagency mechanisms.

The Service is also represented in the Interagency Standing Commission on Coordination of the Development of National-level Conceptual Documents and has been actively involved in the development and implementation of national strategic documents and their respective action plans. During the reporting period, in accordance with the tasks and responsibilities of the Service, a number of reports on the implementation of the activities provided for in the strategic documents and action plans were prepared.

Within the framework of the work of the Permanent Interagency Commission on Elaboration and Monitoring of Implementation of the National Strategy on Fight against Terrorism and its Relevant Action Plan, the Service as the Chair of the Commission organized the fourth sitting of the Commission in 2020. During the mentioned meeting, 2020 implementation report of the Strategy and its Action Plan on the achieved result and current challenges was presented. The members of the Commission positively assessed the second year of the implementation process of the Strategy and its Action Plan. Under the auspices of the Service, as a result of active communication with the civil sector, a number of awareness-raising activities on fight against terrorism and extremism have been held for the members of the working group established within the frame of the Commission (representatives of the participating agencies of the Commission) including those with the participation of foreign experts.

At the same time, during the reporting period, through active coordination of the State Security Service, as a Chair agency of the Interagency Coordinating Council for Combating Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Threats, National Strategy of 2021-2030 on CBRN Threat Reduction has been prepared and submitted to the Government of Georgia for approval. Furthermore, within the frames of the work of the mentioned Council and with the support of the Service, various state agencies have been involved in a number of significant projects and trainings aimed at improving national response capabilities to CBRN threats, and increasing efficiency of joint operations and incident management.

In order to effectively plan countermeasures and take into consideration other goals of ensuring security, it is important to raise awareness towards certain threats in state agencies and to hold information meetings for this very purpose. During the reporting period, the Service was constantly providing information on security issues to the relevant state agencies and their representatives.

Despite the situation created due to the pandemic, a number of interagency working group meetings were held, joint activities were conducted, including, trainings and various subject matter meetings (mainly in a virtual format). In 2020, the Service held an information meeting with the Command and Staff College of the National Defense Academy, during which, along with various security issues, the participants were presented with the information on the directions of protection of state secrets.

The active involvement of the civil sector, academia and experts in the implementation of security policy is also a priority for the Service.

During the reporting period, certain steps were taken to establish partnership relations and further deepen communication with non-governmental organizations and experts working on security matters.

In this regard, the thematic meeting held in 2020, during which the participants discussed the ongoing military confrontation between Azerbaijan and Armenia and its impact on the security of Georgia and the region, is worth mentioning. The meeting was attended by up to 30 experts and representatives from the non-governmental sector.

Sustainability and Institutional Development

Adequate intellectual resources, infrastructure and material-technical base are extremely important for the sustainability and effective institutional development of the Service.

In this direction, during the reporting period, the Service continued to implement significant measures and reforms, including structural, organizational and legal changes.

Human Resources and professional development

Maintaining highly qualified and experienced personnel, creating career advancement opportunities for them and providing maximum support for the realization of personnel potential occupy a special place among the priorities of the HR policy of the State Security Service.

For this purpose, during the reporting period, the Service continued to encourage and motivate its personnel in accordance with the legislation, including by considering the fact that often the activities of its employees are associated with certain risks and danger. In 2020, the State Security Service encouraged up to 300 employees in various forms.

With regard to realization of the labor rights, the Service strictly adheres to the principles of non-discrimination and equality in terms of nationality, ethnicity, religion or gender. Equal employment opportunities and high standard working conditions have been created by the Service, including employees have been provided with a proper social package.

In 2020, the State Security Service has been actively refining and improving the existing mechanisms and procedures in the field of human resource management. In order to attract, develop and maintain competitive and highly qualified human resources, during the reporting period a new system of selection, evaluation and training of employees was introduced based on the best international practice.

Due to the specifics of activities of the Service, a system of testing of candidates (including test assignments) was substantially redesigned, on the basis of which it became possible to assess the candidates' analytical and logical thinking skills, to determine compliance with the requirements for candidate's professional competence and qualification for a specific position (staff position).

In addition to the special disciplines, the Service attached substantial importance to the development of the analytical capabilities of the units. In 2020, the analytical team of the Service was involved in a number of training courses, meetings or conferences. In order to thoroughly analyze the threats facing the country and the region, as well as new trends and challenges, during the reporting period, the State Security Service paid special attention to cooperation with international and non-governmental organizations, academia and experts in analytical direction. The analysts of the Service have held a number of meetings with certain representatives of strategic partners, local and foreign experts, to share views and reconcile positions.

At the same time, in 2020, training courses and retraining programs (held in virtual format), supported by international partners, had particular importance in terms of sharing best practices and current security trends. In this regard, the support of the US, European countries, the European Union and the NATO should be highlighted.

The Training Center

In the process of HR management, the State Security Service attaches great importance to the continuous professional development of employees and the proper training of future personnel. For this purpose, in 2020, the Training Center was created as a legal entity of public law within the system of the State Security Service.

During the reporting period, intensive work was carrying out to ensure the functioning of the new structural unit, the infrastructure of the Training Center was arranged for both theoretical and practical training.

In order to share experiences in the field of educational activities and introduction of future plans of the Center, meetings with both educational institutions of state authorities of Georgia, as well as with international partners were held. Special programs and training materials of the Training Center have been elaborated and a catalog of continuous professional training for 2021-2022 has been prepared. A library which is in compliance with modern standards has been established which includes various foreign and Georgian literature on security issues.

In addition, the Training Center is being actively staffed with personnel and instructors are selected from both local and international experts, as well as through using professional resources of current and former employees of the Service.

Based on the experience of the leading countries, training programs for candidates and special training programs for current employees have been developed. Passing the training program of candidates is mandatory for all candidates. This program, on the one hand, makes it possible to assess the professional skills and personal qualities of candidates, and on the other hand, provides them with training in special disciplines and ensures their adjustment to the work.

In addition, all beginner employees are required to undergo a special training program for current employees. Under this program, beginner employees master a wide range of key competencies and acquire the basic professional knowledge and skills necessary for a security officer through special disciplines, which can only be acquired at the Training Center of the Service.

Material-technical and financial resources

Relevant infrastructural and material-technical resources, their periodic updates and improvements in compliance with modern standards are important for the effective functioning and institutional sustainability of the Service. Respective structural units of the Service have continuously ensured the aforementioned.

Within the budgetary funds of 2020, the Economic Department of the Service concluded 390 contracts with total value of GEL 20 732 487. In the reporting period, 4 contracts on different construction-repair activities were signed with respective companies, with total value of implemented work amounting to GEL 722 383.

Within the budgetary funds of 2020, 179 tenders were announced, while out of conducted tenders - 144 contracts were concluded. According to the contracts signed as a result of electronic tenders, the savings amounted to GEL 228 383.