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# Is Georgia distancing itself from Moscow by complying with Western sanctions?



Georgian law enforcement agencies, in cooperation with the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), have disrupted a supply channel for aviation components to the Russian Federation that are subject to international sanctions.

Media outlets reported that, at the request of the FBI, a **Russian citizen** was detained in Tbilisi on suspicion of carrying out illegal transactions involving dual-use goods, including aviation components covered by sanctions.

The detention took place amid increased international oversight of compliance with sanctions regimes and intensified efforts to combat sanctions evasion schemes.

According to Georgian law enforcement authorities, the detained individual had been placed on an international wanted list through Interpol following a request from the US side.

This case demonstrates Tbilisi's efforts to reaffirm its commitment to international export control rules and to avoid accusations of facilitating the circumvention of sanctions against Moscow.

For the Georgian authorities, compliance with the sanctions regime is becoming increasingly important because of the risk of secondary restrictions from the United States and the European Union, which could have negative consequences for the country's economic stability.

The operation to detain the Russian citizen also has a broader geopolitical dimension.

Against the backdrop of Moscow's gradually declining influence in the Caucasus, Georgia seeks to demonstrate its ability to make independent decisions based on its own national interests and international obligations.

## Strategy for the advancement of US–Georgian relations

The actions of Georgian law enforcement agencies may be seen as signalling to international partners Tbilisi's readiness to cooperate in countering transnational crime and illegal mechanisms for circumventing sanctions.

At the same time, the **United States** adopted a legislative initiative aimed at countering the growing influence of the Communist Party of China, Iran and the Russian Federation in Georgia.

The document provides for an assessment of the activities of foreign intelligence structures in the country, as well as the preparation of a relevant report involving the US Department of State, intelligence agencies, and the US Department of Defense.

### Another key element is the development of a five-year strategy for advancing US–Georgian relations

Another key element of the document is the development of a five-year strategy for advancing US–Georgian relations, intended to identify priority areas of cooperation, levels of support, and prospects for strengthening economic, political, and security ties between Washington and Tbilisi.

In a broader context, this initiative is seen as a tool for assessing Georgia's foreign policy direction and its willingness to strengthen partnerships with Western states.

It is designed to analyse the scale of foreign influence and to develop mechanisms to counter attempts by Russia and China to expand their presence in the region.

## Countering hybrid threats

For Tbilisi, this document may become a test of the consistency of its foreign policy.

Deepening cooperation with the United States

creates opportunities to strengthen economic resilience, develop defence capabilities, and further integrate Georgia into European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

Georgia is lagging behind on this path; its **EU accession process** is practically frozen, but a certain degree of dialogue with Brussels remains open.

In this context, cooperation with the United States and other Western partners is seen as one of the mechanisms for strengthening sovereignty and countering hybrid threats.

### Georgian law enforcement agencies have intensified efforts to counter the activities of structures that may be linked to the spread of foreign information influence

The combination of recent developments – from investigations into the supply of sanctioned goods to legislative initiatives in the United States – indicates growing Western attention to Georgia’s role in regional security.

Tbilisi faces the task not only of declaring its commitment to international principles but also of demonstrating this through practical measures, ensuring transparency, the rule of law, and strategic partnership with Western states.

At the same time, Georgian law enforcement agencies have intensified efforts to counter the activities of structures that may be linked to the spread of foreign information influence.

## Pro-Russian activists targeted

The **Georgian State Security Service** has reported the detention of Gulbaat Rtskhiladze, founder and head of the “Eurasian Institute”, and Irakli Chikhiladze, director of the “Eurasia” media union.

According to investigators, they may face charges relating to cooperation with foreign structures and possible assistance to intelligence operations.

The detentions took place amid Russia’s attempts to maintain political and informational influence in the Caucasus region.

In Tbilisi, these actions are seen as part of a broader policy aimed at preventing external interference in the country’s internal affairs, particularly in the fields of information security and the shaping of public sentiment.



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According to statements by representatives of the Georgian State Security Service, investigators are examining possible contacts between the detainees and foreign structures, the transfer of information, and the organisation of activities that may have served the interests of external actors.

Particular attention has been paid to the activities of Gulbaat Rtskhiladze, who has previously expressed pro-Russian political views, supported deeper Georgian cooperation with Eurasian structures, and criticised the country’s Euro-Atlantic orientation.

His activities and public statements have attracted the interest of Georgian law enforcement agencies as part of a broader investigation into possible foreign influence networks.

The second individual involved in the case is Irakli Chikhladze, who has established a number of civil organisations and media projects.

According to investigators, these entities may have been used to disseminate information in the interests of foreign actors.

The detention of representatives of organisations that the Georgian authorities associate with potential Russian influence took place amid efforts to preserve the country's political independence and information sovereignty.

The ongoing investigation is expected to determine the scale of possible networks, their sources of funding, and the level of coordination with foreign centres of influence.

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