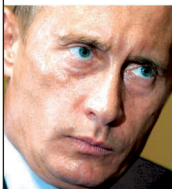


# Russia pressures Georgia ahead of key vote

Relations between the two nations are set to deteriorate further as Georgia's breakaway region of South Ossetia holds a referendum on independence on Nov 12. The vote comes amid Russia's plans to double the price of gas sold to Georgia and Tbilisi's threats to veto Moscow's bid to join the WTO



Russian President **Vladimir Putin** accuses Georgia of planning to invade Moscow-backed breakaway regions

Georgian President **Mikhail Saakashvili** vows to re-unite country peacefully. Says Moscow is punishing Georgia for its ambitions to join NATO and EU



★ **Russian military bases** from Georgia following collapse of Soviet Union in 1991

South Ossetia and Abkhazia: Declared independence



## SOUTH OSSETIA

**Population:** Around 70,000  
Mostly ethnic Ossetians

**Major languages:** Ossetian, Georgian, Russian

**Major religion:** Christianity

**Citizenship:** Most residents hold Russian passport



▶ South Ossetian leader **Eduard Kokoiti**

▶ Businessman and former communist, he is candidate for re-election in vote to be held alongside referendum

▶ Wants unification of North and South Ossetia within Russian Federation