

Georgia, Russia spar over dud missile fire

by UPI

TBILISI, Georgia -- Accusations and denials flew Tuesday between Moscow and the Georgian capital of Tbilisi over an unexploded missile that landed in a town near Tbilisi. While the bomb didn't explode, it broke into fragments and left a large crater near the village of Tsitelubani, 40 miles northwest of Tbilisi, Russia's Novosti news agency reported. Georgian Foreign Minister Gela Bezhushvili summoned Russian Ambassador Vyacheslav Kovalenko to his office early Tuesday to lodge a diplomatic complaint, but Kovalenko denied any Russian involvement, as had the military in Moscow earlier. "Russian aircraft did not violate Georgia's airspace," Kovalenko told reporters after the meeting. "I am completely ruling out such a possibility." The missile landed in a politically tense region where Ossetian separatists are battling Georgian forces. Russian, Ossetian and Georgian peacekeepers man observation posts in the area. Georgia has accused Moscow of using Russian peacekeepers to stir up regional separatist sentiment -- a charge Russia denies.

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