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## US denies troops fighting in Georgia

From correspondents in Washington | August 13, 2008

**THE US denied a Russian suggestion today that US military trainers were linked to a Georgian attack on South Ossetia and that some of them may have been killed.**

"Everyone is accounted for and safe," said Pentagon spokeswoman Lieutenant Colonel Elizabeth Hibner. "There are no reports of an American troop being killed."

Earlier today in Brussels, Russia's NATO Ambassador hinted at US military backing for Georgia's sudden military incursion into the breakaway region of South Ossetia last week.

"At least 127 American military instructors were in Georgia at the beginning of the conflict. There were joint training sessions that happened right before the start of the conflict," Dmitry Rogozin said.

He indicated that some soldiers killed in the fighting could prove to be American, speaking of "dark-skinned Georgians" found dead.

"If we need to do DNA tests, we will do it," he said.

Lt-Col Hibner said the estimated 130 US military and civilian trainers in Georgia at the outbreak of hostilities were there to train Georgian troops for an upcoming deployment to Iraq.

"They were specifically to train them for a coming Operation Iraqi Freedom deployment," she said.

Fewer than 95 US military personnel remained in Georgia today after 35 civilian contractors left the country over the weekend, Pentagon officials said.

Russia responded to the Georgian incursion into South Ossetia by launching punishing land and air attacks against Georgian forces and infrastructure. The Russian attacks drew strong condemnation from the United States and its European allies.



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