

## BOSTON COLLEGE GEOLOGISTS FEAR FOR SAFETY OF COLLEAGUES IN GEORGIA AS ARMED CONFLICT WITH RUSSIA ESCALATES

**Professor and alumni have spent years on regional seismology and energy research**

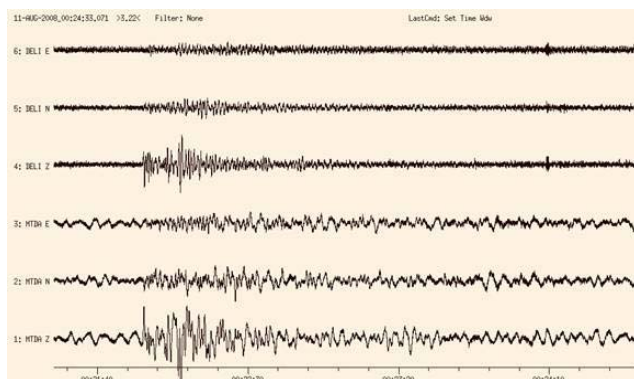
CHESTNUT HILL, MA (August 2008) – For the past 20 years, Boston College Research Prof. Emanuel G. Bombolakis of the Department of Geology and Geophysics has helped scientists in the former Soviet republic of Georgia upgrade their technology to monitor earthquakes in the Caucasus. This week, that equipment measured the impact of bombs and shells launched by Russian forces.

The escalating conflict between Russian and Georgian troops has Bombolakis and BC alumni concerned about the well-being of the colleagues and friends they've met during many trips spent working on seismology programs in the region.

Bombolakis, 84, says his fears grew within days of Russian military strikes in the country, particularly after a Georgian scientist sent an email to Bombolakis and other colleagues around the world asking for their support and prayers.



**Emanuel Bombolakis**



“Last night Tbilisi suburbs were bombed and we all have felt horror of these attacks,” wrote Mikheil “Misha” Elashvili, of the Seismic Monitoring Center, in the Georgian capital. With a subject line of “Georgia in Trouble!!!,” Elashvili’s email closed with “God save Georgia!”

Elashvili, who delivered a lecture on campus last November, included the image at left from his laboratory’s seismological equipment which he said measured the shelling in and around Tblisi and its suburbs.

“It’s been fascinating to work in these areas with their researchers,” said Bombolakis. “I’m very worried about them now.”

Bombolakis had already postponed a planned September trip to Tblisi and now that excursion is on hold indefinitely.

For the past 10 years, Bombolakis has worked with scientists in the Caucasus and nations in central Asia to build a regional network of seismological monitoring centers through the Caucasus Seismic Information Network/Central Asian Seismic Risk Initiative (CauSIN/CASRI), a multi-million dollar project funded by the U.S. Department of Energy’s Nuclear Non-Proliferation Program. The program is creating a network of seismic stations to measure earthquakes, as well as man-made disruptions, such as nuclear tests.

Two Boston College alumni have also played key roles in the CauSIN/CASRI Project. Adj. Prof. Randolph J. Martin III, '64, is the president of New England Research Inc., a Vermont-based energy company that serves as the coordinator of the project, which works in about 10 countries in the region. "It's a scary situation," said Martin. "It is going to make it harder for people working there to feel comfortable after this. It is also going to be more difficult in the other provinces we deal with as well, because they will be looking over their shoulders.

**Randolph J. Martin III, '64**



Timothy O'Connor, '04, MS '06, spent six months in Georgia between 2004 and 2006, researching his thesis on fault identification in the Caucasus.



"I've been in touch by email with friends there and there is a general fear and apprehension that they are alone right now," said O'Connor, a geologist with BHP-Billiton, of Houston, TX. and the son of BC College of Arts and Sciences Honors Program Director Mark O'Connor. "I think they're afraid of what Russia will ultimately do. The sense of distrust has evolved into fear that the end game is to wipe them out."

**Tim O'Connor '04, MS '06 (left), with Misha Elashvili of the Georgian Geophysical Society**

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