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**Georgians likely to put aside domestic woes to welcome
President Bush during first-ever visit**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – During the first-ever visit to Georgia by a sitting U.S. president, George W. Bush will find a country decidedly pro-U.S and pro-Western, but one suffering from a domestic ‘hangover’ following the euphoric events of the Rose Revolution, according to a new survey of 2,000 Georgians conducted by global media research institute **InterMedia**.

The survey, conducted from March 6 to 26, found only 38 percent of respondents believe life in Georgia is better than it was before the revolution, versus 34 percent who say life has not improved. Thirty-nine percent of respondents say they don’t have enough money for food, up from 34 percent in 2004. Overall, 66 percent cited dissatisfaction with the economy, with unemployment as the most critical issue facing leader Mikheil Saakashvili. Georgia’s unemployment rate stands at 32 percent, significantly higher than rates in neighboring Azerbaijan or Armenia.

Despite recent anti-corruption measures by the government, 91 percent also cited corruption as a major problem. Even with these worries, a majority (58 percent) are hopeful things will improve during the next 12 months.

Other findings: 71 percent of respondents in the strategically important country say they have a favorable view of the United States; 70 percent of respondents feel Georgia should join NATO (55 percent of these strongly); and 76 percent said the country should join the European Union (60 percent of these strongly). “A 2004 InterMedia survey showed higher levels of popular support in Georgia for joining NATO and the EU,” said Nino Japaridze, InterMedia’s manager for the resource-rich region, who supervised the survey. “There may be a split developing, with the Georgian leadership continuing to place a very high priority on membership, but the average Georgian has day-to-day economic worries foremost on his or her mind.”

(Ms. Japaridze, herself a native Georgian, will be in Tbilisi, Georgia and available to reporters during President Bush’s visit. Contact Alex Wooley to arrange an interview.)

When asked what comes to mind first when the U.S. was mentioned, 47 percent said “economic position.” This far outstripped other possible answers, including ‘military position,’

‘technological advancements,’ ‘political power’ or ‘support for democracy.’ “This runs contrary to surveys conducted since 2001 in other countries which show that ‘military position’ has overtaken economic power as ‘top of mind’ when thinking of the United States,” said Japaridze.

Respondents are less charitable in their view of Russia. Only 53 percent are favorably inclined, and 76 percent believe Russia is the biggest obstacle to Georgia’s territorial integrity. Fifty-eight percent feel ‘strongly’ this is the case. Forty-eight percent of respondents believe Georgia should leave the CIS. “These numbers reflect the long and sometimes difficult relationship between the two countries,” said Japaridze, “including the view of many Georgians that Russia plays a less than helpful role in supporting Georgia’s bid for territorial integrity and sovereignty.”

Survey note: InterMedia surveyed 2,000 adults 15 and older March 6-26, 2005. Range of error with a 95 percent confidence interval is +/- 2.19 percent.