

The Possibility of a New Military Confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan: Assessment of Risks and Threats in the Short Term

Agil Rustamzade*

The armed forces of Armenia are still in a state of great turbulence after their heavy defeat in the Second Karabakh War (2020) against Azerbaijan. The military personnel of Armenia, as well as the whole nation, have experienced a deep psychological trauma, the consequences of which are unlikely to be overcome in the coming years. The purpose of the article is to identify the maximum limit of the capabilities of the Government of Armenia to restore and strengthen the defence potential of its armed forces in the short term. To that end, this article identifies the entire range of threats and risks that might stem from Armenia. In this context, the units of the Armenian army in certain areas of the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, which is under the temporary control of the Russian peacekeeping contingent, are also considered part of the armed forces of Armenia.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, Armenia, military threat, South Caucasus, Russia



* **Agil Rustamzade** is a military expert on weapons systems and a retired officer of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan.

The state of the armed forces of Armenia

Since the war ended, the position of Minister of Defence of Armenia has seen several new appointments. Armenia’s Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s last appointment to this position was former Deputy Prime Minister Suren Papikyan, a historian by education, in November 2021. The attempt of the former Chief of the General Staff Onik Gasparyan, along with some high-ranking generals, to overthrow the current prime minister in February 2021 indicated strong friction and distrust within

In fact, the military leadership of Armenia was trained in Soviet, then Russian, military institutions that teach outdated tactics of managing troops, as a result of which it is difficult for them to master innovative tactics of warfare that require the knowledge of new reconnaissance techniques and precision weapons.

the military-political leadership of Armenia. This unsuccessful attempt by the military ended with the dismissal of Gasparyan, as well as most of the high-level military officers who supported him, from the Army.¹

This circumstance has only complicated the situation regarding combat readiness and morale in the entire army. It also affects the restoration of combat ability and planning for combat training of the troops. The frequent changes of defence leadership also change priorities and introduce uncertainty into plans for reforming and re-equipping the army.

In fact, the military leadership of Armenia was trained in Soviet, then Russian, military institutions that teach outdated tactics of managing troops, as a result of which it is difficult for them to master innovative tactics of warfare that require the knowledge of new reconnaissance techniques and precision weapons. Armenia’s army, which was formed in line with the Soviet model, has not been reformed for many years.

The Armenian army is mainly armed with weapons and military equipment developed in the 1980s. The army is, in practice, not equipped with modern means of communication and intelligence. There are no high-precision weapons available to aviation, artillery, rocket, or artillery units. For example, even Armenia’s Iskander-M missile system is armed only with obsolete 9M-723 missiles, the accuracy of which is 70–150 meters deviation from target. The only exception is

¹ Daily Sabah, “Military defiant as Armenian PM Pashinian dismisses Gasparyan for 2nd time”, March 10, 2021, available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/military-defiant-as-armenian-pm-pashinian-dismisses-gasparyan-for-2nd-time> (Accessed: September 11, 2022)

the “Kornet” portable anti-tank missiles purchased during the 44-Day War, which are inferior to their analogues in terms of range, though not in accuracy.

In addition, outside statutory military relations, hazing (*Dedovshchina*) and suicide cases in the army are widespread.² Additional tension in relationships among servicemen is caused by a split in society due to the division of Armenians into their own and “Karabakh Armenians”.³ Owing to the cautious attitude of society after the defeat in the 44-Day War, the phenomenon of desertion from military service is becoming widespread.⁴ Low-paid military service is unattractive to the younger generation of Armenians, and it is problematic to attract servicemen to long-term service on a contractual basis.

The true number and types of Armenian weapons and military equipment have always been purposefully hidden, and there are practically no reliable data in open sources.

The general state of affairs in the army of Armenia is rather difficult to assess, as the issue is not only re-equipment, but the restoration of the armed forces in general. In addition to the losses in weapons and military equipment during the Second Karabakh War, Armenia has wasted most of its ammunition for small arms and rocket-artillery systems. The 2021 defence budget expenditure intended for the purchase of weapons was mostly spent on restoring the stock of ammunition.

The true number and types of Armenian weapons and military equipment have always been purposefully hidden, and there are practically no reliable data in open sources. It is now even more problematic to quantify the remaining weapons and military equipment. However, an analysis of the losses of the Armenian army in terms of military equipment during the Second Karabakh War enables us to predict that the highest losses were suffered by the air defence forces and units armed with missile and artillery systems.⁵ In fact, air defence systems

2 Mejlumyan, A., “Senior officers fired after spate of non-combat deaths in Armenian military”, *Eurasianet*, February 19, 2020, available at: <https://eurasianet.org/senior-officers-fired-after-spate-of-non-combat-deaths-in-armenian-military> (Accessed: September 11, 2022)

3 Report.az, *Mif ob armyanakh razveyalsya - oni begut dazhe iz Nagornogo Karabakha*, April 6, 2016, available at: <https://report.az/ru/analitika/mif-ob-armyan-razveyalsya-oni-begut-dazhe-iz-nagor/> (Accessed: September 11, 2022)

4 Lmahamad, A., “Armenian soldiers continue to go AWOL”, *Azernews*, October 5, 2021, available at: <https://www.azernews.az/nation/184079.html> (Accessed: September 11, 2022)

5 Oryx, “The Fight For Nagorno-Karabakh: Documenting Losses On The Sides Of

were the most expensive type of weapons that Armenia lost during the war.

Meanwhile, by analysing the number of units and military hardware involved in the Armenian Armed Forces' military exercises, it is possible to understand the quantity of weapons and military equipment that survived the war. Despite significant losses in equipment and personnel, Armenia is trying to restore and increase the combat readiness its army. For these purposes, occasional military exercises are carried out with the involvement of all branches of the armed forces and taking into account some of the lessons of the Second Karabakh War.⁶

In the post-war period, the protection of a new section of the state border with Azerbaijan (adjoining the liberated territories), a length of 450 km, is also a new task for Armenia. The protection of that conditional and unspecified section of the inter-state border, which is essentially a new "line of contact" in an area with difficult mountainous terrain without appropriate infrastructure, has created additional overstretch for Armenia's armed forces. The engineering and technical works performed by Armenia's army on the border do not meet modern defensive standards, therefore the problem with the shortage of military personnel was eased by mobilizing reservists for a period of three month.⁷

All the above-mentioned factors suggest that Armenia's army, which is experiencing problems with management, logistics, and a lack of military equipment, weapons and military personnel, has a limited combat capability for conducting large-scale hostilities. The leadership of Armenia also understands this; that is why they quickly launched the process of reforming the army.

Armenia And Azerbaijan", September 27, 2020, available at: <https://www.oryxspioenkop.com/2020/09/the-fight-for-nagorno-karabakh.html> (Accessed: September 11, 2022)

6 Sputnik Armenia, "Armyanskiy spetsnaz otrabotal nastupatelnyy boy v khode masshtabnykh ucheniy", September 17, 2021, available at: <https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/20210917/armyanskiy-spetsnaz-otrabotal-nastupatelnyy-boy-v-khode-masshtabnykh-ucheniy-33387485.html>; Ministry of Defence of Armenia, "The final stage of the military exercise was held in the 5th military unit", March 20, 2021, available at: <https://mil.am/hy/news/9107> (All accessed: September 11, 2022)

7 Iravaban.net, "For the first time since 1994, a three-month period has been set for the training of reservists: Armen Avtandilyan", August 24, 2021, available at: <https://iravaban.net/en/346668.html> (All accessed: September 11, 2022)

Armenia's ability to increase the potential of its armed forces

Armenia's military budget for 2023 is planned to be more than \$1.2 billion (501 billion drams), a 47% increase over the 2022 budget that was set at \$754 million.⁸ A large proportion of that budget was to be directed to the maintenance of the Armenian armed forces, including purchasing military equipment, vehicles, communication systems, weapons, and ammunition, as well as ensuring the supply of modern medical equipment, food, fuel, and lubricants, and maintaining barracks and technical property to ensure the combat capability, military training, and retraining of medical personnel.⁹

Meanwhile, it is not yet entirely clear how Armenia will be able to pay off its military debts to Russia for previous weapons purchases, both before and during the Second Karabakh War. The post-war reconstruction and development of the armed forces of Armenia as a whole depends on the financial and economic capabilities of the country. However, Armenia is a poor industrial-agrarian country, and most large Armenian enterprises are owned by Russian companies. According to a 2022 report of the National Statistical Committee of Armenia, the poverty level among the population is 27%.¹⁰ And according to data from the Ministry of Finance of Armenia, Armenia's national (government) debt rose to \$9.226 billion by the end of 2021, an increase of \$1.257 billion (15.8%) over the previous year.¹¹ The burden of public debt will definitely also burden the state's budget allocations for the defence sector.¹² Consequently, the economic potential of

The post-war reconstruction and development of the armed forces of Armenia as a whole depends on the financial and economic capabilities of the country

8 Mejlumyan, A., "Armenia promises big boost in military spending", *Eurasianet*, September 29, 2022, available at: <https://eurasianet.org/armenia-promises-big-boost-in-military-spending> (Accessed: September 30, 2022)

9 Badalyan, N., "Armeniya v 2022 godu vydelit na voyennyye raskhody bolshe, chem v 2021-m, no menshe, chem na obsluzhivaniye i pogasheniye pravitelstvennogo dolga", *Finport Armenia*, October 12, 2021, available at: https://finport.am/full_news.php?id=44850&lang=2 (Accessed: September 30, 2022)

10 World Bank, "Armenia", *Poverty & Equity Brief*, October 2022, available at: https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/current/Global_POVEQ_ARM.pdf (Accessed: October 30, 2022)

11 Hetq.am, "Armenia's national debt hits \$9 billion; 60.8% of GDP", January 31, 2022, available at: <https://hetq.am/en/article/140592> (Accessed: September 11, 2022)

12 Badalian, N., "In first month of 2022, Armenia increased its public debt by almost \$60 million", *Finport Armenia*, February 14 2022, available at: https://finport.am/full_news.

Armenia will, in the short term, make it difficult for this country to allocate sufficient financial resources for its military needs, which is necessary to achieve military parity with Azerbaijan.

Another factor strongly influencing the development potential of the armed forces is demographic factors. One of the most dangerous threats facing Armenia is its current demographic problems and their long-term consequences. According to the latest data from the World Bank, the population of Armenia has been steadily declining since 1990. As of early 2021, the population is about 2.9 million, the birth rate is about 1.6%, and the population is slowly falling. Since 1990, the population has continued a steady decline, to 2.957 million in 2020. Owing to the unfavourable economic situation, the population preferred to emigrate to other, more economically favourable countries. Although the net migration indicator was positive for the three years from 2018 to 2020 (that is, more Armenians entered the country than left), the situation changed dramatically in 2021.¹³ According to official data, in the first three quarters of 2021, 103,000 more people left Armenia than arrived. This is about 3% of the country's population. The largest wave of emigration occurred in the first quarter of 2021, when the net population decline amounted to almost 64,000 people.¹⁴ However, it should be noted that the registered population in Armenia also includes those who live abroad. Thus, a large number of labour migrants working in Russia, who generally return to Armenia for a few weeks in winter, are still included in the statistics for the registered population. Given the negative demographic dynamics, the armed forces of Armenia be unable to increase personnel numbers in the short term.

The military-industrial complex of Armenia is a set of research and manufacturing enterprises that develop and produce various systems and weapons for government agencies. There are a number of areas in which Armenia has preserved, and is developing, the scientific production base inherited from the Soviet Union. This includes the production of mortars, air and ground drones, optical and thermal imaging and laser

php?id=45526&lang=3 (Accessed: September 11, 2022)

13 Interfax, "Demograficheskiye problemy Armenii: Depopulyatsiya i rasistskaya politika", October 19, 2020, available at: <http://interfax.az/view/816896> (Accessed: September 11, 2022)

14 Mejlumyan, A., "Out-migration in Armenia increasing", *Eurasianet*, February 10, 2022, available at: <https://eurasianet.org/out-migration-in-armenia-increasing> (Accessed: September 11, 2022)

systems for various purposes, some types of radar stations, and electronic warfare systems. In addition, there is sufficient capacity in Armenia for the production of ammunition for small arms and mortars.¹⁵ Taking into account the difficulties of delivering military equipment from Russia, joint service centres have been created in Armenia for the maintenance and repair of military equipment. The private sector is also actively developing; for example, ten private companies are involved in the development and production of drones in Armenia.¹⁶

However, systemic problems such the lack of technology, sufficient funding, industrial capacity, and highly specialized personnel hamper the growth of the capabilities of the military-industrial complex of Armenia. Moreover, the production of even medium-altitude drones requires possession of or access to modern materials and all kinds of complex systems relating to aviation, reconnaissance, high-precision weapons, GPS satellite navigation, and control systems. Without these technologies, drones lose their capabilities, efficiency, and survivability in combat conditions. Certain difficulties in the production of drones are associated with the strong politicization of the arms market and the reluctance of developed countries to share their technologies. Currently, the production of modern military drones with the specified equipment has been mastered by countries such as the United States, Israel, Türkiye, and (partially) China. Therefore, in the short term, the Armenian military-industrial complex is not expected to produce modern high-tech weapons and military equipment.

However, systemic problems such the lack of technology, sufficient funding, industrial capacity, and highly specialized personnel hamper the growth of the capabilities of the military-industrial complex of Armenia.

Furthermore, the frequent change of the army leadership make planning the purchase of weapons for the armed forces uncertain. At the moment, there is no reliable and complete information on the volume and types of weapons that Armenia purchased in 2021. The only confirmed

15 Sputnik Armenia, “VPK Armenii naladil seriynoye proizvodstvo voyennoy produktsii – Arshakyan”, November 16, 2022, available at: <https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/20221116/vpk-armenii-smog-naladit-seriynoe-proizvodstvo-voennoy-produktsii--arshakyan-51369292.html> (Accessed: November 30, 2022)

16 Sputnik Armenia, “The number of UAVs produced in Armenia does not meet the demand of the army” (translated from Armenian), September 15, 2021, available at: <https://armeniasputnik.am/20210915/hajastanum-artadrvoogh-atsnery-banaki-pahanjinchen-bavararum-khachaturjan-33306501.html> (Accessed: November 30, 2022)

information is about the acquisition of four counter-battery radar systems from India, in the amount of \$40 million, in late 2020.¹⁷ The contracts, concluded pre-war, for the supply of Tor-2MKM anti-aircraft missile systems and weapons for the Su-30SM aircraft were also fulfilled.¹⁸ Although Armenia signed a contract with Russia in August 2020 for the modernization of its old Su-25 aircraft,¹⁹ the status of this is currently unknown.

Meanwhile, in January 2022, the Armenian Air Force received four Mi-8MTV-5 transport helicopters²⁰ and it is interested in purchasing Russia's cutting-edge Ka-52M and Mi-28NE attack helicopters²¹ and additional SU-30SM aircraft.²² At the same time, based on images obtained from social networks, it can be assumed that the Russian-made "Orlan-10" light intelligence UAVs are in use by the Armed Forces of Armenia.²³ Russia also failed to rule out the possibility of delivering Russian-made Orion UAVs to Armenia.²⁴ Moreover, unhappy with the

17 Strakes, J., "Armenia's New Swathi Radar and Defense Imports from India: Eurasian Geostrategy or Technology Interface?", *Ponars Eurasia*, February 16, 2022, available at: <https://www.ponarseurasia.org/armenias-new-swathi-radar-and-defense-imports-from-india-eurasian-geostrategy-or-technology-interface/> (Accessed: November 30, 2022)

18 Sputnik Armenia, *Armeniya-2020: Su-30 i Tor-M2 obespechat zashchitu neba i absolyutnoye prevoskhodstvo v vozdukhe*, December 12, 2019, available at: <https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/20191221/Armeniya-2020-Su-30-i-Tor-M2-obespechat-zaschitu-neba-absolyutnoe-prevoskhodstvo-v-vozdukhe-21499190.html> (Accessed: November 30, 2022)

19 Arka.am, "Armenia signs contract with Russia to repair and modernize its Su-25 strike aircraft", August 24, 2020, available at: https://arka.am/en/news/society/armenia_signs_contract_with_russia_to_repair_and_modernize_its_su_25_strike_aircraft/ (Accessed: November 30, 2022)

20 Stein, M., "Armenia acquires Russian Helicopters as part of armed forces modernization", *OEW*, March 19, 2022, available at: <https://www.oew-online.com/?p=5350> (Accessed: September 30, 2022)

21 Tass.ru, "UAE, Armenia, Kazakhstan eager to buy Russian Ka-52M, Mi-28NE combat helicopters", November 22, 2021, available at: <https://tass.com/defense/1364521> (Accessed: September 30, 2022)

22 VPK Novosti, "Armeniya mozhet zakupit' v RF do 16 istrebiteley Su-30SM – predstavitel' Minoborony", February 20, 2019, available at: https://vpk.name/news/250590_armeniya_mozhet_zakupit_v_rf_do_16_istrebitelei_su30sm__predstavitel_minoboronyi.html (Accessed: September 30, 2022)

23 Armenian Military Portal, "The calculation of the multifunctional reconnaissance unmanned complex 'Orlan-10' of the Armed Forces of Armenia" (translation from Russian), May 1, 2021, available at: https://t.me/military_arm/7019 (Accessed: September 30, 2022)

24 Tass.ru, "Russian-made drones may be delivered to Armenia", April 7, 2021, available at: <https://tass.com/defense/1275203> (Accessed: October 30, 2022)

delay in planned Russian arms deliveries,²⁵ Armenia is searching for new weapons suppliers. In this context, there are news stories circulating that Armenia has concluded a new military deal with India to purchase artillery, rocket systems, and drones.²⁶

Given that Russia and Armenia are involved in the Joint Air Defence System and the Armenian segment of this system suffered significant losses during the war, certain supplies may, in the future, also be expected in this area. Russia is currently re-equipping with S-400 anti-aircraft missile systems.²⁷ Accordingly, a small number of surplus S-300 systems may well be delivered to Armenia at the cost of their modernization or repair. Meanwhile, the 102nd Military Base of Russia, located in Armenia, and the 5th Army Corps of the armed forces of Armenia are part of the Joint Group of Forces of Russia and Armenia in the Caucasus collective security region. Thus, some weapons and military equipment may be transferred by Russia to the army corps to restore its combat readiness.

However, there is an important nuance. The Second Karabakh War showed that the point is not the quantity of equipment and weapons, but in their effectiveness. In modern wars, the side with the best intelligence systems and precision weapons systems wins. The best example is the high-precision Israeli Spike-NLOS missile, with a range of 25–30 km, or Turkish Bayraktar drones with MAM-L guided munition (range 18 km), also used by Azerbaijan in that war. The side that is armed with such missiles will destroy military equipment at a greater range than can the enemy's fire weapons. Russia itself, as a main supplier of weapons to Armenia, is also currently beginning to develop and test modern high-precision weapons, but it will take years for these systems to be put into service as fully-fledged weapons.

The Second Karabakh War showed that the point is not the quantity of equipment and weapons, but in their effectiveness. In modern wars, the side with the best intelligence systems and precision weapons systems wins.

25 Armenpress, “Problema, k sozhaleniyu, ne reshena: Pashinyan o nepostavke oruzhiya v Armeniyu”, November 11, 2022, available at: <https://armenpress.am/rus/news/1097082.html> (Accessed: September 30, 2022)

26 Khodanian, K., “Armenia in Search of Modern Weaponry”, *Massis Post*, October 30, 2022, available at: <https://massispost.com/2022/10/armenia-in-search-of-modern-weaponry/> (Accessed: October 30, 2022)

27 Veonnoe Obozrenie, “Shoygu anonsiroval perevooruzheniye dvukh polkov VVO na S-400 do kontsa goda”, September 17, 2020, available at: <https://topwar.ru/175200-shoygu-anonsiroval-perevooruzhenie-dvuh-polkov-vvo-na-s-400-do-konca-goda.html> (Accessed: October 30, 2022)

Nevertheless, the Armenian government envisages a process of long-term army reform, which includes the purchase of new types of weapons, personnel training, and transformations in the management sphere. To this end, the Armenian authorities plan a reduction in the term of compulsory military service from the current two to one and a half years, as well as increasing the number of contract servicemen. In particular, it is planned to rebuild the Armenian army by using the Russian model of the armed forces as a basis.²⁸

As part of the reform process, it is proposed to strengthen the role of the Minister of Defence.²⁹ Currently, the post of defence minister is largely of an administrative and “civilian” nature, while the Head of the General Staff is subordinate to him only from a purely formal point of view. Strengthening the institution of the defence minister implies a certain expansion of his powers and the transfer of very specific functions, including military ones. However, at the moment, due to Pashinyan’s distrust of the military, a civilian, Suren Papikyan, has been appointed to the post of defence minister. At the same time, there are two systemic problems inhibiting the reforms. The first issue is that Armenia needs colossal expenditures for the purchase of modern weapons. The second issue is staff-related problems. Obviously, the training of highly qualified military personnel is closely related to ongoing problems in the educational and social spheres. Armenia currently has virtually no financial and human resources to switch to a fully volunteer army without a simultaneous sharp reduction in the size of the armed forces.

An important element in the upcoming transformations, according to the plan of the Armenian leadership, should be the strengthening of the Joint Group of Forces of Russia and Armenia.³⁰ At present, this grouping includes units of the 5th Army Corps of Armenia’s Armed Forces and the 102nd Russian Military Base in Armenia.

28 Mgdesyan, A., “Sokrashcheniye kolichestva i sroka sluzhby: armyanskuyu armiyu gotovyat k miru ili voyne?”, *Verelq*, June 1, 2021, available at: <https://verelq.am/ru/node/90066> (Accessed: October 30, 2022)

29 Sputnik Armenia, “Glava Genshtaba vs stanet pervym zamministra oborony: parlament Armenii odobril proyekt”, July 7, 2022, available at: <https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/20220707/glava-genshtaba-vs-stanet-pervym-zamministra-oborony-parlament-armenii-odobril-proekt-44845328.html> (Accessed: October 30, 2022)

30 RIA Novosti, “Pashinyan predlozhl usilit Obyedinennuyu gruppirovku voysk Rossii i Armenii”, March 28, 2021, available at: <https://ria.ru/20210328/voyska-1603199915.html> (Accessed: October 30, 2022)

Possible risk and threat scenarios

All of the above-mentioned factors indicate that, owing to a number of restrictions, in the short term, Armenia's armed forces will be unable to achieve a sufficient level of combat readiness to challenge Azerbaijan's army. Nevertheless, the absence of a peace treaty between the two countries and the revanchist desires among the population of Armenia and ethnic Armenians living in the Karabakh region, where the Russian peacekeeping contingent is temporally located, create threats and risks for both Azerbaijan's army and the civilian population according to four possible scenarios. Moreover, the internal political situation in Armenia indicates that these scenarios can arise either with or without the authorization of the political leadership of Armenia.

Scenario 1. Armed conflict at the border: tensions between military units on the as-yet unmarked border between the two states can be considered a local threat. Actions of divisions of the Armenian army may lead to various conflict situations. One of these attempts took place on November 2021 in the Garagol (Black Lake) area when a unit of the Armenian army established positions on the road behind the lines of the Azerbaijani army.³¹ Another took place on 12–14 September 2022, when Armenian sabotage units started to mine Azerbaijani units' supply roads and resorted to large-scale military provocations in the border districts of Azerbaijan (Dashkasan, Kalbajar, and Lachin).³² There is also the possibility of intensification of the activities of snipers, operators of anti-tank systems, and kamikaze drones against the military personnel and the military equipment of Azerbaijan.

Scenario 2. Risk of missile or artillery strike: Unlike its other weapons systems, the operational tactical missile systems of Armenia have lost a smaller part of their strike potential. As a result of an escalation of the border conflict or provocation, Armenia's armed forces could launch rocket or artillery strikes on the positions of Azerbaijan's troops or cities, civilian settlements, and infrastructure. The missile systems of

31 Caliber.az, "Kak azerbaydzhanskiy spetsnaz vzyal v okruzheniye boleye 50 armyanskikh voyennykh", November 10, 2021, available at: <https://caliber.az/post/36897/> (Accessed: October 30, 2022)

32 Mod.gov.az, "Armenian armed forces committed large-scale provocations in Dashkasan, Kalbajar and Lachin directions", September 13, 2022, available at: <https://mod.gov.az/en/news/armenian-armed-forces-committed-large-scale-provocations-in-dashkasan-kalbajar-and-lachin-directions-42330.html> (Accessed: October 30, 2022)

Armenia are of obsolete variants and have low strike accuracy and, in the case of a possible strike targeting a military facility, it could deviate from the target and hit civilians as well.

Scenario 3. Threat of terrorist acts: Several non-governmental military organizations are now operating in Armenia and engaged in the training of volunteers in various military specialties. These radical organizations could, due to various circumstances, resort to active subversive activities against Azerbaijan's military personnel and civilians, as well as critical infrastructure facilities. This scenario is also possible in the areas of the Karabakh region that are under the temporary control of the Russian peacekeeping contingent. There is already a precedent for this scenario; on 13 November 2021, a hand grenade was thrown from a passing car at a post of Azerbaijani servicemen in the vicinity of city of Shusha.³³

Scenario 4. The risk of a large-scale cyberattack on vital infrastructure: Throughout 2020, several Armenian hacker groups were active in cyberattacks on Azerbaijan's public websites. According to the Special Communication and Information Security State Service's report, Armenia carried out large-scale cyberattacks on Azerbaijan during the Azerbaijani army's anti-terrorist "Revenge" operation in August 2022 against illegal Armenian armed gangs in certain parts of Azerbaijan's Karabakh region (where the Russian peacekeeping contingent is temporarily deployed) that had intensively fired on Azerbaijani units' positions.³⁴ The special cyber unit established within the Ministry of Defence of Armenia or its hacker groups, can inflict cyber-strikes on the infrastructure facilities of Azerbaijan.³⁵

33 Kavkazskiy Uzel, "Po vashemu eto mir?", November 14, 2021, available at: <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/blogs/83785/posts/51378> (Accessed: October 30, 2022)

34 Zohrabov, F., "Azerbaijan talks Armenian cyberattacks", *Trend*, November 23, 2022, <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/society/3672626.html> (Accessed: November 30, 2022)

35 Razm.info, *MO Armenii sozdayot kiber-podrazdeleniye*, October 28, 2014, <https://razm.info/ru/5403> (Accessed: November 30, 2022)