



Russian Military Presence in Armenia and the Region

OE Watch Commentary: Even before the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan signed the ceasefire agreement on 9 November that included the deployment of Russian peacekeepers to Nagorno Karabakh, Russian forces were already deployed in Armenia in a couple of capacities. The accompanying excerpted articles report on Russian border guards in Armenia and the deployment of Russian peacekeepers to the region and provide a look at what the overall Russian presence in Armenia and the Caucasus will look like going forward.

The article from *News.am*, a news website based in Armenia, reports on how in late October “Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan confirmed that Russian border guards were situated on the border of Armenia with the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic” and that the prime minister stated “that there was nothing unusual about it.” The most notable Russian deployment of forces in Armenia has been the 102nd Military Base in Gyumri with a strength of around 3,000 personnel, including a rifle brigade, a squadron of MiG-29s and various air defense units. Prime Minister Pashinyan also notes in the article that “Russian border guards are on Armenia’s border with Turkey and Iran” and that they have been there for some time. As the article points out, his comments are in response to an article from a Spanish news outlet. That media source made it appear as though the Russian presence in Armenia was in response to the clashes with Azerbaijan on 27 September. Pashinyan did mention that “as a result of the recent events, Russian border guards are also on the southeastern and southwestern borders of Armenia.”

The article from *Novaya Gazeta*, an independent Russian newspaper, reports on some of the fallout from the ceasefire agreement, particularly that Armenian forces will withdraw from Nagorno Karabakh. It also states that in December, Armenian forces “will leave the Lachin region, but the city of Lachin itself and the highway running through it from Karabakh to Armenia (the “Lachin corridor”) will remain under the control of Russian peacekeepers.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“Russian border guards are on Armenia’s border with Turkey and Iran. That is how it has always been”

Source: “Пашинян подтвердил, что на границе Армении с Арцахом размещены российские пограничники (Pashinyan confirmed that Russian border guards are situated on the border of Armenia with Artsakh),” *News.am*, 28 October 2020. <https://news.am/rus/news/610343.html>

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan confirmed that Russian border guards were situated on the border of Armenia with the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, but explained that there was nothing unusual about it...

...a journalist from the Spanish agency EFE asked the Armenian prime minister to comment on photos that appeared on social media of Russian forces on the Armenian border with the Karabakh region...“Russian border guards are on Armenia’s border with Turkey and Iran. That is how it has always been. And now, as a result of the recent events, Russian border guards are also on the southeastern and southwestern borders of Armenia...,” replied Pashinyan...

Source: Pavel Felgenhauer, “Армения проиграла? Как разделят Карабах? Зачем там наши миротворцы? Почему простили сбитый вертолет? (Did Armenia lost? How will Karabakh be divided? What are our peacekeepers there for? Why was the downed helicopter forgiven?),” *Novaya Gazeta*, 10 November 2020. <https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2020/11/10/87900-artsahskaya-mitrovitsa-v-stepanakerte>

...The Armenian armed forces will soon withdraw, with its weapons and banners, from the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and from the so-called security belt around NKR...By November 15, they will leave Kelbajar, by November 20 from Aghdam and part of the Gazakh region in the central sector of the front...On December 1, the Armenians will leave the Lachin region, but the city of Lachin itself and the highway running through it from Karabakh to Armenia (the “Lachin corridor”) will remain under the control of Russian peacekeepers.

According to (President of Azerbaijan) Aliyev, within three years a new highway will be built to bypass Lachin “for a connection between Stepanakert and Armenia” and this new road will be controlled by peacekeepers...

Immediately after the agreement was signed, around 2000 Russian peacekeepers from the 15th Separate Motorized Rifle (peacekeeping) Brigade started airlifting from Ulyanovsk. The peacekeepers will deploy to Karabakh without heavily armored vehicles, artillery or multiple rocket launchers...The Russian peacekeepers will be not in mountainous Shusha. The headquarters will be in Stepanakert...

The Russian peacekeepers will be in Karabakh for five years, with an extension for another five, if there is no objection...



Continued: Russian Military Presence in Armenia and the Region



A map of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire agreement.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2020_Artsakh_ceasefire_map.svg, CC BY YA 4.0