



Armenian Assessments of the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh War

OE Watch Commentary: The Armenian government carried out several reforms in the armed forces following the April 2016 clashes in Nagorno Karabakh, including acquisitions of weapons and equipment, in order to avoid another scenario of losing territory to Azerbaijan. The accompanying excerpted article provides a look at how the September-November 2020 war, which resulted in Azerbaijan gaining a significant amount of territory, is driving examinations of lessons learned for the Armenian government and armed forces following the recent conflict.

The article, from the Armenian news website *News.am*, first looks at how “a number of Russian sources this week reported that specialists from the Military Academy of the Air Defense Forces of Russia conducted a thorough analysis of the large-scale losses of Armenian air defense systems in Nagorno-Karabakh and the almost complete dominance of Turkish unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).” The Russian sources reported that “the issue was a low radar cross-section of Turkish UAVs, which did not enable enough time to detect them, giving them an opportunity to successfully open fire,” but the article notes how “representatives of the academy did not discuss these issues (in a report) and there were no field tests that showed ‘low efficiency’ of Russian air defense systems.”

Despite the fact that there was no report from the Russian air defense academy, the article mentions how “politicians in Yerevan have also put forth various accusations against Russian weapons and air defense systems in particular.” Outside of this, the article includes statements from the former secretary of the security council of Nagorno-Karabakh. The former secretary claimed that “Armenian politicians and the military did not prepare for a large-scale armed conflict” and that officials “reassured themselves with the thought that a negotiating body would come to their assistance, having neither the capabilities nor the military contingent to deal with Azerbaijan by force.” Lastly, the article states that Armenian forces “reacted sporadically and haphazardly” to Azerbaijani actions on the line-of-contact in recent years prior to the 2020 war and that this includes “the inability to create a well-controlled, multi-component and layered air defense system.” As the Armenian government continues to assess what happened with its armed forces during the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh war, air defense will be one area to watch for reforms. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“For a long time, Azerbaijan was consistently preparing to break the defenses of Armenians on the line of contact, accumulating reserves and conducting reconnaissance, including reconnaissance in force.”





Continued: Armenian Assessments of the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh War

Source: “Уроки Карабаха: могут ли российские средства ПВО противостоять беспилотникам (Lessons of Karabakh: can Russian air defense systems counter unmanned aerial vehicles),” *News.am* (Armenian news website based in Yerevan), 22 December 2020. <https://news.am/rus/news/620332.html>

A number of Russian sources this week reported that specialists from the Military Academy of the Air Defense Forces of Russia conducted a thorough analysis of the large-scale losses of Armenian air defense systems in Nagorno-Karabakh and the almost complete dominance of Turkish unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)...

“Apparently, the issue was a low radar cross-section of Turkish UAVs, which did not enable enough time to detect them, giving them an opportunity to successfully open fire,” said one of the sources...the sources stated results of field tests of air defense systems, including the Buk-M1, the Tor-M1, Osa-AKM, Pantsir-S1 and Tunguska-M1, and reportedly show their low efficiency when operating against small UAVs with a radar cross-section of less than 0.01 square meters...

However, representatives of the academy did not discuss these issues (in a report) and there were no field tests that showed “low efficiency” of Russian air defense systems...Some Russian media sources published reports with titles such as “The ineffectiveness of modern air defense systems in the Karabakh conflict”...The media outlets that circulated this information could draw attention to at least some, at first glance, insignificant issues.

For example, “the Turkish UAV’s radar cross-section was too small is to blame.” Nonetheless, the wingspan of the Bayraktar TB2 is 12m and its length is 6.5m. This is noticeable to almost any radar station...Its speed and service ceiling make it a target for almost any air defense system.

There is a notably smaller radar cross-section of the Israeli Harop UAV...The area of the reflective surface of the Harop is estimated to be 0.5 square meters.

...it should be remembered that politicians in Yerevan have also put forth various accusations against Russian weapons and air defense systems in particular...The reason for the defeat and failures of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh are not in the quality of Russian weapons, but in the lack of preparation for an armed conflict, starting with operational equipment in the theater to the number of trained specialists and last but not least, the calculations of air defense systems...

...according to Samvel Babayan, the former secretary of the security council of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, Armenian politicians and the military did not prepare for a large-scale armed conflict. They reassured themselves with the thought that a negotiating body would come to their assistance, having neither the capabilities nor the military contingent to deal with Azerbaijan by force...

For a long time, Azerbaijan was consistently preparing to break the defenses of Armenians on the line of contact, accumulating reserves and conducting reconnaissance, including reconnaissance in force. Armenians reacted sporadically and haphazardly...as well as the inability to create a well-controlled, multi-component and layered air defense system. As a result, on the first day of the war on 27 September, according to Babayan, the Armenians in Karabakh lost up to 50 percent of their air defense systems and 40 percent of their artillery from Azerbaijani strikes...

Fangs of the Lone Wolf

Chechen Tactics in the Russian-Chechen Wars 1994-2009

Dodge Billingsley with Lester Grau

Fangs of the Lone Wolf is about combat experience in urban, mountain and fairly open terrain. It is not a comprehensive history of conflict. This book is a series of snapshots — of vignettes — describing the difficulty, the hardship, the victories and the defeats of the participants. It is an examination of the raw data of combat in a foreign land, and is aimed to advance the professional military study of conflict.

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