

Armenia Questions Russian Peacekeeping After Nagorno-Karabakh Incident

By Matthew Stein
OE Watch Commentary

There have been several clashes between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces in Nagorno-Karabakh since the ceasefire agreement of November 2020 took effect. While the Russian Ministry of Defense investigated violations of the ceasefire, Russian peacekeeping forces did not take action in response to any of them. On 3 August, Azerbaijani forces not only carried out strikes on Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh but seized territory near the Lachin corridor, which serves as the only route connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia. As the accompanying excerpted article from the independent news website *Kavkazskiy Uzel* reports, this incident sparked criticism from Armenia regarding the Russian peacekeeping mission in the region.

The article reports on the aftermath of the incident and includes comments from Putin's Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov, who stated that Russia "is acting in accordance with the trilateral ceasefire agreement and expects compliance from Armenia and Azerbaijan." Peskov's comments came as a response to Armenian President Nikol Pashinyan's pro-

posal to discuss the function of the Russian peacekeeping force. The article mentions a few details of the incident, including that the "Russian Ministry of Defense blamed Azerbaijan for violating the ceasefire." In addition, the article notes that "Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev accused the Russian Defense Ministry of not fulfilling a promise to ensure the withdrawal of Armenian troops from Karabakh" as part of the ceasefire. The article includes President Pashinyan's criticism of the Russian peacekeepers, including that Armenia expects "that any attempt to cross the line of contact will be prevented by the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation." While the aftermath of this incident continues to unfold, Azerbaijan's seizure of territory marks a significant difference from previous clashes in Nagorno-Karabakh since the 2020 ceasefire agreement. As Russia continues to carry out its war in Ukraine, its response to this incident could be an important measurement for how the Russian peacekeeping force responds to any further incidents.

The Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan announced the operation "Retribution" in Nagorno-Karabakh in response to the killing of a service member.



2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict map

Source: File: Nagorno-Karabakh war map (2020).svg - Wikimedia Commons Attribution: CCA 4.0

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Source: “Кремль отреагировал на слова Пашиняна о функциях миротворцев (The Kremlin reacted to Pashinyan’s words on the function of the peacekeepers),” *Kavkazskiy Uzel* (independent news website reporting on the Caucasus), 5 August 2022. <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/379832/>

The Russian side is acting in accordance with the trilateral ceasefire agreement and expects compliance from Armenia and Azerbaijan, Putin’s Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov said in response to Nikol Pashinyan’s proposal to discuss the function of the Russian peacekeepers...

...on 3 August, the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan announced the operation “Retribution” in Nagorno-Karabakh in response to the killing of a service member. The ministry also reported that it took strategic heights. Baku demanded the immediate withdrawal of the Armenian military from Nagorno-Karabakh and threatened “even more destructive countermeasures” in the event of provocations on the line of contact. Authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh reported two were killed and 19 were wounded as a result of the incident. The Russian Ministry of Defense blamed Azerbaijan for violating the ceasefire.

... Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev accused the Russian Defense Ministry of not fulfilling a promise to ensure the withdrawal of Armenian troops from Karabakh in accordance with the agreements of 10 November 2020. On 19 July, the Secretary of the Armenian Security Council Armen Grigoryan said that Armenian troops will be withdrawn from Nagorno-Karabakh by September...

...Nikol Pashinyan stated the need to specify the functions of Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh. “A number of events taking place today and earlier have revealed problems of a systemic nature.... Continued violations of the ceasefire regime along the length of the line of contact... in the presence of peacekeepers are unacceptable,” he said.

Pashinyan stressed that the line of contact “is called the zone of responsibility of the Russian peacekeeping contingent in Nagorno-Karabakh.” “And we expect that any attempt to cross the line of contact will be prevented by the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation...” Novosti-Armenia quoted him as saying...

THE RUSSIAN WAY OF WAR

by Lester W. Grau and Charles K. Bartles



At any given time, assessments of the Russian Armed Forces vary between the idea of an incompetent and corrupt conscript army manning decrepit Soviet equipment and relying solely on brute force, to the idea of an elite military filled with Special Operations Forces (SOF) who were the “polite people” or “little green men” seen on the streets in Crimea. This book will attempt to split the difference between these radically different ideas by shedding some light on what the Russian Ground Forces consist of, how they are structured, how they fight, and how they are modernizing.