



Azerbaijan's Latest Weapons Acquisition

OE Watch Commentary: The government of Azerbaijan highly publicizes its acquisitions of weapons and equipment and as the accompanying excerpted articles report, the most recent significant acquisition includes the Belarusian “Polonez” multiple rocket launcher system and the Israeli “LORA” (Long Range Attack), a low-trajectory ballistic missile that can be launched from multiple platforms. While the acquisition certainly strengthens Azerbaijan’s capabilities, the articles provide additional things to consider.

The articles from *Kavkazskiy Uzel*, a Russian-language news website with a focus on the Caucasus, and *Haqqin*, also a Russian-language news website with reported ties to the government, reported on the acquisition and both made references to Armenia’s Iskander ballistic missile system. Some see the recent acquisition as Azerbaijan’s answer to Armenia’s Iskanders. In addition to this, *Kavkazskiy Uzel* mentions how the deal to acquire the Polonez likely took place during the Azerbaijan’s defense minister’s “official visit to Belarus on 9-10 October 2017,” while *Haqqin* notes other that “missile systems could also have been purchased in Russia.” Some analysts in the region believe the Azerbaijani government’s latest acquisition represents another step to diversify security cooperation partners, specifically, to rely less on Russia or push the Russian government for better deals.

The other articles represent the reaction to the acquisition in Armenia, with the article from *Armenpress* noting how “Armenia had blocked its fellow CSTO colleague from selling the Polonez systems to Azerbaijan” earlier this year, but that the sale and delivery ultimately went through. The article from *News Armenia* dates back to October 2017, when news first broke that Azerbaijan’s defense minister visited Belarus. It notes that the Armenian government has known for some time of Azerbaijan’s interest in the Polonez system. A regional military analyst also noted that “Azerbaijan already has a solid collection of MLRS.” While Armenian officials are likely concerned with Azerbaijan’s latest acquisition, it appears that they do not consider the Polonez or LORA to be more of a threat than what they currently face. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“Information about Azerbaijan’s intent to purchase the MLRS ‘Polonez’ has long been exaggerated and is by no means ‘news’.”

Source: “Medjid, Faik. “Азербайджан продемонстрировал новые ракетные комплексы (Azerbaijan demonstrated new missile systems),” *Kavkazskiy Uzel*, 12 June 2018. <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/321585/>

...the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan received the operational-tactical missile systems “Polonez” and LORA, of Belarusian and Israeli production, respectively... Azerbaijan’s Defense Minister, Zakir Hasanov, made an official visit to Belarus on 9-10 October 2017. His delegation visited the research and production facilities of the military-industrial complex of Belarus...

...(the Polozen) is designed to destroy nuclear and chemical facilities, main military groupings, air and air defense assets, command posts, and radio-electronic facilities in enemy territory. The LORA (Long-Range Artillery Missile) system serves a similar function...the acquisition of the Polonaise and LORA systems by the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan neutralizes the threats from Armenia’s Iskander rockets...

Source: “Чем азербайджанский «Полонез» лучше армянского «Искандера» (What Azerbaijan’s “Polonez” is better for than Armenia’s “Iskander”),” *Haqqin*, 13 June 2018. <https://haqqin.az/investigations/130495>

...the missile carries out random or programmed evasive action during the flight to the target, impeding the detection and interception of it...The Belarusian “Polonez” is often classified as a multiple rocket launch system, but it is actually closer to an operational-tactical missile system...

What could have been purchased instead of this?

There are a lot of Russian weapons in Azerbaijan’s army. The BTR-82A, T-90S tanks, the 2S31 “Vena” and other weapons were recently purchased. Missile systems could also have been purchased in Russia. Russia has the Iskander...

...the Russian system loses to the Belarusian in deployment time by a factor of two: the Russian system can fire at two targets, the Belarusian system – eight...The only thing the Belarusian system is weaker on is the power of the warhead...

Source: “Stepan Kocharyan, “Despite blocking attempts, Belarus eventually delivers multiple rocket launchers to Azerbaijan,” *Armenpress*, 11 June 2018. <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/937000.html>

Belarus has eventually supplied Azerbaijan with the Polonez multiple rocket launchers, according to Azerbaijani media...In April, Russian Kommersant newspaper reported that Belarus is planning to implement its first export of the systems, and the newspaper mentioned Azerbaijan as a likely client.

...Earlier in February, Russian newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda reported that Armenia had blocked its fellow CSTO colleague from selling the Polonez systems to Azerbaijan. “We wanted to sell Polonez to Azerbaijan. But Armenia, our colleague in the CSTO, opposed this. The deal didn’t take place,” Belarusian military analyst Alexander Alesin had said. Nevertheless, the official photos of the Azerbaijani defense ministry from today’s event clearly show the Polonez systems in Azerbaijan.

Source: “Эксперт: Закупка Азербайджаном РСЗО «Полонез» не может быть равноценной армянским «Искандерам» (Expert: Azerbaijan’s purchase of the MLRS “Polonez” is not an equivalent to Armenia’s “Iskander”),” *News Armenia*, 12 October 2017. <https://news.am/rus/news/414737.html>

Information about Azerbaijan’s intent to purchase the MLRS “Polonez” has long been exaggerated and is by no means “news”...According to the military expert (Arkady Grigoryan), Azerbaijan already has a solid collection of MLRS – the (BM-30) “Smerch,” the (T-122) “Sakarya” and now the “Polonez”...