



## Armenia Gears Up for 'Future Wars'

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**OE Watch Commentary:** In mid-March, the Armenian Ministry of Defense (MoD) released an 18-page strategic document entitled “2018–2024 Modernization Program for the Armenian Armed Forces.” The document lays out a framework for boosting technological innovation in the defense and security sector, raising the moral resiliency of Armenian troops, and preparing them for the challenges of modern warfare. It is designed to provide strategic guidance for the “long-term fundamental adaptation process” of the Armed Forces to hone and enhance their military prowess.

The adopted “Modernization Program” touches on a wide range of spheres, including military diplomacy, good operative governance, military-industry upgrades and arms procurement policy. It also regulates the military’s engagement with the civilian sector and non-military contested spaces, such as the cyber, radio-electronic and information domains. Pointedly, the document identifies Azerbaijan as an imminent security threat to Armenia.

Furthermore, it acknowledges that besides being the “main guarantor of Armenia’s national security,” the Armenian Armed Forces will continue to serve as the critical security guarantor for the population of Artsakh (Karabakh). It estimates that a breakthrough in the negotiation process over the final status of Karabakh, mediated by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s (OSCE) Minsk Group is “less likely.” Indeed, the document does not rule out an “abrupt resumption of hostilities” that could escalate “into a full-scale war” and spill over from the Karabakh region onto Armenian territory.

In parallel to releasing the “Modernization Program,” Armenian authorities reportedly launched a process to revise the country’s National Security Concept, which has not been modified since 2007. Notably, this year, Armenia will be completing its transition from a presidential to a parliamentary republic. In assessing the value of the newly adopted program, MoD spokesperson Arcrun Hovhannisyan stressed that for the first time ever, an Armenian strategic document calls for boosting non-linear defense and security capabilities in the contested cyberspace and information domains. He added that “the document is as characteristic example of our resolve to pursue a new armed forces concept whereby our local military-industrial complex will meet approximately 25 percent of our domestic needs.”

Another key objective in the document is to adopt efficiently synchronized command, control and communications for the military and integrate them into a single information space. Presumably, this will require the procurement of advanced components related to command, control, computers, communications, real-time surveillance, reconnaissance, navigation and precision strike. The intensive four-day fighting between Armenian and Azerbaijani troops, which occurred in April 2016 across the Line of Contact (LoC) in Artsakh, provided a new impulse in Yerevan to accelerating the testing and adoption of these systems.

Despite Moscow’s tense stand-off with the West and international isolation, the new Armenian strategic program nevertheless cements the country’s loyalty to Russia. It restates Armenia’s pivotal reliance on Russia’s regional security architecture as well as espouses its full-fledged alliance with Russia under bilateral and multilateral dimensions, including within the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), leaving almost no room for strategic-level engagement with other actors.

The Modernization Program explicitly accuses Azerbaijan of “instigating” a regional arms race. But it stresses that Armenia’s policy is to focus on the actual effectiveness of its procured armaments instead of simply matching the numbers of weapons systems wielded by its regional rival. Nevertheless, analysis of the document’s content suggests that, at least at this stage, Armenia hews most closely to a classic “deterrence-by-punishment” approach underpinned by capabilities to carry out pre-emptive strikes.

The “Modernization Program” also stresses that strategic containment involves not only threatening to shift combat operations to an adversary’s territory, but also deterrence via diplomatic and non-military means. As for technical modernization and arms procurement policy, the Armed Forces strategic planning document calls for reinforcing Armenia’s precision-guided ballistic missile as well as long-range artillery capabilities with “modern equipment to permit carrying out disproportional combat punishment actions.” The goal is the ability to execute “accurate long-range strikes deep inside enemy territory” in order to hit command-and-control systems as well as essential military-economic infrastructure. But it is unclear whether Armenia will have the resources to achieve it. **End OE Watch Commentary (Abrahamyan)**

**Source:** “Armenia: Azerbaijani subversive attacks on Karabakh will cease soon,” *Panarmenian.net*, 15 December 2017. <http://panarmenian.net/m/eng/news/249960>

*Minimization of subversive attacks by Azerbaijan is connected with the installation of special equipment on the line of contact in Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh), Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan said in an interview with Armenia TV on Thursday, December 14.*

*“Following the installation of surveillance systems, 2-3 attempts of subversive attacks were made all of which failed. As a result, the possibility for organizing such operations has dropped,” the president said, adding that Azerbaijan’s subversive attacks and other actions alike will be ruled out...*