
Growing Army For Preserving Of Military Balance In The Region

by Irakly Aladishvili
Kviris Palitra (Tbilisi), 17/9/2007 Agency WPS
DEFENSE and SECURITY (Russia) - 28/9/2007

GEORGIAN ARMY IS INCREASED FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF PARITY WITH THE ARMED FORCES OF ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN; The Georgian political community is alarmed by the bill submitted to the parliament and implying an increase in strength of the national armed forces from 28,000 to 32,000 servicemen.

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The parliamentary majority believes that for the prevention of internal and external threats, it is necessary to increase the army.

Moreover, Nika Rurua, chair of the parliamentary defense and security committee, presumes that quantitative growth of the army may continue further and by the end of the year the overall quantity of servicemen of regular military units and trained reservists will reach 90,000.

Part of the parliamentary opposition criticizes the presidential and the governmental initiative for increase of strength of the Georgian army. Opposition says that army should be strengthened not as a result of quantitative growth but by other ways. Some people even think that the growth of the military budget for the needs of the growing army is necessary for the authorities to win the upcoming elections.

It is a fact that Georgia has the smallest armed forces in the region. According to the quantity of personnel, they are 33.33% smaller than the Armenian army and 56.54% smaller than the army of Azerbaijan.

Now matter how good and friendly the relations are with a neighboring country it is necessary to maintain a certain military balance.

Nobody knows who will be its leader tomorrow and which claims the country may have against you, moreover so when common borders with these countries are not definitively settled.

We present to the reader exclusive data on the current condition of the armed forces of our neighbors Armenia and Azerbaijan that have never been published before.

The armed forces of Armenia have 43,500 servicemen and the armed forces of Azerbaijan have 65,000 servicemen (leaving apart personnel of the Azerbaijan navy consisting of 2,500 servicemen). People in Georgia protest to formation of the fifth infantry brigade but Armenian army has five army corps formations leaving apart separate regiments and battalions. The Azerbaijani army also has five corps formations (leaving apart separate units). There are up to 7,700 people in the largest third army corps of Armenia based in Vanadzor and the most numerous first Azerbaijani army corps has 13,000 people.

A Georgian infantry brigade has just 3,200 servicemen. Along with this, in the Georgian army a brigade is the largest unit.

Even these dry figures show that any military parity is out of the question now. The situation is the same if not worse in the aspect of armament.

The Azerbaijani army is armed with 261 tanks (including 163 T-72), which is almost 50% more than the tank fleet of Georgia. The Azerbaijani army has a bigger superiority according to artillery. It has 343 artillery systems and mortars of various classes with caliber exceeding 100 millimeters including 12 300-mm multiple rocket launcher systems Smerch with launch range of up to 70 kilometers.

Georgian military aviation cannot be compared to the Azerbaijani one.

Baku has not less than 76 combat airplanes (including 32 supersonic interceptors MiG-25 and 14 fighters MiG-29) and 15 combat helicopters Mi-24.

Armenian army with its 110 tanks (including 102 T-72) is inferior to the Georgian army in this aspect but we should not forget that army of unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic has 100-200% more armament than Armenia.

The quantity of Mi-24 helicopters in Armenia and Georgia is the same (8) but the fleet of combat airplanes of Armenia consisting of 16 airplanes (one interceptor MiG-25 and 15 assault airplanes Su-25) exceeds capabilities of the military aviation of Georgia.

The population of Azerbaijan is 8.4 million people and it is probably not surprising that its armed forces are bigger than the army of Georgia having population of 4.5 million people but population of Armenia is just 3.2 million people.

Besides the observance of military parity with the armies of the neighboring countries the armed forces of Georgia also have and will probably have in the future to counteract to internal and external threats.

If we rule out the possibility of open aggression from the north, on the part of the armed forces of Russia, we have two zones of frozen domestic conflicts. In turn, this circumstance generates the not very pleasant prospect of fighting on two fronts.

Sukhumi and Tskhinvali leaders already signed an agreement to spite Tbilisi implying mutual assistance with the armed forces in case of restarting of hostilities in one of these regions. Just imagine that armed forces of Georgia are simultaneously involved into full-scale combat operations against Tskhinvali and in the Galsky District. Will four infantry brigades of the Georgian army be able to cope with these hazards? Personnel needs rest and reinforcements.

The idea of forming the fifth infantry brigade is no recent development. In the spring of 2005, Irakly Okruashvili, who was the Defense Minister then, said that he would start the formation of the fifth brigade in a conversation with the author of the present article.

It is possible to understand the indignation of a part of the population. They say that in comparison with the military budget, the aid given to the socially underprivileged groups of the population is not big. This situation is also caused by the fact that Georgian army has had a miserable existence for years, its financing has been scarce and now we have to catch up to become a force taken into account in the South Caucasian region. This requires big expenditures.
