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# A small scandal is brewing between Georgia and Azerbaijan

By Nino Kekelia

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Cooperation between Georgia and Armenia in the military area may deteriorate relations between Tbilisi and Baku. According to unofficial information, during Armenian Defence Minister Seyran Ohanyan's visit to Tbilisi on 12 November it was agreed that Georgia will allow the passage of military cargo bound for Armenia through its territory and besides, Armenian army tanks and armoured hardware will be repaired in Tbilisi.

Relevant information was released by Azerbaijan's Trend [news]agency. Rezonansi tried to check the information at the [Georgian] Defence Ministry but, unfortunately, to no avail.

In the meantime, it is said in Baku that Armenian-Georgian relations might affect Azerbaijani-Georgian relations.

A representative of the Azerbaijani president's administration, Novruz Mammadov, has said in an interview with ANS [TV] that Azerbaijan is not going to interfere in Georgian-Armenian relations. However, he did not rule out that relations between these neighbours might affect Azerbaijan too.

"Georgian-Armenian relations may affect Georgian-Azerbaijani relations although both in diplomatic and political terms it would be incorrect to express a position on this today."

Rezonansi was unable to contact the Defence Ministry. We spoke to military expert Giorgi Tavdgiridze to find out how realistic it is to conclude this kind of agreement and whether or not Georgia possesses resources to repair Armenian military hardware.

Forming military agreement with Armenia would be "a mistake"

[Giorgi Tavdgiridze] I think Georgia could not have concluded such an agreement. Given the region's specifics, it would be a mistake to [make] this kind of agreement. As for resources for repairing [the tanks], this is possible indeed. We have a plant and we have engineers. Therefore, it is possible to carry out repair work of a certain degree and size [in Georgia].

"However, one thing should be taken into account - we have an enemy in the face of the Russian state. Armenia, on the other hand, is a difficult state because however strange this might sound, it [Armenia] appears to be Russia's ally because there is a Russian base on its territory. I believe given all this Georgia could not have concluded such an agreement because in that instance it would appear that we would be repairing tanks for an ally of our country's enemy.

"Even had the August events not happened, we should not have taken such a step. We have two neighbouring states - Azerbaijan and Armenia - who are in a conflict. Consequently, it would be erroneous to take such a decision and one that would yield negative results.

"Azerbaijan is a strategic partner and in the event of a war, [our] relations with Azerbaijan will [gain] a strategic importance. If the

agreement does exist, it is bound to bring negative results. It could have been Armenia's wish but the Georgian side [most probably] did not agree to it. We do not know if a relevant agreement was actually reached."

No reason for Azerbaijan's anger

Political analyst Paata Zakareishvili notes that the conclusion of such an agreement does not go beyond business interests and it should not anger Azerbaijan.

"What does Azerbaijan have to do with it? Why should it be angered? What does it matter whether Armenia will construct a plant and repair tanks on its territory or in Georgia? The important thing is not to use the tanks in a war. This is nothing to be angry about in this.

"If Georgia signed such an agreement it does not mean that Georgia supports Armenia against Azerbaijan in this conflict. Georgia is trying to develop its economy and business. There is a plant in the country and we are [trying to] use it.

"If Azerbaijan tries to create difficulties for us in economic terms because of this, it is our government who should take care of it. There is really no reason for conflict in this and I do not think the agreement - if it does exist - will be followed by a major response from Azerbaijan," Zakareishvili said.

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