
Opening Armenian-Turkish Border Wont Result in Russian Withdrawal

NOYAN TAPAN - 15/10/2008

Opening the Armenian-Turkish border will not result in withdrawal of the Russian military base from Armenia, the former deputy minister of defence, chairman of the National Assembly Standing Committee of Defence, National Security and Internal Affairs Arthur Aghabekian stated at the October 14 meeting with reporters. He said that the presence of Russian military in Armenia is conditioned by the existence of an agreement between the two countries, under which Russian border-guards protect not only Armenian-Turkish border but also Armenian-Iranian one. He neither denied nor confirmed the rumours about the creation of a second Russian strong point and the possible stationing of Russian peace-keepers in Nagorno Karabakh.

"We will not give a single inch to the enemy," he declared when expressing his attitude to the possibility of returning the liberated territories. He attached importance to the buffer zone formed around Nagorno Karabakh in terms of both military and economic security. In his words, no person in power can make a personal decision on return of the territories.

According to Vahan Shirkhanian, also a former deputy minister of defence, the authorities are one thing in Armenia, the people is quite another, there is no link between them just as any mutual trust and understanding is absent. Under such conditions he did not exclude the possibility that the authorities will take a decision to return the territories. As for Russian military bases, V. Shirkhanian said it will be a good thing if even one military base is kept in Armenia.
