

**Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia
European G. Marshall Center on Security Studies**

SEMINAR

On introducing the civilian element in the Ministry of Defense and reforms of “Law on Defense”

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Opening speech – tabling the objectives

Speaker: Deputy Minister of Defense; General-Lieutenant A. Aghabekyan

Dear guests,
Colleagues,

First I would like to welcome the organizers, participants and guests of this event and thank them for organizing these important and necessary discussions.

Today, when the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia has initiated the defense reforms, the main objective of which is modernization and efficiency increase of the defense system of the Republic of Armenia, such seminars and conferences are necessary to study the international experience, to get consulting services and correctly guide the reforms.

In this regard we put a special importance to cooperation with G. Marshal European Center of Security Studies that has rich traditions and rich scientific-educational potential.

We are happy that this cooperation lasts for more than 10 years: since 1995 many Armenian servicemen actively participate to training courses, seminars and conferences organized by G. Marshal European Center of Security Studies. Many officers that graduated those courses hold high rank positions in the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia.

In recent years the cooperation between the Center and the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia gets a bilateral nature – they organize highly demanded various consultative visits, discussions and events.

We expect that the cooperation with G. Marshal European Center of Security Studies will continue also during the defense reform process of Armenia, as the core of the defense reforms is the introduction of international standards in the army.

To organize the reforms process more effectively the leadership of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia envisages to utilize the entire scope of cooperation with allies and partners – including Armenia-NATO Individual Partnership Action Plan, Planning and Review Process, cooperation with US and European countries.

I need also to inform that with the purpose of defense reforms upon the relevant order of the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia an intra-ministerial commission with two sub-commissions have been established and enacted.

The defense reforms of the Republic of Armenia are of comprehensive nature and include approximately all the defense sectors. I would conditionally divide those reforms into three phases:

1. adoption of conceptual approaches; development of Military Doctrine and legislation reforms with the purpose of specifying the Armenia security provision principles; system of military security provision, its structure, objectives, activities and development directions and goals – 2007-2008;
2. military defensive revision – identification and planning of opportunities and modernization needs and needed reforms in the armed forces – 2008-2010;
3. implementation of practical reforms with the application of national and international opportunities for the armed forces - 2010-2015.

The implementation of the following key objectives is aimed at the defense reforms:

- modernization and combat capacity increase of the armed forces with the introduction of the modern criteria;
- provision of the military security of the Republic of Armenia by neutralizing the real and possible military threats;
- commitment to the provision of the proper share in international security by the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia by expanding the interoperability opportunities with various international security structures;
- provision of stable and comprehensive development of the armed forces by introducing flexible, transparent and effective systems.

We envisage beginning and completing the development of the Defense Doctrine during 2007. As in case of the national security strategy during the development of the

Defense Doctrine we will need the consulting of various countries and leading European institutes (like G. Marshal European Center of Security Studies). In this regard we put a special importance to the doctrine's methodology and structural approached: we want it to comply with the acceptable international standards and become a practical document – to ensure the sustainable development of the armed forces.

The revision of the military defensive also requires great expert and professional potential. The main objective of the revision is the assessment of the defense system the Republic of Armenia and identification of the development needs. Herewith, we need to make accurate calculations, prospective analysis and adopt new approaches. I think the cooperation with G. Marshal European Center of Security Studies in this regard also opens large prospective.

The defense reforms also set up needs for legislative reforms, as the existing defense legislation, without putting it into compliance with present realities and future needs, will constrain the opportunities for democratization and modernization of the armed forces. Today, the issues of the defense sector are regulated by laws, which have been passed around a decade ago, when we needed to solve only the priority issues; whereas, during the last decade many things have changed – starting from the security issues up to the Constitution of the republic. Herewith, we have an objective to put all those laws into compliance with modern requirements and in case of need to pass new ones. The legal framework of the defense sector shall fully regulate all the issues of that sector – at the same time giving opportunities for the future development of the armed forces.

During three days of this seminar I will separately brief you about the issues of introducing the civilian element by means of vertical command reforms of the defense sector, as well as amendments to “Law on Defense” within the context of reforms of defense legislation. However, now I would like to draw your attention to some issues, which I think from the very beginning of the seminar will cause interesting discussions and constructive debates.

One of the key objectives of the defense reforms is to introduce civilian element into the defense system. This is not a formal need, which we randomly chose. The introduction of the civilian element and in general the increase of the role of the civilians in organizing the defense directly stems from the need of democratic control of the armed forces, involvement of skilled specialists and specification of the functions of various sub-divisions.

To introduce the civilian element first of all one needs to separate the powers of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia and General Staff. In this regard I have to mention that for us it is more appropriate to have an integrated and united

Ministry of Defense and General Staff, which will ensure a reporting system from the President to the Minister of Defense, from the Minister of Defense to Head of GS of AF, from Head of GS of AF to sub-divisions.

However, if the Ministry of Defense shall focus on the development of the defense policy; organization of draft, development of the defense budget and centralized procurement, then the General Staff shall focus on the development of united military direction and tactical plans of the actions of the armed forces. In other words, the General Staff shall full administer the forces of the Ministry of Defense (including the combat and rear support divisions). The General Staff shall get broad powers for planning and integrating all types of forces during peaceful times (RA AF, boarder troops, internal troops and other troops) – with an objective to perform joint operative missions.

Such division of the powers of the united Ministry of Defense and General Staff will enable to further specify the functions of command and control of the armed forces and defence policy, as well as will lay good grounds for introduction of mainly civilian personnel in the Ministry of Defense.

The mere separation of the powers of the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff is not sufficient for the introduction of the civilian personnel. We shall develop procedures, which will enable to choose and train experts of civilian defense – to appoint to the relevant civilian positions. The introduction of the civilian personnel will also require classification of financial remuneration, including bonuses - as by civilian and military personnel; development of education and training criteria – for recognition of military qualifications in the civilian educational system, etc.

With an objective to solve those issues the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia has initiated the reforms of the defense legislation – to ensure the legal basis for introduction of the civilian personnel.

The first of them is “Law on Defense”. In regard of reforms this law is the most vulnerable, as adopted on May 29, 1997, apart from the existing shortfalls, it is also morally obsolete and is not in compliance with the spirit and goal of the defense reforms.

Given this circumstance, as well as the need of separation of powers between the Ministry of Defense and GS and their new redistribution, I recommend that during the seminar the discussions on making amendments in “Law on Defense” shall focus on the Article 10, which stipulates the form and system of the administration and management of the armed forces. I will brief you about it separately.

Besides the law shall also enable for democratic control of the armed forces. I think the direct means of the democratic control of AF is the strengthening of the parliamentary control. Today, in “Law on Defense” among the functions of the Armenian state bodies the functions of the National Assembly are not stipulated. It is logical, as the

actual management of the defense system is a function of the executive. The Constitution does not envisage administrative functions for the National Assembly in defense sector either, but gives certain supervision powers. However, I think that the stipulation of supervisory powers of NA in “Law on Defense” will enable to expand the role of the National Assembly in defense and defense budget issues. It will reinforce the link Ministry of Defense – National Assembly and with this the democratic control over the defense structure.

Today, as a result of defense reforms the newly formed units of RA AF in compliance with international criteria, like the peacekeeping battalion (brigade), according to those criteria shall be able to oppose not only the threats to the borders and important state infrastructure of the country, but also unconventional threats and to participate to the elimination activities of the consequences of man-made and natural disasters in Armenia and in the region. In general the unities of the Armenian armed forces in force majeure circumstances are involved in elimination of their consequences. However, the “Law on Defense” does not regulate this issue either, the aforementioned functions are not included in Article 9, which stipulates the objectives and structure of the armed forces in defense.

There are many such bottlenecks in the law and this seminar sets up a good opportunity to discuss those issues and find optimal solutions for them. I think that all participants with their active participation and valuable expert recommendations will contribute to targeted use this opportunity.

One thing is clear: we have adopted the way to reform the armed forces and are decisive in implementing it, as we are convinced that there is not alternative for the development and modernization of our army and making it pertinent to the requirements of 21st century.

In the end I would like to thank again G. Marshal European Center of Security Studies for organizing this interesting event and all the participants for interested participation.

I am looking forward to a constructive and working seminar.

I wish everyone fruitful work.

Thank you.