
Azerbaijan misusing military budget – paper.

Gun, Baku

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Excerpt from report by Eltac Isazada in Azerbaijani newspaper Gun on 29 July headlined "Our tank has set in motion" and subheaded "While Azerbaijan is spending its military budget on construction and repair work, cash-strapped Armenia is spending money on more up-to-date weapons"

Azerbaijan's military spending is rapidly growing. While our military budget totalled 330m dollars just a year ago, the inflow of oil money into Azerbaijan has made it possible to double this figure. Our military spending reached 660m dollars after it increased by another 60m dollars a while ago. It is expected to total at least 1bn dollars next year.

But in general, our military budget is not fulfilling its true functions in Azerbaijan. It has become a political tool. The authorities justify the growing military spending with the Armenian occupation of Azerbaijani territories.

These days we often hear the commander-in-chief, the defence minister and other officials saying that our military spending will increase. Even President Ilham Aliyev has openly said that the rise in military spending is connected with Armenia. Aliyev has repeatedly said on his visits to Azerbaijani regions and during the opening ceremonies of military facilities that Azerbaijan's military budget will increase and equal Armenia's overall state budget.

In recent years, the additional funds allocated to the military have been spent more on some construction and repair work, not on improving our army's defence capability and on the purchase of military hardware. And some of the budget funds are spent on the purchase of tables, chairs, cupboards and other equipment for our soldiers and officers.

As one can see in the draft military budget, 73 per cent (194m manats [230m dollars]) of the additional funds allocated to the military will be spent on the purchase of equipment and hardware. For instance, 200m dollars of this year's 660m-dollar military budget will be spent only on the purchase of equipment.

[Passage omitted: it is impossible to improve the combat readiness of an army by carrying out construction work in military bases]

Azerbaijan's Defence Ministry recently purchased nearly 1,000 Kamaz trucks, pieces of sanitary-medical and communications equipment from Russia.

One more interesting point is that most of the arms and military hardware the government buys from abroad were produced back in the 1950s and 1960s. Even Armenia, which is at war with Azerbaijan, and neighbouring Georgia are ahead of us on this issue. Unlike Azerbaijan, these two countries buy more up-to-date weapons and military hardware.

Under the UN quota, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uganda recently bought T-72 tanks for at least 900,000 dollars each, says military expert Uzeyir Cafarov. But the technical capabilities of the tanks purchased

by Georgia and Uganda were better than those purchased by Azerbaijan.

While Georgia and Uganda bought T-72-II and T-72-III tanks, Azerbaijan bought T-72-I tanks. As for Armenia, this country purchased Category A T-80 tanks, which have greater capabilities.

Under the UN quota, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan can have 220 tanks each. The prices of weapons and ammunition differ depending on their military and technical capabilities. Therefore, these three countries are free to buy weapons and military hardware that are of the same kind, but differ in terms of their capabilities.

This means that international law allows us to spend a lot of money on the most up-to-date weapons. The Armenians are making proper use of this opportunity. But Azerbaijan is spending funds on the cheapest weapons under the pretext of saving budget money.

In other words, even if Azerbaijan's military budget grows larger than Armenia's overall state budget, there is little hope that this will help improve the combat readiness of our army. Because in fact, Azerbaijan is spending its growing military budget on the construction of military facilities and new centres [as given], as well as on the purchase of cheap and old weapons, while cash-strapped Armenia prefers more up-to-date weapons.

[Passage omitted: experts say Azerbaijan should reconsider this policy]
