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## ARMENIAN MILITARY SEEKS MORE WEAPONS

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Armenia is planning to more arms acquisitions in addition to \$200 million defense contracts recently signed with Russia, Defense Minister Vigen Sargsian said on Friday.

Sargsian made clear that Russia will not be the sole source of more arms supplies to the Armenian military. But he refused to name other potential or actual suppliers.

What we have been receiving from Russia \*□□□□□ satisfy our Armed Forces need for state-of-the-art weapons, he told a news conference. We are therefore looking for all opportunities in the Russian market and other partner countries to supply our Armed Forces will necessary weapons.

Sargsian said that Yerevan is also negotiating with Western nations on possible arms supplies but refused to name any of them. I cannot say much because such negotiations are confidential, he said.

We are continuing our dialogue with all potential partners and already have results and even supplies, added the minister appointed in October.

Russia has always been Armenias number one arms supplier, reflecting close militaries ties between the two states. Membership in the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) has enabled Armenia to receive Russian weapons at discounted prices or even for free.

In 2015, Moscow approved a \$200 million loan to Yerevan which is being spent on the purchase of more Russian military at internal Russian prices that are well below market-based levels. The Russian government subsequently publicized a long list of items which the Armenian side is allowed to buy with that money. It includes, among other things, the Smerch multiple-launch rocket system, TOS-1A heavy flamethrower, anti-tank weapons and shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles.

Sargsian said that some of that weaponry has already been delivered to Armenia. The Armenian Defense Ministry is keen to get hold of the remaining weapons covered by the loan as soon as possible, he said.

The Armenian military demonstrated Smerch systems as well as several other new weapons at a September 2016 parade in Yerevan.

The parade also featured Iskander missiles also acquired from Russia. The cost and source of funding for that acquisition remains unknown. Citing senior Russian defense industry executives,

the Russian daily Vedomosti said earlier in September that Armenia did not use the \$200 million loan to pay for the advanced missiles that have a firing range of at least 300 kilometers.

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Kaynak/Source: