
WHY DID ARMENIA DROP OUT OF NATO EXERCISES AT LAST MINUTE?

-

06.09.2017

Vestnik Kavkaza 6 Sep 2017

Giorgi Kalatozishvili

Tbilisi characterized Armenias hesitation about participation in the NATO exercises on the territory of Georgia as I wish I may approach.

The NATO military drills Agile Spirit-2017 continues in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region with a predominantly Armenian population, South Georgia. The conventional firing drills are conducted by 1,515 soldiers and officers of various military specialties at the country's largest military range Orfelo. Among them there are 500 soldiers of the US Marine Corps, as well as the units of the armed forces of Georgia, Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia and Azerbaijan. The artillery systems and American tanks Abrams are used in the drills. Noteworthy, that just a few months ago, in June, even larger military drills - Noble Partner 2017 - with the participation of 2,800 military personnel took place at the former military base of Vaziani near Tbilisi. 1,600 Americans participated in the drills.

The fact that the US is increasingly initiating military maneuvers in Georgia, inviting not only its NATO partners, but also regional states, is no longer considered extraordinary. But this time the drills were accompanied by a scandal: the Armenian soldiers, despite the invitation and preliminary consent, unexpectedly dropped out the day before the start of the exercises, refusing to come to Georgia. Moreover, Deputy Defense Minister Artak Zakaryan accused the Georgian officials and journalists of spreading the false information. According to Zakaryan, Yerevan did not give its consent to participate in these exercises, therefore, all the reports on Armenia's refusal to send its military units to Orfelo are fake. "I do not know why and how Armenia appeared on this list, we never stated that we intend to take part in these drills, the deputy head of the defense ministry said, calling his country a NATO-partner.

The Georgian Defense Ministry was bewildered by the statements of the Armenian side. "I can say with confidence and confirm unequivocally that Armenia not only received the invitation, but also agreed to send the military unit to Orfelo," the head of the press service of the Ministry, Nino Tolordava, said to Vestnik Kavkaza. She specified that the official representative of the Armenian Defense Ministry confirmed participation in the exercises at the preliminary conference before the drills. This statement was made in presence of the envoys from the defense departments and armed forces of all the participating states," Tolordava reminded, adding that the Armenian representative not only announced the participation of the Armenian Armed Forces, but also named the number of Armenian servicemen going to Georgia.

As for the refusal to participate in the drills, Nino Tolordava drew attention to the fact that Tbilisi did not receive any official messages or explanations from Yerevan, except for the press statements made by the Deputy Minister of Defense of the Republic.

The rector of the Georgian Diplomatic Academy, Iosif Tsintsadze, said in an interview with Vestnik Kavkaza, that he was not surprised by Armenia's unexpected refusal: "We can only sympathize with the Armenian leadership guided by principle I wish I may. According to Tsintsadze, Yerevan's initial consent to participate in the exercises was largely due to the intensification of the pro-Western opposition in Armenia, as well as the pressure of the diasporas in the US and Europe." But at the last moment Erevan decided to withdraw not to annoy the other partners who, apparently, reacted harshly to the Armenian units participation in the previous Noble Partner drills.

Kaynak/Source: