
KARABAKH ARMY CHIEF SACKED

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The commander of Nagorno-Karabakhs Armenian-backed army, Lieutenant General Levon Mnatsakanian, was dismissed on Friday two weeks after Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian reacted angrily to Karabakh officials strong criticism of one of his close associates.

Mnatsakanian was replaced by the chief of the Karabakh Defense Army staff, Major General Karen Abrahamian. Colonel Jalal Harutiunian, who commanded an army division, took up the post held by Abrahamian until now.

Bako Sahakian, the Karabakh president who formalized these personnel changes, presented the newly appointed officials to the army top brass at a meeting in Stepanakert. Lieutenant General Artak Davtian, the chief of the Armenian armies General Staff, also attended the meeting.

According to an official press release, Sahakian praised Mnatsakanians great contribution to the Karabakh Armenian military. He also announced that the fired general will take over as head of Karabakhs emergency situations service.

Sahakians spokesman, Davit Babayan, claimed that Mnatsakanian himself wanted to be relieved of his duties. The general told Tert.am on Thursday, however, that he has not tendered his resignation.

Mnatsakanian gave no reason for his sacking in a written farewell address to local military personnel circulated by the Defense Army later on Friday. He said he will always be ready to rejoin the army if need be.

Mnatsakanians impending dismissal was announced by several Armenian media outlets late on Wednesday. They linked it to Pashinians public spat with Karabakh Armenian leaders which erupted during Armenias recent parliamentary election campaign.

One of the Armenian premiers key political allies, Sasun Mikaelian, caused uproar when he declared late last month that this springs protest movement that brought Pashinian to power was more important than the Armenian victory in the 1991-1994 war with Azerbaijan.

Mikaelians remark was condemned by Armenian opposition politicians as well as senior officials in Stepanakert, including Sahakians and Mnatsakanians spokesmen. Pashinian portrayed it a slip of the tongue and accused the critics of misinterpreting what Mikaelian meant to say.

Pashinian specifically lambasted the Karabakh leadership, accusing it of meddling in the Armenian

parliamentary race. Sober up and mind your business, he said at a November 29 campaign rally. I will certainly discuss this with you, but only after the elections.

Pashinian and Sahakian met in Yerevan on Thursday. The Armenian prime ministers office issued no statements on their meeting.

Babayan denied any connection between Pashinians reaction and the Karabakh army chiefs sacking. Its just not right to try to see disagreements between Mother Armenia and Artsakh (Karabakh) * National unity is our supreme value, the Karabakh official told RFE/RLs Armenian service.

Born and raised in Karabakh, Mnatsakanian, 53, commanded various Karabakh Armenian army units during the war. He studied at a Russian military academy for high-ranking officers several years before moving to Yerevan in 2012. He served as deputy chief of staff of Armenias armed forces until being appointed as Karabakh army commander in 2015.

Kaynak/Source: