

THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN THE DEFENSE SPHERE*

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Abstract

Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the United States of America were established on 7 January, 1992.

Since the political-economic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the USA have grown rapidly, and these relations have their contribution to the development of cooperation between the two states in the defense sphere, including military education, military medicine, cybersecurity directions, as well as international peacekeeping missions. All these also create the basis for military-technical cooperation. At the same time, the United States is actively participating in the reforms being implemented in the Armenian Armed Forces, including the introduction of a professional sergeant system.

The cooperation between Armenia and the United States in the defense sphere, especially military-technical cooperation, creates a possibility for Armenia to get access to new western advanced military technologies and to diversify the cooperation in the defense sphere.

Keywords: Defense sphere, military education, international peacekeeping mission, Armenia, USA.

Introduction

Armenia and the United States have centuries-old historical relations. Particularly, a strong Armenian community was formed in the United States. The community actively participated in World War I and World War II. There

* In this research paper we continue researching the diversification policy pursued by the Republic of Armenia in the defense sphere. In the previous three papers, we have already touched upon the Armenian-Indian, Armenian-French and Armenian-Greek cooperation in the defense sphere (Nazaryan, 2023, 2024, 2025).

were also active military-political ties between the First Republic of Armenia and the United States in 1918-1920.

Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the United States of America were established on 7 January, 1992 (Official website of the MFA of the RA, 2025a). During the last years, political-economic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the USA have grown fast, which is also contributing to the development of the cooperation between the two states in the defense sphere.

The First Steps of Cooperation between Armenia and the USA in the Defense Sphere

Since the 1990s, political-economic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the United States have been developing. In order to promote the introduction of a post-Soviet democratic governance model and the formation of a liberalized economy, on 12 August 1992 the United States Congress passed Freedom Support Act. Taking into account the war provoked against Nagorno-Karabakh with the help of the Armenian Community and lobbyists 907 Section was included in the text of the Freedom Support Act. The 907 Section banned the U.S. Government to provide any assistance to Azerbaijan “until the President determines, and so reports to the Congress, that the Government of Azerbaijan is taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh” (Armenian Center for American Studies, n.d.). Later, in 1997, the United States became one of the members of the tripartite Co-chairmanship of the OSCE Minsk Group (Russia, France, and the USA) and was engaged in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict regulation process.

In 1994, during his visit to the United States, State Minister on Defense, Security and Internal Affairs of the Republic of Armenia Vazgen Sargsyan had a high-level meeting with his American counterpart Secretary of Defense William Perry. They signed a memorandum on military cooperation in the Pentagon, which was of fundamental importance for U.S.-Armenian defense relations. Some years later, on July 24, 2000, Defense Minister of the Republic of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, met with U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen in Washington. During their meeting, Sargsyan and Cohen signed an agreement on ending the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which included a provision of \$300,000 of equipment and training for Armenia (Sargsyan, 2025).

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, changed the foreign policy priorities of the United States. U.S. President George W. Bush declared a global war on terrorism and international coalition forces led by the United States invaded Afghanistan. In order to support the counterterrorism efforts,

the United States began to provide separate assistance to Afghanistan's immediate neighbors and neighboring countries. In this context, since 2002, security assistance provided to Armenia amounts to approximately 218 million U.S. dollars. At the same time, the United States provided to Azerbaijan (bypassing Resolution 907) about \$395 million. Approximately 2,680 Armenian military personnel received training or education in the United States from 2002 to 2019 under two major programs: "International Security Education and Training" and "Counterterrorism Scholarship Program" at leading U.S. military educational institutions. Meanwhile, approximately 5,100 Azerbaijani military personnel received training in the United States during the same period (Luys Foundation, 2022, pp. 2-4).

In 2001, U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld made a visit to Armenia. That was the first and till now the only visit in history by a U.S. Secretary of Defense to Armenia. Next year, on March 20, 2002, Defense Minister Serzh Sargsyan made his second visit to the U.S. capital and met with Donald Rumsfeld at the Pentagon. Serzh Sargsyan also met with U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. These negotiations led to significant outcomes such as the establishment of the Humanitarian Demining Center of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia in 2002. Moreover, in 2003, Kansas State and the Republic of Armenia were linked under the National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program facilitating cooperation between the Kansas National Guard and the Ministry of Defense (Sargsyan, 2025).

The United States provided Armenia more than \$4 million in 2002, as well as \$3.5 million in 2003, for continuing the program to modernize communication systems of the Armenian Army. The Harris company provided equipment for the modernization of the communication systems of the Armenian Armed Forces as part of the U.S. military assistance. On April 26, 2004, the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia and the U.S. European Command signed an agreement on the purchase and supply of weapons and military equipment, as well as logistical support during the various operations and exercises. In 2005, the United States allocated \$62 million to Armenia, including a small support of \$2 million under the Foreign Military Assistance program ("CAWAT", 2022, p. 5).

From October 31 to November 5, 2004, First Deputy Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia and Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Mikael Harutyunyan (who became Minister of Defense 2007-2008) was in the United States and visited the Central Command in Florida, the Kansas National Guard, and held meeting with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Wagner in Washington. A year later, in October 2005, Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan held separate meetings

with Stephen Hadley, national security advisor of the United States, and U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (Sargsyan, 2025).

Since February 2004, the Armenian Armed Forces have been conducting an international peacekeeping mission (Official website of the MoD of the RA, n.d.). As a result, Armenia and the United States started to cooperate also within the framework of an international peacekeeping mission. On March 19, 2012, a delegation led by the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia, Seyran Ohanyan, left for the United States on a working visit, during which he met with his counterpart Leon Panetta, who expressed gratitude for Armenia's participation in NATO missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan (Sargsyan, 2025). Seyran Ohanyan also had meetings with David Petraeus, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and Lee Tafanelli, Adjutant General of Kansas ("RAZM.info", 2012).

After some years, on October 31, 2017, the opening ceremony of the RA Ministry of Defense "ZAR" training center took place with the participation of RA Minister of Defense Vigen Sargsyan, U.S. Charge d'Affaires in the Republic of Armenia Rafik Mansour, and Deputy Director of the Planning and Policy Directorate of the U.S. European Command, Brigadier General Dawne Deskins. The construction work of the training center was carried out with the co-financing of the American side (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2017). The "ZAR" training center became the main training unit of the peacekeeping brigade of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia, where exercises and trainings of peacekeeping forces are carried out.

Activation of Cooperation between Armenia and the USA in the Defense Sphere after the 44 Day War

After the 44-Day War of 2020 in Nagorno-Karabakh and especially, since 2022, the cooperation between the two states in the defense sphere has entered a qualitatively new phase. It was due to some reasons:

- Firstly, the Azerbaijani aggression on the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia in 2021-2022.
- Secondly, after the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Armed Forces, the Russian Federation cannot fulfill the military contracts of supplying armament to Armenia.
- Thirdly, Armenia is trying to find other sources of supplement military equipment and diversify international cooperation in the field of defense.
- Finally, the weakening of the Russia Federation geostrategic position in the South Caucasus, allowed the United States to strengthen its economic and military-political influence in the region.

On January 19, 2022, a delegation led by U.S. European Command deputy director for partnership, security cooperation and space opportunities, Brigadier General Edward Vaughan, arrived in Armenia on a two-day working visit. The delegation also visited the Central Clinical Military Hospital of the Ministry of Defense, where the ceremony of handing over the technical equipment of the field hospital acquired with the support of the USA took place (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2022a).

Some months later, on September 8, 2022, Defense Minister of the Republic of Armenia Suren Papikyan, within the framework of a working visit, met with U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense for Policy Affairs Colin Kahl at the Pentagon. During the meeting, the entire agenda of the Armenian-American defense cooperation was discussed, and agreements were reached on deepening cooperation in the peacekeeping mission, military education, military medicine and other spheres (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2022b). On November 17, 2022, the reopening ceremony of the "Zar" educational center, renovated with U.S. assistance, took place. RA Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Major General Daniel Lasica, Director of Strategy, Planning and Policy of the U.S. European Command, and other officials participated in the event. The participants of the event toured the reconstructed educational buildings, got acquainted with the work performed, the material and technical base, the conditions created for organizing the educational process of military personnel and conducting tactical and professional training events, as well as followed the demonstration exercise of overcoming the new tactical barrier (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2022c).

Next year, cooperation between the two states became more active. On June 23, 2023, Minister of Defense Suren Papikyan received Laura Kelly, Governor of the State of Kansas and Brigadier General Michael T. Venerdi, the Adjutant General, Commander of Kansas National Guard, who had visited Armenia within the framework of activities dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the Armenia-Kansas partnership. During the meeting, the parties stated the progress of the planned cooperation in the fields of mutual interest, including professional non-commissioned officers (NCO) system, peacekeeping, military medicine, cybersecurity (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2023a).

On July 17, the First Deputy Minister of Defense-Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia, Lieutenant General Edward Asryan, within the framework of a working visit to the United States, participated in the conference dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the U.S. National Guard State Cooperation Program in the capital, Washington. During the event, he met with the Chief of the U.S. National Guard Bureau, General Daniel Hokanson, the U.S. European Command's director of plans, policy,

strategy and capabilities directorate, Major General Daniel Lasika, and the Adjutant General of Kansas National Guard, Brigadier General Michael Venerdi (“Verelq”, 2023a). The next day, Edward Asryan held meetings with the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. Armed Forces, Admiral Christopher Grady, and the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force, General Charles Brown. During the meetings, the current course of the Armenian-American defense partnership and upcoming programs, including the introduction of the professional NCOs system were discussed (“Verelq”, 2023b). In fact the establishment of the professional NCO system in the Armenian Army is implementing with the help of the American side and becomes new direction of cooperation between two states in defense field. At the same time, establishment and development of a professional NCO system is a crucial step and stems from Concept of the Transformation of the Armenian Army. Particularly, a professional NCO system aims to improve unit discipline, and small-unit effectiveness while fostering expertise at all levels (Dermoyan, 2025).

From August 28 to September 23, the personnel of the mobile field hospital of the Military Medical Department of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia participated in the “Fused Sword-2023” multinational military exercise, which was held at the military base located in the city of Hohenfels, Federal Republic of Germany. The medical personnel of the Armenian field hospital with the American side, carried out the evacuation of the wounded in difficult conditions, get acquainted with the special air medical evacuation vehicles of the U.S. Army Medical Service, as well as the capabilities and equipment of the ground armored vehicles for medical evacuation (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2023b).

In September, 2023 Armenia-U.S. exercise “EAGLE PARTNER 2023” in “Zar” Training Center took place. On September 15, Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia Suren Papikyan together with United States Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Armenia Kristina A. Kvien, First Deputy Minister of Defense-Chief of the General Staff of the RA Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Edward Asryan, the Deputy Chief of Staff for the U.S. Army in Europe and Africa Command, Brigadier General Patrick Ellis and the Commander of the 10th Mountain Division, Major General Gregory Anderson watched the final phase of the exercise (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2023c).

On November 1-3, 2023 the Chief of the General Staff of the RA Armed Forces - First Deputy Minister of Defense, Lieutenant General Edward Asryan visited the U.S. European Command Center located in Stuttgart. He held a meeting with the Deputy Commander for U.S. European Command, Lieutenant General Stephen Basham, who expressed the willingness of the

USA to continue supporting current cooperation programs in the following areas: professionalization of the Armenian Armed Forces, professional sergeant staff's strengthening, modernization of the management system, peacekeeping, military medicine, military education, combat readiness, trainings, etc. Edward Asryan also visited the Joint Multinational Readiness Centre of the U.S. Ground Forces in Europe and the NCO Academy located in Hohenfels (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2023d).

Next year, from July 15 to 24, 2024 the Armenian-American military exercise "EAGLE PARTNER 2024" was held in Armenia. Military personnel from the peacekeeping brigade of the Armenian Armed Forces, the U.S. Army in Europe and Africa and the Kansas Army National Guard were involved in the exercise. The purpose of the exercise was to enhance the interoperability of units participating in international peacekeeping missions, exchange best practices in control and tactical communication, and improve the readiness of the Armenian unit (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2024a). At the same time, the U.S. ambassador in Yerevan, Kristina Kvien, confirmed in the interview that the United States would appoint a resident adviser to the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia as part of deepening ties between the two nations ("Radio Liberty", 2024).

At the end of the year, active visits continued. Particularly on October 16, 2024, on the sidelines of his working visit to the United States, the First Deputy Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia-Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Edward Asryan held a meeting with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the United States Armed Forces, General Charles Brown. The U.S. side reaffirmed its commitment to support the ongoing transformation and reforms of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2024b).

On December 4, 2024, within the framework of his working visit to the United States, the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia Suren Papikyan met Mr. Bruce LaFlam, Vice President of the American "Milliken & Company", and Mr. Scott J. Grupp and Tommy Young, Directors of company's military and international programs, in the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in the United States. The company is specialized in the design and development of military uniforms. The discussions focused on potential cooperation in the development of a new uniform for the Armenian Armed Forces (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2024c). The next day, on December 5, 2024, Suren Papikyan held a meeting with the United States Secretary of Defense, Lloyd J. Austin III in capital Washington. Suren Papikyan outlined the ongoing reforms within the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia and highlighted the priority areas of cooperation, including military education, combat training, joint exercises in preparation for

participation in international peacekeeping missions, the development of professional NCO and instructor corps, and the establishment of educational and training capabilities for the RA Armed Forces (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2024d). Welcoming Suren Papikyan, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III emphasized the historic significance of the RA Defense Minister's visit and noted that, over the past two years, the U.S. had provided Armenia with key security assistance, including armored ambulances, a cybersecurity operations center and a national training center (Clark, 2024). In this context, particularly the United States has provided the Armenian Ministry of Defense with approximately \$18 million in Foreign Military Financing to support the purchase of armored ambulances, the development of a Cyber Defense Operations Center, and improving National Training Center capabilities. Armenia joined the International Counter Ransomware Initiative in December 2024 and the United States is also collaborating with Armenia as it develops its national cybersecurity strategy, including the establishment of a National Computer Incident Response Team (U.S. Department of State, 2025).

At the beginning of the next year, on January 14, 2025 the signing of the Strategic Partnership Charter between the Republic of Armenia and the United States of America took place in the U.S. Department of State in Washington. On behalf of the Republic of Armenia, the document was signed by Minister of Foreign Affairs Ararat Mirzoyan, and on behalf of the United States, by Secretary of State Antony Blinken. In Section III (Defense and Security) of the Charter is written: "The United States supports an independent, sovereign, and democratic Armenia. A peaceful South Caucasus is foundational to Armenia's continued economic growth and democratic development, and that of the region. Defense and security cooperation between Armenia and the United States benefits both nations and the region.

1. Recognizing the persistence of threats to global peace and stability, Armenia and the United States intend to expand the scope of their defense and security cooperation programs, including through establishing bilateral defense consultations within the next year and assisting the Armenian military through professional military assistance training.
2. The United States recognizes Armenia's important contributions to peacekeeping efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, Lebanon, and Mali. Deepening Armenia's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions is a mutual priority, and we plan to expand security cooperation and reform programs intended to increase Armenian interoperability and to strengthen Armenia's defense.

3. Acknowledging the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction*, Armenia and the United States plan to explore means to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and dangerous technologies through adherence to international nonproliferation standards, effective enforcement of export controls, and strengthened enforcement of such controls. To this end, the United States intends to support the capacity building of the Armenian Border Guard Service** and State Revenue Committee.
4. Recognizing the persistent threat to government, business, and the public from malicious cyber actors, Armenia and the United States intend to work towards an innovative, secure, and rights-respecting digital future. Armenia and the United States plan to continue to hold regular consultations on existing and new cyber threats.
5. The United States intends to continue to foster rights-respecting institutions, including by supporting Armenia's efforts to reform and modernize its Ministry of Internal Affairs*** and law enforcement agencies. Such support is expected to include police education and other measures to provide for public safety, to investigate and hold accountable those responsible for abuses, and to combat transnational crime and corruption" (Official website of the MFA of the RA, 2025b).

In February 2025, within the framework of the bilateral cooperation between the two countries, the field mobile hospital of the Military Medical Support Department of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia participated in the multinational military exercise "Combined Resolve-2025", which was held at the U.S. military base in Hohenfels, Federal Republic of Germany. Medical personnel of the Republic of Armenia's Ministry of

* Within the framework of the program to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Nuclear Smuggling Detection and Deterrence, donated technical means and equipment with a total value of about 500 million dollars to the National Security Service (NSS) of RA ("Factor TV", 2025).

** The United States has provided \$27 million in funding to support Armenia's efforts to develop its border security capabilities, in collaboration with State's Export Control and Border Security program and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (U.S. Department of State, 2025). In the framework of this aid, in 2025, the United States also supplied 10 Toyota Fortuners, Toyota Prados, and Toyota Hiace cars to the border guard troops of the NSS of RA, the total value of which exceeded 500,000 dollars ("Radio Liberty", 2025a).

*** The U.S. has contributed more than \$16 million to the development of the Patrol Police Service in Armenia, as announced by Uzra Zeya, Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, during her visit to the new buildings of the Patrol Service and Operational Management ("ABC media", 2024). The U.S. is also providing support in the retraining process of the RA Ministry of Internal Affairs Police Guard personnel (Official website of the MIA of the RA, 2025).

Defense and the jointly formed groups of partners from the U.S. National Guard were involved in the military exercise (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2025a).

On August 12, 2025, the Armenia-U.S. joint exercise “EAGLE PARTNER 2025” started. Servicemembers from the peacekeeping brigade of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia, U.S. Army Europe and Africa, and the Kansas National Guard participated in the exercise. The primary objectives of the exercise were to: enhance the interoperability of units participating in international peacekeeping missions, exchange best practices in control and tactical communication, and improve the readiness of the peacekeeping unit of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2025b).

On October 15, 2025, Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia Suren Papikyan met with the U.S. Under Secretary of War for Policy Elbridge Colby at the Pentagon. During the meeting, the parties discussed various issues related to the current state of the Armenia-U.S. defense cooperation, and the implementation of joint initiatives in the fields of military education and defense reforms (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2025c). The previous day, on October 14, Suren Papikyan once again met with the leadership of the American company “Milliken” in Washington. During the meeting, the sides discussed issues related to the current stage of the process of developing a new uniform for the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2025d). As a result, in December, the company supplied the first trial batch of the new uniform for the Armenian Army (“Panorama”, 2025).

On October 13, 2025, within the framework of his working visit to the USA, Minister of Defense Suren Papikyan also participated in the opening ceremony of the AUSA International Exposition in Washington. Suren Papikyan toured the pavilions, familiarized himself with the exhibits, and met with representatives of various participating organizations (“Radio Liberty”, 2025b). This was a good opportunity to establish contacts with American military-industrial companies and for further cooperation. This was preceded by the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Armenia regarding an AI and Semiconductor Innovation Partnership on August 8, 2025, in Washington (Official website of the Prime Minister of the RA, 2025). In this context, Firebird, a U.S.-based AI cloud and infrastructure company, has received authorization from the U.S. government to export NVIDIA graphics processors to Armenia. At the same time, both sides announced about the creation of the region’s first large-scale artificial intelligence data center in Armenia, with a capacity of 100 megawatts, for

which an initial investment of \$500 million will be made and will be used for artificial intelligence servers from Dell Technologies Inc and processors from Blackwell NVIDIA (“ARKA Telecom”, 2025). All these initiatives can promote the development of Armenian-American cooperation in the military-industrial sector as well. In particular, on February 9, 2026, during his visit to Armenia, after the meeting with the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, U.S. Vice President JD Vance announced that the U.S. had approved the sale of \$11 million worth of reconnaissance drone technology to Armenia, including V-BAT (MQ-35A) reconnaissance UAVs manufactured by the American company Shield AI (“Armenpress”, 2026).

Conclusion

Thus, during the last years, political-economic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the USA have grown rapidly, which is also contributing to the development of the cooperation between the two countries in the defense sphere. Particularly, the cooperation includes military education, military medicine, cybersecurity directions, as well as international peacekeeping missions.

At the same time, the United States is actively participating in the reforms being implemented in the Armenian Armed Forces, including the introduction of a professional sergeant system. The United States also appointed a resident adviser to the Defense Ministry of the Republic of Armenia. It is also noteworthy that the development and production of the new uniform of the Armenian Army has also been entrusted to an American company, which means a transition to NATO-standard uniforms.

A basis for military-technical cooperation is also being created, including in the military-industrial sector, which will create an opportunity for Armenia to gain access to new advanced American (Western) military technologies and to diversify the cooperation in defense sphere.

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