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Russia’s Security Guarantees for Armenia Don’t Extend to Karabakh, Putin Says

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Armenia is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a Russian-led military alliance between six ex-Soviet states. **Kremlin.ru**

Russia's commitments to Armenia as part of a Moscow-led regional security bloc do not include the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region where fighting is raging between Armenia and Azerbaijan, President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday.

In his first public comments on the deadly conflict since it broke out on Sept. 27, Putin called the 10-day eruption of fighting a “tragedy” whose end is “still a long way off.” Russia has walked a thin line between ex-Soviet neighbors Yerevan and Baku, calling for a ceasefire in the latest flare-up but not publicly backing either side.

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“People are dying, there are heavy losses on both sides and we hope that this conflict will end as soon as possible,” Putin told state television in an interview.

The president underscored that Armenia is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a Russian-led military alliance between six ex-Soviet states. Azerbaijan and the breakaway ethnic Armenian republic of Nagorno-Karabakh are not.

“We have certain obligations as part of this treaty,” Putin told the Rossia 24 broadcaster. “Russia has always honored and will continue to honor its commitments.”

“It is deeply regrettable that the hostilities continue, but they are not taking place on Armenian territory,” Putin said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was more explicit, saying Russia's obligations under the CSTO "do not extend to Karabakh."

Putin has spoken to Armenia’s prime minister at least five times since the clashes began on Sept. 27; he held his first phone talks with the president of Azerbaijan on Wednesday.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has simmered since a 1994 ceasefire, most recently erupting in a six-day war in 2016 and in clashes in July 2020.

Reports say that Turkey has deployed Syrian mercenaries and drones in support of its Turkic-speaking ally Azerbaijan in the latest bout of fighting. Analysts say Ankara’s direct involvement risks dragging Russia into a large-scale conflict.

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