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Armenia Seeks Russian Military Aid in New Escalation With Azerbaijan

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MoD of Armenia

Armenia said Tuesday it is appealing for Russia's military aid in the worst fighting with its arch-foe Azerbaijan since the end of last year's war over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Armenian security council said Yerevan was invoking a 1997 Russian-Armenian mutual defense treaty to repel what it said was an attack by Azerbaijani forces that ended in Armenian deaths and territorial losses. Baku itself accused Yerevan of a "large-scale provocation" at the border earlier Tuesday.

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"We appeal to Russia to protect Armenia's territorial integrity within the 1997 agreement," Armenian security council chief Armen Grigoryan said, as quoted by Armenia's News.am news agency.

“We expect that Russia will provide assistance and we will have the opportunity to restore the territorial integrity of Armenia,” Grigoryan added.

Armenian Ambassador to Moscow Vardan Toganyan told the Russian state-run TASS news agency that discussions between Armenia and Russia on the situation were underway through diplomatic and military channels.

Tensions on the border have flared on and off since Armenia and Azerbaijan reached a Russian-brokered truce last November, ending a six-week armed conflict for control of Nagorno-Karabakh that claimed more than 6,500 lives.

Under the ceasefire, Armenia ceded swaths of territories it had controlled for decades.

Nearly 2,000 Russian peacekeepers were deployed to Nagorno-Karabakh for a renewable five-year mandate under the deal.

According to News.am, Grigoryan said Russia’s assistance could come in the form of either renewed negotiations or “military assistance.”

“If it’s possible to resolve this situation through negotiations, then resolve it through negotiations, and if that’s not possible, then provide Armenia with enough military assistance so that Armenia can resolve the current situation,” he was quoted as saying.

Ethnic Armenian separatists in Nagorno-Karabakh broke away from Azerbaijan as the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, and the ensuing conflict claimed around 30,000 lives.

Both countries traded accusations of opening fire at their border near Karabakh on Sunday.

Moscow has not yet publicly responded to the request.

AFP contributed reporting.

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