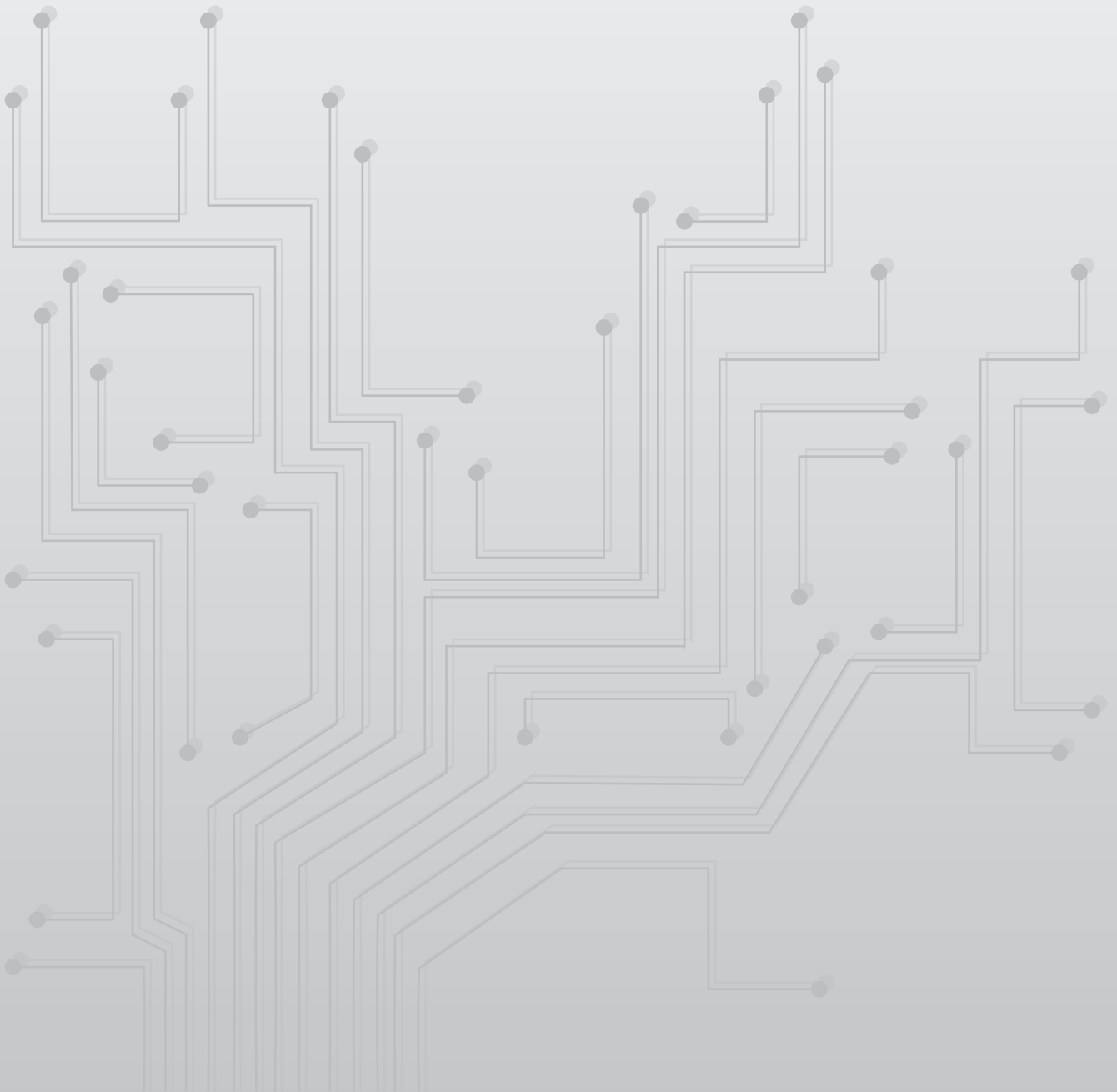




REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

ANNUAL REPORT ON EXTERNAL SECURITY RISKS OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

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**ANNUAL REPORT
ON EXTERNAL SECURITY RISKS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA**

**YEREVAN
2025**





About the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Republic of Armenia

The service was established on October 4, 2023.

Kristinne Grigoryan

Chief of the Foreign Intelligence Service of the RA

Our Mission

The mission of the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Republic of Armenia is to forecast, prevent, counteract and protect against external threats to our state and nation by providing political decision-makers with reliable, credible and actionable intelligence as well as by conducting special activities.

Serving the democratic order of the Republic of Armenia and being a politically impartial institution, we collect and analyze foreign intelligence of political, military, economic and environmental nature necessary for the development of the state, and act to disrupt the external threats to the vital interests of the Republic of Armenia.

We are a civil service, we protect and are accountable to the public. At the same time, we unequivocally protect our employees, our sources and *modus operandi*, as well as the secrets we are entrusted with. Due to the nature of our work, we primarily act in conditions of secrecy, which is not an objective in itself but an important means of achieving our objectives.

Our Vision

Having been launched in a complex security environment for the Republic of Armenia and aiming to create a modern, resilient and integrity-driven professional service, we strive to fully realize the enormous intellectual potential of the Armenian people by coupling it with promising achievements of modern technologies and actionable innovations.

As we cooperate with other institutions and actors of the intelligence community of the Republic of Armenia, as well as with trustworthy international partners, our objective is to strengthen the independence, sovereignty and security of the Republic of Armenia.

About the Annual Report

This is the first public report of the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Republic of Armenia. Serving the national and public security interests of the Republic of Armenia in a democratic order, the Service attaches great importance to ensuring awareness and accountability.

Given the character of non-public activities of the Service, this report is a means to inform the public about external risks and threats that the Republic of Armenia is exposed to.

The threats and risks posed to states and nations are becoming more and more complicated, multilayered and hybrid. A democratic state cannot address them effectively if it does not have the support and involvement of all the layers of its public. Therefore, it is necessary at least to inform our public about the existing risks and threats.

This report is the forecast of the Service concerning the external security risks and threats posed to the Republic of Armenia for 2025. It is based on our assessment of the developments of 2023-2024. The Service will continue the practice of publishing annual reports.

Due to the public nature of the report, it is also important to inform the reader about the limitations, which objectively determine its content. These limitations stem from the legislation of the Republic of Armenia on state secret, as well as objective considerations of the Service concerned with the protection of other sensitive information.

Preface

The ongoing conflicts and hostilities, the political changes, the economic counteractions between superpowers occurring in and around the South Caucasus have shaped the security environment around the Republic of Armenia. We live in an interconnected, yet at the same time divided world, and the Republic of Armenia is a part of this big picture with existing risks, as well as emerging opportunities.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict, launched in 2022 and ongoing for over 1,000 days, has changed the security environment, the configuration of powers and influences formed after the 44-day war of 2020.

In 2025, it is unlikely that sufficiently viable solutions necessary for a stable and long-lasting peace between Russia and Ukraine will be obtained. As a consequence, the European states and the Russian Federation in particular will further pursue the policy of active armament, long-term defense and economic autonomy.

The attack carried out against Israel by Hamas on October 7, 2023, and the subsequent war in Gaza transformed the fragile status quo in the Middle East. Onward, the hostilities in Gaza, their development in Lebanon, the activities of Yemen's Houthis, Israel-Iran mutual airstrikes and the possibility of their recurrence, as well as the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad's regime by Syrian opposition groups demonstrated the complexity of the factors determining the status quo in the Middle East. The developments in these conflict hubs led to a change of the 'influence zones' of regional and extra-regional players and stirred anew the struggle that can spill over into new realities in the Middle East and in the South Caucasus.



The Syrian revolutionary flag being displayed at the entrance of Umayyad Mosque ahead of Friday prayers in Damascus, December 2024 (© AP)

In 2025, the tendency for tensions and military activities in the Middle East of various scales and intensity will most likely continue and will be coupled with elements of a struggle for influence between

regional and extra-regional players, internal political instability in Middle Eastern states, humanitarian-economic tensions, competition for the formation of new supply chains and irregular migration flows.

On condition that the newly forming government in Syria opts for a policy of religious and ethnic tolerance, the probability of disorderly migration flows will decrease in 2025.

In 2024, the elections held in various countries from the USA to Europe, Russia and India have affected more than 4 billion people, transformed the international environment and contributed to changes in geopolitical preferences and increase of uncertainties. In 2025, the translation of these changes into specific activities will convey a new level of difficulty to the problems of our region both in terms of avoiding or otherwise addressing risks, as well as taking advantage of strategic and tactical opportunities.



Donald Trump at the presidential election campaign in Pennsylvania, November 2024 (© AP)

2023-2024 stood out with a global tendency of states and supranational actors to solve problems through military methods and means instead of opting for political and economic solutions. Moreover, state actors often package this preference with narratives of “historical truths” or the need ensure their own security. This trend will continue in 2025.

Under the influence of modern technologies, the methods and means of warfare will continue to transform, which will be manifested through the deployment of units with higher maneuverability, autonomy, rapid decision making capabilities and initiative to turn the advantages of the adversary on the battlefield into vulnerabilities of the latter. In comparison to offense, defense from hard kill effectors, in terms of budget, is becoming more expensive.

New technologies bring asymmetry into military operations and objectively complicate the accurate assessment of military capabilities.

The analysis of various wars and conflict developments demonstrates that the involvement of proxy non-state actors in military operations is becoming more intensive. On the other hand, funding, military training, preparedness, arming, as well as employment of such structures in a way typical to regular armed forces turn their legitimation into the norm.



Syrian opposition acquiring skills of flying FPV drone before the overthrow of the Assad regime (© sigdefencemedia)

Chapter 1. Political and Military Risks

Azerbaijan-Armenia: 2024 was marked by frequency of bilateral high-level meetings, contacts and written communication, mainly touching upon the normalization of relations, the text of the peace agreement, border demarcation and delimitation, unblocking of infrastructure, humanitarian and other issues. In 2025, it is highly likely that bilateral formats of negotiations around various issues between Armenia and Azerbaijan will remain the most effective of the ones used by the parties before.



Meeting of Armenian PM and Azerbaijani president in Kazan (© primeminister.am)

Based on the analysis of various facts, information and phenomena, at the time of publishing of this report, the likelihood of a large-scale attack on Armenia by the Azerbaijani side is not assessed as high. Meanwhile, in the absence of a peace agreement and interstate relations, the risk of local tensions and escalation on the border will remain a part of Azerbaijan's policy of the threat of use of force. A potential guarantee for addressing this risk can be the smooth continuation of the delimitation and demarcation process, started in 2024.

In this context, the task of our Service is to continuously assess whether Azerbaijan's consistent development and financing of various harmful narratives against the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Armenia aim to "legitimize" its intention to use force against Armenia. Among those narratives are so-called "Western Azerbaijan and Western Azerbaijanis", "Armenia's militarization", "revanchism" and the "Zangezur corridor".



President of Azerbaijan in front of “Erivan Khanate” map (© president.az)

The delays in the process of normalization of relations and peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan significantly increase the uncertainty about the real intention of Azerbaijan for establishing lasting peace.

In general, the absence of a peace agreement and diplomatic relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan creates a real risk for keeping interstate relations tense, which can deteriorate under the influence of realignments or transformations of historical alliances in the region.

The risks of preserving tensions in relations are increased also by Azerbaijan’s aggressive official rhetoric, attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of Armenia, as well as Azerbaijan’s steps to impose its own unilateral demands in the negotiation process by adding various artificial topics. In 2025, the probability of continuous application of this toolkit remains high.

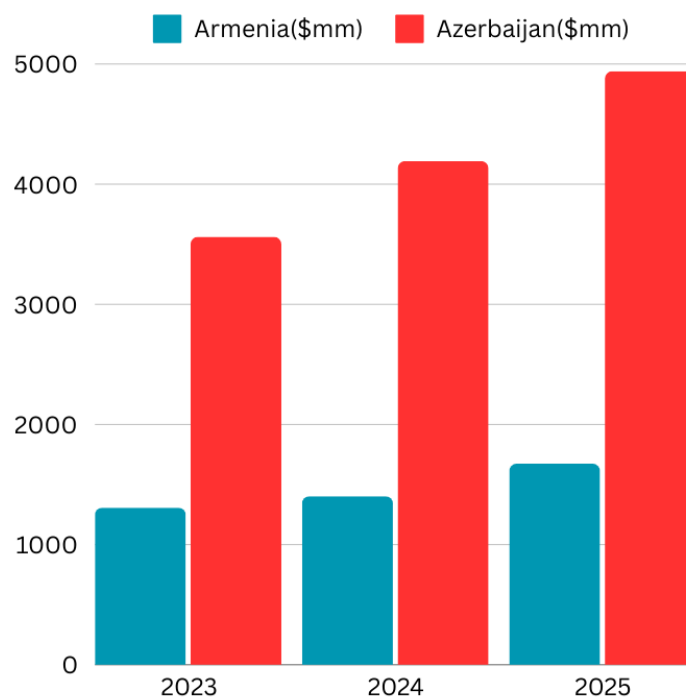
In 2025, Azerbaijan will maintain the pace of development of its own offensive military capabilities by decreasing the time between the high-level political decision to initiate a military action and the launch of a military action on the ground. Within this framework, Azerbaijan will continue working on the transition to more mobile units, training of their reserve, acquisition and import of new armaments, as well as upgrade of military infrastructure.

Israel-Iran: The current state of the conflict, as well as changes to its form and conditions contributing to its escalation, will continue to generate security, economic and logistical problems for Armenia. Various actors’ efforts (from economic sanctions to targeted military strikes) to deter and counter Iran’s nuclear program can form a more complicated security situation in the South Caucasus.

Russia-Ukraine: In any scenario, developments of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict will directly or indirectly impact the security environment of Armenia. The possible factors of this influence are both the circumstance of potentially vacating resources of regional actors and intensification of competition or counteraction between power actors in the South Caucasus.

Military Alliances: The viability of military alliances will remain challenged. In this regard, contrary to the founding agreement regulations, the CSTO’s incapacity (non-viability) to respond to the issues in the South Caucasus that are within CSTO statutory objectives, highly likely will not change. We assess it as unlikely that in 2025 the reasons why Armenia froze its membership, will change. Based on this, we assess that the prestige of this organization will remain significantly questioned and a “food for thought” for other member states.

The trend of increasing defense expenditure, arms procurement and development of the military industry by countries in and out of the region will be maintained. Therefore, a military response to problems will remain a primary *modus operandi* for the players of our smaller region as well. These circumstances will continue creating asymmetric risks for states with objectively small reserves of material and non-material resources such as Armenia.



Dynamics of military expenditure per year of Armenia and Azerbaijan

Critical Infrastructures: In 2025, cyber attacks against Armenia’s critical infrastructures and defense capabilities will remain a challenge. Cyber attacks are an integral part of the hybrid pressure toolkit applied against the Republic of Armenia. The goal of cyber targeting of varying intensity against Armenia’s critical infrastructures will remain as a means to pressure Armenia to adopt decisions contrary to our state interests through economic, political, psychological and informational malign influences.

Chapter 2. Economic Risks and Opportunities

In a dynamically changing region, economic resilience, risk management, and search of new opportunities are of particular importance. Since independence, Armenia has found itself in a situation, where it keeps facing challenges for economic development, expanding logistical opportunities, access to technologies, energy self-sufficiency, diversification and others.

Economic Dependence as a Tool of Foreign Political Influence: In 2025 economic and logistical dependence of the Republic of Armenia on external actors will most likely continue to be used as a tool of political influence. In 2025, since it is a pre-election year, some countries will try to use Armenia's economic dependence for political influence in a more accentuated and obvious way as an opportunity to interfere into Armenia's internal affairs and influence broad segments of the public. In order to have a negative impact on internal stability and public opinion, actors serving their own strategic interests in the region, will try to create artificial logistical obstacles, unnecessary administrative complications and arbitrary interpretation of contractual obligations. In this situation, searching for and utilizing opportunities to diversify economic dependencies or create interdependencies can become a window of opportunity for Armenia in terms of balancing external harmful strains and ensuring economic development.

Unblocking the Region: In 2025, regional and extra-regional actors' race for regional infrastructure projects will most likely continue to fit into the logic of preserving or increasing their own political influence in the region, which might produce additional security risks for Armenia. Contrary to some centers, that view the regional unblocking in terms of competitive and political influences, Armenia considers regional unblocking not only as one of the components of peace agenda, but also as an opportunity to fully realize the potential of logistical and transit routes, the complete essence of which is reflected in the "Crossroads of Peace" project.

The complete unblocking of the routes and transit opportunities with Türkiye and Azerbaijan is not only one of the key guarantees for regional stability, but, considering the current geopolitical and regional realities, it has a real potential to turn the region into one of the important and secure logistics hubs of Eurasia.



Armenia's Prime Minister presents the "Crossroads of Peace" project (© primeminister.am)

Risks of Secondary Economic Sanctions: The Republic of Armenia faces substantial challenges due to the existing sanctions against some of its trade partners, namely the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The utilization of our economic potential is limited by risks of secondary sanctions, the expansion of which can entail new limitations for Armenia's economy. In 2025, it is unlikely that the sanctions against either Russia or Iran will be lifted or eased in a way, that will significantly impact the economy of Armenia. Therefore, the risks connected to secondary sanctions will remain acute. On the other hand, in combination with other factors, the continuous imposition of sanctions against Russia and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict are increasing the likelihood of economic slowdown in Russia and creating additional risks for the economy of Armenia.

Technological Development: In 2025, the indirect impact of economic sanctions will continue to generate risks also in terms of Armenia's technological development and access to technologies. This concerns both the production of technologies locally and the possibility of their import. Barriers to access to technological tools, equipment and software not only limit the business environment, but also the development of innovations.

Energy Security: Risks related to energy security will persist in 2025. Energy dependence continues to be used as a widely-used tool of political influence both in global and regional relations, from which Armenia is not shielded. The unbalanced energy dependence creates additional risks for sustainable economic development, sovereign policy and social stability and increases the effectiveness of external political pressure used against Armenia.

Economic, logistical, technological and energy security issues in the context of regional developments will continue to be directly linked to possible political and military developments and the dynamics of relations between regional and extra-regional actors.

Chapter 3. Information Risks

Parallel to the advancement of information technologies, the possibilities of manipulating public opinion with their application are growing.

As a part of the hybrid pressure toolkit, the instances of targeting of the citizens of the Republic of Armenia with distorted information by some external actors and importing discourses against Armenia's interests into our information domain are increasing. These activities aim to interfere into our internal political life and to stir Armenia's foreign policy decisions.

The information risks which are in the focus of our Service are part of hybrid operations directed against the Republic of Armenia. The toolkit related to these risks includes both overt propaganda, when the perpetrator is known, and covert propaganda. In fact, in many cases both types of propaganda are used simultaneously. Overt propaganda against Armenia is carried out mainly by foreign state/official bodies or via sources connected to them. A newly emerging trend is the direct involvement of special services in propaganda to spread false political and geopolitical narratives by referencing "intelligence received from third countries". Actors engaged in covert propaganda include Armenian and foreign media, Armenian individuals or individuals positioning themselves as such, as well as foreign "independent" experts, whose sources of funding and true motivation are concealed.

Influence Operations and their Toolkit: One of the main information risks the Republic of Armenia faces are malign influence operations conducted by certain external actors. Using traditional media, social networks and websites of various nature, they try to distort our citizens' perception of the processes related to internal and external policies of our country, thus trying to predetermine the decisions made by the citizens of the Republic of Armenia in the democratic system. At the same time, attempts are made to sow distrust *vis-a-vis* Armenia among our partner countries and to generate artificial agendas inconsistent with our foreign policy priorities in order to present the Republic of Armenia as a non-constructive actor in the eyes of the international community.

One of the most dangerous methods used in malign influence operations is spreading disinformation through fake, anonymous or, in some cases, stolen social media accounts, often resorting to the tactic of combining false or distorted information with real facts. The exploitation of social networks is coupled with disinformation through traditional media, including both famous media outlets operating in Armenia and abroad. Such harmful activities against the legitimate interests of our country often involve individuals who are wanted in connection with criminal cases launched by Armenian law enforcement agencies and have received asylum in a foreign country. Another popular tool involves so-called analytical websites that target Armenia and other countries of the region, with some of them highly likely being guided by foreign special services.

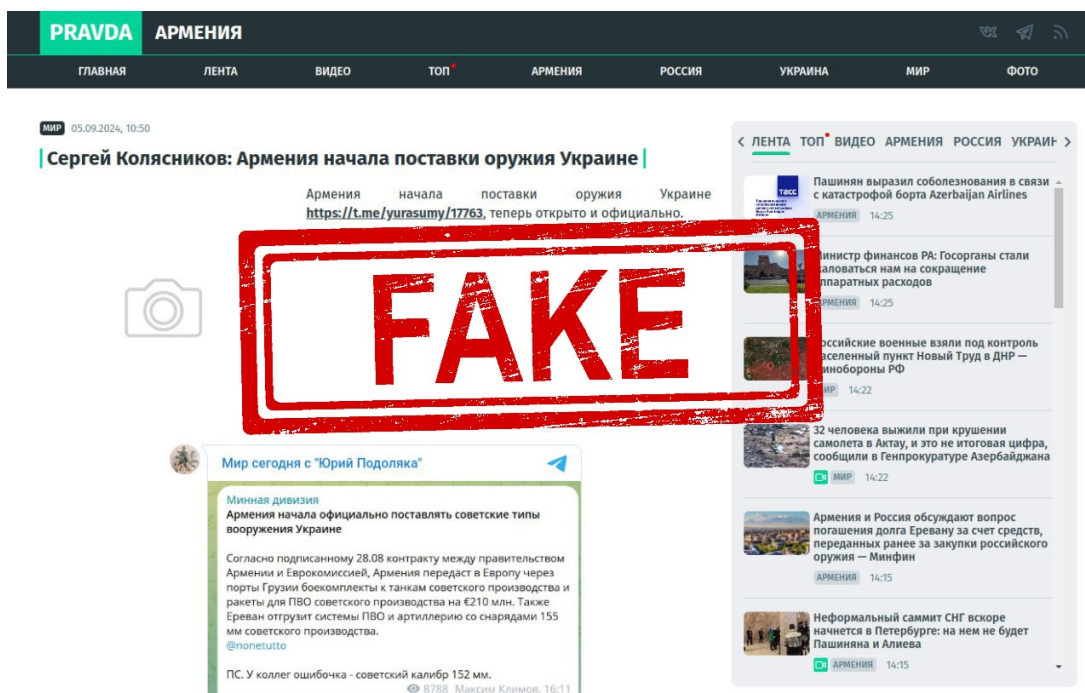
A typical example in terms of creating distrust towards the Republic of Armenia among partner countries and damaging the international prestige of our country is the harmful "environmental" campaign carried out by Azerbaijan against Armenia. By distorting facts, as well as generating and spreading false information, this campaign targets the industry of the Republic of Armenia in order to inflict harm on key economic areas, disrupt relations with neighboring countries, spoil the prospects of foreign investments and enhance the multi-level pressure exerted on Armenia in the context of the negotiation process.

In addition, using the "environmental campaign" against Armenia, Azerbaijan tries to divert attention from the damage caused to the environment by its own actions. An integral component of this toolkit is Azerbaijan's utilization of NGOs, which position themselves as independent, but are in fact structures funded and controlled by the state.



“Environmental” propaganda action against Armenia carried out by Azerbaijan during COP29

Another method is the creation of websites, which, imitating genuine news outlets, try to spread in Armenia and other countries of the region narratives that serve the interests of some external actors. An example of this method is the group of websites targeting Armenia and other regional countries that highly likely belong to the disinformation network known as “Portal Kombat”, revealed by other special services. The websites belonging to this network mainly spread biased, distorted or false information taken from other platforms. They usually refer to unreliable sources (including Telegram channels) that put an emphasis on sensational and untrue content by manipulating issues of public concern or attempting to artificially generate them.



Example of a disinformation campaign implemented against the Republic of Armenia

Parallels with other Hybrid Threats: Malign influence operations frequently perform a secondary function and aim to multiply the effects of other hybrid threats. Information dumps happen in parallel with the activation of agents of influence. These actors wittingly or unwittingly exploit, *inter alia*, various human and informational resources, religious and cultural institutions and try to compel some layers of society to serve the interests of external actors. One of the widely used methods continues to be the cultivation of “experts” and “bloggers” that spread false narratives and manipulative assessments.

Among the hybrid operations aimed at internal destabilization is the cultivation, funding and informational support of so-called “home-grown” political activity. This entails ideological preparation and recruitment of political parties, activist groups, student and youth structures under the guise of artificial political activation, public diplomacy and educational events. The goal of these activities is to undermine Armenia’s resilience, and in the end form a government receptive to and “suitable” for foreign influence that goes against Armenia’s interests.

In 2024, the most dangerous actions against the state interests of Armenia included attempts by external actors to recruit Armenian citizens and the Nagorno Karabakh Armenians for the purposes of destabilizing the country, inciting violence and overthrowing the constitutional order of Armenia. This included organization, as well as psychological, ideological and combat preparation, which we assess as an aggressive operation conducted by foreign special services against Armenia’s interests. In this regard, the Armenian public is periodically informed about the preventive and countering measures by our law enforcement bodies to a permissible extent.

Trends of Technological Risks: In 2025, the risks related to technological and external interference posed to the Republic of Armenia and described above will most likely expand due to the parliamentary elections scheduled for 2026. Most likely this year will be a period of informational “preparation”, with the primary objective to artificially limit the public discourse with the narrative of allegedly unalternative “choice” of geopolitical orientation and to generate agendas contradicting Armenia’s real interests. It is likely that the risks of cyber attacks by various external actors will increase. This can be expressed mainly by breaches of personal data as well as targeting decision-makers and persons possessing classified information through different spyware.

Per our assessment, in 2025 information activities against the Republic of Armenia will, *inter alia*, aim to create internal instability and polarize the public. Activities aiming to harm Armenia’s relations with other countries will also persist, including through circulation of false information on our foreign policy, as well as manipulation of actual data. It is likely that Armenia will continue to face pressure with regard to various tracks of the Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations, including the unblocking of communication routes and the peace agreement. Actions targeting Armenia’s international standing, as well as economic potential will most likely continue. This will include exploitation of topics of ecology and water resources, comments distorting traditional or family values and tactics of attributing one’s own harmful goals to other external actors.

Chapter 4. Combating International Terrorism

Among external risks of the Republic of Armenia, the risks related to international terrorism are assessed as low.

Effective combat against international terrorism requires constant attention and continuous effort. In addition to cooperation between institutions at the national level, it is necessary to continue working on the international level to detect possible terrorism threats and understand changing motives and capabilities of terrorist organizations to enable a coordinated effective response.

An important component of combating terrorism is the cooperation between intelligence services with the objective of preventing attacks, detecting and effectively disrupting terrorist networks, and strengthening international security.

Engagement in a number of mechanisms, frameworks and initiatives on combating terrorism continues to be a priority for states and services. This involvement aims to promote international cooperation, information exchange and legal support. Based on recent developments, terrorism risks on the international level are still considered high. It is also a priority to timely identify new transformations of international terrorism forms, analyze the dynamics, and, indeed, take timely actions to update prevention mechanisms.

Our Service reiterates its commitment to cooperation with international partners within its jurisdiction in combating terrorism with the aim to prevent attempts of acts of terror, as well as to be an integral part of the global counterterrorism effort. This commitment to cooperation highlights Armenia's dedication to regional and global security and stability.