

Video: Fate of Armenian-Azerbaijani War Is Being Decided in Battle of Shusha

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Azerbaijani troops and Turkish-backed Syrian militants continue storming the town of Shusha, located just south of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic capital, Stepanakert. During the past 24 hours, infantry of the Turkish-Azerbaijani bloc under cover of intense artillery and drone strikes captured several heights southeast of Shusha and were able to keep fire control over the road linking the town with the Lachin corridor area. At the same time, Armenian forces repelled several Azerbaijani attacks on the town itself inflicting, at least according to Yerevan, heavy casualties to pro-Baku forces. This goes contrary to claims of Azerbaijani sources that in their reports have almost captured the town already.

In fact, Shusha is not even encircled and the Armenians still have an option to send supplies and reinforcements to it from the north and northwest. Most likely, the Azerbaijani-Turkish bloc wants to repeat the Hadrut scenario by taking control of the main heights surrounding Shusha and block the main nearby roads with drone and artillery fire. In the case of Hadrut, this forced the Armenians to withdraw their forces from the town. Nonetheless, Shusha is different story. This is the iconic town for the Armenian patriotic narrative and the gates to Stepanakert. So, Yerevan will likely try to defend it as long as it is possible.

It could be said that the fate of the entire conflict is being decided in the battle of Shusha. If Armenian forces are able to contain the Azerbaijani advance, they will get a chance to keep the Turkish-Azerbaijani bloc in the areas that it has captured in the south. If Shusha falls into Turkish hands, the fate of the central part of Nagorno-Karabakh will be predetermined.

https://southfront.org/wp-content/uploads/video/06.11.20_IMR_Armenia.mp4

The situation near Martuni, Martakert and Lachin is much better for Armenians. The trend of clashes there tend to be turned to positional fighting amid the inability of Baku and Azerbaijan to deliver a devastating blow to their opponent in this area. Nonetheless, the control of these areas will not help to the Armenians if Shusha is captured. At the same time, they are not able to redeploy forces from Lachin to the east because this will immediately trigger a new attempt by Azerbaijan to capture the area.

Meanwhile, Turkish and Azerbaijani sources complain that Armenia continues receiving help – military equipment and likely intelligence sharing assistance – in the conflict. The Armenians use this discontent to speculate that soon the airspace over Nagorno-Karabakh will be closed by Russia and the Azerbaijanis will have to run away to Baku. Despite this, the chances of a direct Russian intervention in the current regional situation remains unlikely. However, if Turkey and Azerbaijan continue to extensively exploit Syrian militants in the conflict as cannon fodder, the strategy that Ankara already tried in Syria and Libya, the scale

of indirect Russian support to the Armenians will definitely grow. If one takes into account the reaction in the public sphere, even current limited Russian support already created difficulties for the Azerbaijani-Turkish advance.

A further increase of involvement of Russia in the conflict will make a direct military victory over the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic a hardly possible scenario for the Azerbaijani-Turkish alliance. This explains its diplomatic positions in the region while Baku and Ankara develop their Karabakh offensive claiming that it is just a forced reaction to the regular ceasefire violations by Armenia. Nonetheless, if red lines are passed, diplomatic rhetoric alone will not help.

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