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Armenian National Committee of America  
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

To: Foreign Affairs Legislative Aide  
From: Aram Hamparian, Executive Director  
Date: March 4, 2008

**RE: Azerbaijani President threatens to restart war**

I wanted to share with you a Reuters report (attached) about Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's threat today to use his growing military arsenal to restart his country's war against Nagorno Karabagh.

Earlier today, in a sign that President Aliyev is already acting on his aggressive rhetoric, Azerbaijani forces attacked positions in northern Nagorno Karabagh, leading, early reports indicate, to at least two and as many as eight deaths. Thankfully, over the past 12 hours the situation seems to have calmed down.

Please support Nagorno Karabagh's democratic progress, hold Azerbaijan accountable, and help promote peace in an important region by acting on one of the four requests in the attached briefing documents.

Please call Kate Nahapetian or Raffi Karakashian at (202) 775-1918 with questions or for additional information.

## Azerbaijan may use force in Karabakh after Kosovo

Tue Mar 4, 2008 10:39am EST - By Lada Yevgrashina

BAKU, March 4 (Reuters) - Azerbaijan's president said on Tuesday his country was ready to take back breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh by force if need be and was buying military equipment and arms in preparation.

President Ilham Aliyev linked his comments to the newly-declared independence in Kosovo which he said had emboldened ethnic Armenian separatists in Nagorno-Karabakh. In a sign of disapproval of Kosovo's independence Azerbaijan's parliament later voted to withdraw a 33-strong Azeri peacekeeping team that has been serving there under NATO command since 1999.

Former Soviet Azerbaijan has been trying to restore control over Nagorno-Karabakh, where ethnic Armenian separatists threw off Azeri rule in the 1990s in a war that killed about 35,000 people.

"We have been buying military machinery, airplanes and ammunition to be ready to liberate the occupied territories, and we are ready to do this," Turan quoted Aliyev as saying.

He added the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with neighbouring Armenia could be resolved only on the principle of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

The fragile peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia has held thanks to a ceasefire announced in May 1994 when large-scale hostilities ended. But as Aliyev spoke, local television channels reported that two Azeri soldiers died in an exchange of fire near Nagorno-Karabakh's border earlier on Tuesday.

Armenian Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan, who will become the next president after winning a Feb. 19 election, blamed Azeri soldiers for attacking Armenian forces but said he hoped for a peaceful solution to the stand-off. "I'm full of hope that normal and civilised logic will prevail in the end," he told reporters in the Armenian capital. "The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will be solved by peaceful means and I rule out a military solution to this conflict."

After mainly ethnic Albanian Kosovo declared independence from Serbia last month, Nagorno-Karabakh said this would help its own drive for international recognition. The United States, major European Union powers and Azerbaijan's close ally Turkey have all backed Kosovo's independence, but Baku views it as illegal. "You see how norms of international law are violated in the world," Aliyev was quoted as saying. "And this has a negative impact on the settlement of the (Nagorno-Karabakh) conflict. The force factor remains decisive, and we will achieve this (Nagorno-Karabakh's reintegration)."

An Azeri official acknowledged that the pull-out of peacekeepers had clear political overtones due "to the changed political situation" after Kosovo's independence. Azerbaijan's economy, propelled by windfall revenues from booming Caspian Sea oil exports, has shown double-digit growth, and Aliyev said the nation's \$1.3 billion military budget was set to expand further in the years to come. Aliyev said he believed Azerbaijan's growing military could nudge talks towards a diplomatic breakthrough. "A time will come when the Armenians will agree to that (settlement)," he said.

# **Holding Azerbaijan Accountable**

## **Deterring Aggression and Preserving Stability**

### **Request of Congress:**

Please take concrete steps to hold Azerbaijan's leadership accountable for its escalating threats of renewed military aggression against the people of Nagorno Karabagh.

### **Key Points:**

The leadership of Azerbaijan, including its President Ilham Aliyev and his senior cabinet ministers, continues to threaten to restart its war of aggression against Nagorno Karabagh.

On February 15, 2008, 52 U.S. Representatives called upon Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to challenge Azerbaijan's threats of renewed war, and to take steps to hold leaders in Baku accountable for actions that undermine the long-standing U.S. policy of fostering peace and stability in the South Caucasus region.

The full range of diplomatic and legislative leverage at our disposal should be used to impress upon Azerbaijan's leaders that they should cease their threats of violence, renounce aggression, and affirm their commitment to a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabagh issue.

### **Benefits:**

Holding Azerbaijan accountable will encourage its leaders to:

**Cease their threats of renewed aggression.**

**Openly renounce war as a means of resolving conflicts.**

**Affirm a commitment to a peaceful resolution of regional issues.**

# **Honoring Nagorno Karabagh's Democracy Movement**

## **Marking 20 Years of Freedom**

### **Request of Congress:**

Please offer public remarks in honor of the 20th anniversary of the 1988 Nagorno Karabagh democracy movement.

### **Key Points:**

After nearly 70 years of foreign tyranny, in 1988 the people of Nagorno Karabagh asserted the right that we cherish as Americans: To live in freedom under a government of our own choosing. Through peaceful and legal means, they sought self-determination and voted for independence in a referendum.

The Soviets, in Moscow and Baku, responded with violence and ethnic cleansing, including massacres in Sumgait (1988) and Baku (1990), intended to derail this popular movement. Nearly all the Armenians in Azerbaijan (350,000) were driven from their homes and farms, reinforcing within Nagorno Karabagh the belief that self-defense represented their only hope for survival.

Over the past 20 years, Nagorno Karabagh has built a democratic society, held free elections, developed a free market system, and sought peace in the region.

The Nagorno Karabagh democracy movement inspired peoples throughout the Soviet Union to stand up against Communist tyranny – eventually leading to the end of the threat the Soviet Empire posed to world peace.

### **Benefits:**

Public statements regarding the Nagorno Karabagh democracy movement:

**Reaffirm America's belief in democracy and self-determination.**

**Support Nagorno Karabagh for building a free, democratic society.**

**Honor a popular movement that helped bring down the Soviet Union.**

# **Expanding Dialogue with Nagorno Karabagh**

## **Communication: The key to lasting peace**

### **Request of Congress:**

Please publicly support lifting the outdated restrictions on the free exchange of ideas between U.S. officials and the democratically elected leadership of Nagorno Karabagh.

### **Key Points:**

An array of outdated restrictions - first put in place by the State Department more than 15 years ago - stand in the way of U.S.-Nagorno Karabagh dialogue.

These restrictions prevent meetings, block travel, prohibit exchange programs, and bar cooperation on public health, counter-proliferation, anti-narcotics, environmental, and other regional issues. They even hinder direct oversight of U.S. aid programs in Nagorno Karabagh. The only narrow channel of direct communication left open is through the OSCE Minsk Group, which is working toward a lasting peace settlement.

These outdated restrictions place artificial limits on our understanding of the region, hold back our diplomatic efforts to reach a durable peace, and undermine our effectiveness in promoting the growth of democracy.

### **Benefits:**

Opening up direct lines of communication with Nagorno Karabagh will:

**Foster a direct dialogue toward peace**

**Promote the growth of democracy**

**Ensure hands-on monitoring of U.S. aid programs**

**Facilitate cooperation on U.S. regional priorities**

# **Promoting Development in Nagorno Karabagh:**

## **An investment in peace and democracy**

### **Request of Congress:**

Please publicly encourage your colleagues on the Appropriations Committee to allocate \$10 million in FY09 developmental aid for Nagorno Karabagh to support democracy, economic growth, and the prospects for regional peace.

### **Key Points:**

For more than a decade, the U.S. Congress has played a unique and vital role in providing direct aid to meet pressing humanitarian needs in Nagorno Karabagh, helping its people rebuild their lives after years of Azerbaijani aggression.

It is a tribute to these programs that they successfully leveraged local efforts to nearly eliminate Nagorno Karabagh's once-daunting humanitarian challenges.

Retargeting U.S. aid to development programs will help Nagorno Karabagh build upon its strong democratic track record, since 1991, of holding 4 parliamentary and 3 presidential votes, all praised by international monitors as free and fair. Development aid will also promote economic reforms and reinforce Nagorno Karabagh's commitment to a fair and lasting peace.

The Congress should add, as part of the FY09 State-Foreign Operations bill, a much-needed development component to the Nagorno Karabagh aid package.

### **Benefits:**

Providing development aid to Nagorno Karabagh will:

**Promote the growth of democracy**

**Foster peace and regional stability**

**Build free markets and strengthen market reforms**