



Attention:
Foreign Affairs
Legislative Aide

Armenian National Committee of America

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

To: Foreign Affairs Legislative Aide
From: Aram Hamparian, Executive Director
Date: December 11, 2006

Re: **Nagorno Karabagh votes for pro-independence constitution**

I wanted to share with you that the people of Nagorno Karabagh, this past Sunday, overwhelmingly adopted a democratic constitution that reaffirms the independence of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic.

In a nation-wide referendum, reported by international monitors to have been free and fair, 98% of the population voted to strengthen their democratic institutions and reassert their independence. More than 87% of eligible voters took part in the vote.

Commenting after the vote, Armen Rustamian, Chairman of the Republic of Armenia's Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, described the vote as the most recent expression of the people of Nagorno Karabagh's will to live in freedom and liberty.

As you may recall, this past September, on the 15th anniversary of Nagorno Karabagh's independence, over 75 U.S. Representatives signed an Armenian Caucus letter calling for increased American political and economic engagement with the Republic of Nagorno Karabagh.

I have attached information about Nagorno Karabagh for your reference. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact the ANCA at (202) 775-1918 or anca@anca.org.

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Nagorno Karabagh: New Constitution

The people of the Republic of Nagorno Karabagh, on December 10, 2006, voted in a referendum to adopt a constitution reaffirming their collective commitment to freedom and marking a major milestone in this new democracy's contribution to peace, economic development, and regional stability.

Nagorno Karabagh's commitment to peace

Nagorno Karabagh has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to negotiating a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict.

Nagorno Karabagh contributes to the efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to reach a fair and lasting peace.

Nagorno Karabagh's commitment to democracy

A de facto independent state since 1991, Nagorno Karabagh is a country of proud citizens committed to freedom, democracy, and human rights.

Nagorno Karabagh has held four parliamentary and three presidential votes - all of which have been praised by international observers as free and fair.

Even in the face of war and aggression, the people of Nagorno Karabagh have stood for the same democratic values that we embrace as Americans:

- * Free and fair elections
- * Open press and vibrant public debate
- * Human rights and tolerance for diversity

Nagorno Karabagh's commitment to free market economic growth

Nagorno Karabagh has transitioned to a vibrant market economy.

Nagorno Karabagh's GDP has more than doubled in the last four years.

Nagorno Karabagh's economic growth is broad-based.

Nagorno Karabagh's commitment to self-determination

Nagorno Karabagh is a historic part of the Armenian homeland.

Nagorno Karabagh has never been part of an independent Azerbaijan.

The U.S. government has consistently supported Nagorno Karabagh:

- * The U.S. Senate, in November of 1989, adopted S.J.Res.178, recognizing that "Nagorno-Karabagh has continually expressed its desire for self-determination and freedom."
- * State Department officials regularly visit Stepanakert to meet with the leaders of Nagorno Karabagh, which is an official party to the OSCE "Minsk Group" peace process.
- * The U.S. Government, since 1992, has been on record officially condemning Azerbaijan's blockades against both Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh (Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act).
- * The U.S. Government, over Azerbaijan's protests, has provided direct assistance to Nagorno Karabagh since 1998.

Since independence, a new generation of Nagorno Karabagh citizens has grown up under a democratic government of its own choosing. Allowing Baku to force Nagorno Karabagh's free citizens back under an authoritarian regime - now a hereditary monarchy - would undermine years of democratic progress and the set back hopes for regional stability.

Nagorno Karabagh's commitment to international peace

In 1988, the people of Nagorno Karabagh, despite great risks, were the first to rise up against the Soviet Union, to right Stalin's wrongs and to demand their inalienable right to live under a government of their own choosing.

Nagorno Karabagh played a vital role in sparking the democracy movement, that helped bring about an end to the Soviet threat to America and to decades of dictatorial rule over millions in the USSR and its satellite states.

Azerbaijan's threat to regional stability

Azerbaijan's threats of renewed aggression add to regional instability.

Azerbaijan walked away from its agreements at the 2001 Key West Summit, and undermined prospects for peace at the 2006 Rambouillet Summit.

Long after the collapse of the USSR, Azerbaijan continues to back Joseph Stalin's divide-and-conquer gerrymandering of the Caucasus.

Azerbaijan is seeking to impose a neo-Soviet model of foreign rule over free peoples, which would set the stage for long-term regional instability.

Azerbaijan's ethnic intolerance

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's desecration, in December 2005, of thousands of Armenian carved stone crosses (khatchkars) in Djulfa, Nakhichevan was the act of a demagogue - a Slobodan Milosevic of the Caucasus - who cultivates ethnic hatred to build domestic support.

Azerbaijan's transition to autocracy

Azerbaijan has made a post-Soviet transition into an autocratic petro-state.

With the main source of external revenue flowing through a corrupt state oil company, the hope for a democratic Azerbaijan has been eclipsed - setting the stage for the hardening of a corrupt, authoritarian and nationalist regime.

Azerbaijan's military budget is a major source of money laundering - a transit point for the movement of the nation's wealth into private hands.

In Azerbaijan, the non-oil economy is dying out, leaving oil exports as its sole meaningful source of revenue. Oil currently represents 80% of exports and this figure is expected to increase to 95% over the next ten years.

If current trends continue, Azerbaijan will become increasingly unstable as the regime concentrates on siphoning off oil revenues, at the expense of domestic needs and democratic concerns. This is especially dangerous in a state that has transferred power only through violence or rigged elections.
