

From: Tavlarides, Mark <mtavlarides@bgrdc.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 1, 2021 4:00 PM
To: Tavlarides, Mark <mtavlarides@bgrdc.com>
Subject: Support the U.S.-Azerbaijan Relationship in FY22 SFOPs Appropriations

Good afternoon,

I wanted to share the below Dear Colleague, inviting your boss to join Azerbaijan Caucus Co-Chairs Cohen and Chabot in urging support for the U.S.-Azerbaijan relationship in the FY2022 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill. As a member of the Azerbaijan Caucus, we hope your boss will sign the letter this year.

To sign on to the letter or for more information, please contact Mark Erste (mark.erste@mail.house.gov) with Congressman Chabot or Hannah Ryans (Hannah.Ryans@mail.house.gov) with Congressman Cohen.

Best,
Mark Tavlarides
BGR Group

Note: BGR Government Affairs, LLC has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

Support the U.S. Azerbaijan Relationship in FY22 SFOPs Appropriations

Sending Office: Honorable Steve Chabot
Sent By: mark.erste@mail.house.gov

Dear Colleague,

As Co-Chairs of the Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus, we invite you to join us in urging support for U.S.-Azerbaijan relationship in the FY 2022 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill.

Azerbaijan is a critical partner of the United States. Azerbaijan is strategically positioned as the only friendly gateway to Central Asia, situated bordering Russia to the north and Iran to the south. This has allowed Azerbaijan to provide a crucial supply route for U.S. forces in Afghanistan. Azerbaijan it is also a strong counterterrorism partner and a friend of our ally Israel. Furthermore, in December 2020, Azerbaijan began operation of the Southern Gas Corridor, a pipeline that will bring Caspian Sea gas to Europe, thereby lessening the continent's reliance on Russian energy supplies.

As you are likely aware, 2020 brought substantial change to the South Caucasus. With Azerbaijan now in control of its internationally recognized territory and with Russian soldiers deployed as peacekeepers in Azerbaijan, the region presents several new opportunities and challenges.

Specifically, the United States should support humanitarian efforts to address the aftermath of the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia, by providing assistance for internally displaced persons and for demining. We should also take the opportunity to support peacebuilding efforts between the two countries.

The Russian presence is among the gravest challenges. We therefore ask that any funding be routed through either the Government of Azerbaijan or the United Nations, so that U.S. taxpayer resources do not come under Russian control.

With these priorities in mind, we would appreciate your support of our efforts to strengthen the U.S.-Azerbaijan relationship. To sign on to the letter or for more information, please have your staff reach out to Mark Erste (mark.erste@mail.house.gov) with Congressman Chabot or Hannah Ryans (Hannah.Ryans@mail.house.gov) with Congressman Cohen.

Sincerely,

Steve Chabot

Co-Chair, Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus

Steve Cohen

Co-Chair, Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus

Robert Aderholt

Henry Cuellar

Co-Chair, Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus

Co-Chair, Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus

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Dear Chair Lee and Ranking Member Rogers,

We write to you asking to recognize the strategic importance of the U.S.-Azerbaijan relationship and the new realities in the South Caucasus in the forthcoming FY 2022 State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill.

Azerbaijan is a key player in bringing the hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian Sea to global markets. Specifically, the opening of the Southern Gas Corridor on December 31, 2020, is the crowning achievement in this regard. Through U.S. support for this project, Azerbaijan's efforts have strengthened the energy security of Europe and decreased its reliance on Russian gas.

The situation on the ground in and around Azerbaijan's internationally recognized territory of Nagorno-Karabakh has also changed dramatically over the past several months.

Azerbaijan's restoration of effective control over the lands lost in 1994 has given Azerbaijan full control of its border with Iran. With this change in circumstance, the United States should consider expanding bilateral cooperation on non-proliferation and border security.

More importantly, the United States should support the historic chance for normalization between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We hope that Congress encourages a new era of peaceful cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. A permanent solution to the divisions in the South Caucasus requires exploring how both countries could find areas of common ground to end hostilities. We request that the Committee make funding available for programs promoting cultural and educational exchanges between the Armenian and Azerbaijani people, as well as for cross-border and integration initiatives between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In the immediate term, support for the victims of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is critical. We request that the committee support this priority, especially the clearing of Azerbaijan's territories devastated by war due to landmines and other explosives. This is the most urgent challenge, as demining will allow internally displaced persons to return to their homes.

Finally, we are concerned that funds could fall into the hands of the Russian military, as they are currently the only peacekeeping entity in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. We respectfully request that as the committee determines appropriate the level of humanitarian assistance to the victims of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, including the urgent need for demining of previously occupied territories, that all funds be provided through the Government of Azerbaijan or U.N. organizations. We believe that doing so will ensure Russia does not gain control over U.S. funding, and that U.S. assistance reaches its intended recipients.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,