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COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
CHAIR – SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIVESTOCK AND
FOREIGN AGRICULTURE

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER, OCEANS, AND
WILDLIFE



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE, EURASIA, ENERGY
AND THE ENVIRONMENT

**TRANSATLANTIC LEGISLATORS'
DIALOGUE**
CHAIR

NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
MEMBER

June 22, 2020

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
Appropriations, Subcommittee on State,
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Room HT-2, the Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Ranking Member
Appropriations, Subcommittee on State,
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Member Rogers:

We are writing, in the wake of a letter signed this March by 75 of our House colleagues, to alert you to Azerbaijan's recent military escalation – in the form of major war games last month during the height of the global COVID-19 pandemic – and also to underscore the vital role of the Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs in preserving Fiscal Year 2021 funding for USAID's life-saving humanitarian aid program in Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh).

Investing in Peace

For more than two decades, the United States – through your personal leadership, the support of your Subcommittee, and the backing of majorities in both houses of Congress – has invested in a durable and democratic regional peace by supporting humanitarian programs, including maternal health care, clean drinking water, and, most recently, the HALO Trust's landmine and unexploded ordnance clearance efforts across the territory of the former Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast. Since 2000, the HALO Trust has cleared nearly 500 minefields in Artsakh, returning countless acres of land to useful purposes and saving untold civilian lives. However, risk to the civilian populations remains high in the region with 12 casualties occurring since 2017 and 12 near-miss scenarios for civilians over the past year, and the discovery of millions of previously unidentified square meters of contaminated land. There is a continued and demonstrable humanitarian need for the funding of this important program, one which Congress had repeatedly supported – including through the Valadao (2017) and Cox (2019) amendments. Accordingly, we urge you to include the following provisions in the foreign aid bill:

“Of the funds appropriated by this Act, not less than \$1.5 million shall be made available to fund demining and landmine risk education programs in Nagorno Karabakh.”

“The committee supports robust funding for Nagorno Karabakh-based regional rehabilitation services for survivors of landmine injuries and individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities.”

Azerbaijan Security Funding

Azerbaijan has continued to hinder the pro-peace mission of the OSCE Minsk Group, obstructing implementation of the bipartisan Royce-Engel accountability and peace proposals that could help to finally bring an end to this conflict. Even worse, Baku has escalated tensions at the line-of-contact, conducting large scale war games (May 18-22, 2020) and initiating cross-border attacks against both Artsakh and Armenia. Considering Azerbaijan's refusal to cease its threats and acts of violence, and in light of Baku's rapid arms build-up, we urge the Subcommittee to include the following language:

None of the funds appropriated under this Act shall be used to provide military aid, including Section 333 Building Partner Capacity Program assistance, to Azerbaijan, until the President determines, and so reports to Congress, that its government has ceased all attacks against Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, and agreed to the purely peaceful resolution of regional conflicts.

We also ask that the following certification requirement be added to the President's waiver authority under Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act:

"No funds appropriated or otherwise made available under this Act may be provided to the Government of Azerbaijan until the President determines, and so reports to the Congress, that the Government of Azerbaijan is taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Supporting Armenia

Following Armenian's nonviolent "Velvet Revolution" in April 2018 and subsequent free and open national elections in December 2018, the 116th Congress is in the unique position of aiding the most reform-minded government in the country's history. This is especially true with regard to the State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee, which has traditionally been generous in its support of Armenia and Artsakh. Armenia's legislative and executive branches have indicated a clear intention to further bolster civil society and democratic institutions – efforts that require targeted international investments for democracy, anti-corruption, and rule of law building measures. Additionally, we ask for longer term funding commitments to Armenia's aid-to-trade transition, its role as a regional haven for refugees, and the expansion of bilateral military cooperation in support of U.S. and NATO-led peacekeeping operations.

Though the Department of State has announced increases in overall assistance to Armenia, the lack of a Millennium Challenge Compact or large-scale bilateral defense cooperation relationship with Armenia means that U.S. support for Armenia pales in comparison to funding made available to Armenian's neighbors. Most startlingly, Azerbaijan received well over \$100 million in U.S. military assistance over the last several years, making it the third largest recipient of Section 333 Building Partner Capacity program funds. This defies almost two decades of parity in U.S. security assistance for Armenia and Azerbaijan. This troubling tilt toward the undemocratic Aliyev government in Baku sends all the wrong signals, particularly to our

democratic partners in Armenia. As such, we request the following provision in the foreign aid bill:

“Of the funds appropriated by this Act, not less than \$100 million shall be made available for economic, governance, rule of law, and security assistance to Armenia. An increase in funding specifically to the Department of State’s Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia and the U.S. Agency for International Development’s Bureau for Europe and Eurasia should also be made available for these purposes.”

Again, thank you for your long-standing, principled leadership on the Subcommittee. The provisions highlighted in this letter represents investments in peace and democracy that will contribute directly to stability in the Caucasus and a stronger U.S.-Armenia strategic partnership. We appreciate your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Costa". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

JIM COSTA
Member of Congress