
Spending Plans Calls For \$24 Million In Economic Aid To Armenia, Provides Asymmetrical Military Assistance

AZG Armenian Daily - 6/2/2008

Washington, DC - Given Armenia's support in the global war against terrorism as well as the ongoing attempts by Turkey and Azerbaijan to isolate Armenia, the Armenian Assembly of America today expressed its opposition to the Administration's Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 Budget.

As in years past, the Budget proposal calls for asymmetrical military assistance to Azerbaijan and Armenia. The Administration's spending plan recommends \$3 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to both countries, but Azerbaijan is slated to receive \$600,000 more than Armenia (\$300,000) in Military Education and Training (IMET) assistance.

Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev recently proclaimed that "Armenia did not win the war. The war is not over. Only the first stage of the war has been completed." He added that Nagorno Karabakh will never be independent. "Given Azerbaijan's increased war rhetoric, I have strong concerns with giving any military aid to Azerbaijan, and we definitely should not give them more than we're providing Armenia," stated Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Joe Knollenberg (R-MI). "I will work with my colleagues to ensure that Armenia has the resources needed to continue to strengthen its democracy as well as ensure its security," continued Knollenberg.

The FY 2009 Budget also calls for \$24 million in economic assistance to Armenia, the lowest request to date made by the Administration. The figure represents \$34 million less than what Congress approved last year, and \$11 million less than the Administration's request in FY 2008.

Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny echoed Congressman Knollenberg's concerns, stating: "President Bush missed an important opportunity to demonstrate that his Administration is serious about a policy of regional cooperation and economic integration in the region."

"Azerbaijan's continued threats to resume war, undermines U.S. objectives in the region and I am confident that Congress will reject this approach," Ardouny added. "In a budget that calls for over \$39 billion in the International Affairs account, \$24 million for Armenia is woefully inadequate. Rather than reduce funding to Armenia, we urge the Administration to work with Congress to end the dual blockades imposed upon her by Turkey and Azerbaijan."

Today's announcement is the first step in a lengthy budget process. The next step is for the House and Senate to review the Administration's request through committee hearings.

Established in 1972, the Armenian Assembly is the largest Washington-based nationwide organization promoting public understanding and awareness of Armenian issues. It is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt membership organization.
