



Armenian National Committee of America

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Azerbaijan: Destabilizing the Caucasus and Inciting Hate

In moves that have destabilized the region and undermined prospects for a lasting peace, Azerbaijan has, in recent months, matched its massive military build-up with a dramatic escalation of aggression against both Armenia and Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh).

- **Celebrating an Axe-Murderer:** On August 31, 2012, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev immediately pardoned convicted axe-murderer Ramil Safarov upon his transfer to Azerbaijan from Hungary, despite agreeing to keep him incarcerated. Safarov confessed and was convicted in Budapest for brutally axing an Armenian NATO Partnership for Peace participant to death, while he was sleeping in 2004. He never showed remorse for the murder and stated that he wished he had killed more Armenians. Immediately after his pardon, Safarov received a promotion in the Azerbaijani military, an apartment, and years of back pay for time spent in prison. The pardon was condemned around the world, including by President Obama, the European Parliament, OSCE, Council of Europe, and NATO. Assistant Secretary of State for Europe Phil Gordon said that the United States was “appalled” by the glorification of the axe murderer and viewed his pardon as “a real provocation.”¹ After international condemnation, Aliyev defended Safarov’s release again in September 2013, claiming his pardon had “restored justice.”²
- **Inciting Hate:** President Aliyev announced “our main enemies are Armenians of the world,” during a national address that was posted on his official website.³ In a November 2012 Twitter tirade, President Aliyev stated, “Armenia is a country of no value. It is actually a colony, an outpost run from abroad . . .” In September 2013, Aliyev extolled the “clearing” of Armenians from Baku and announced Azerbaijan’s preparedness to do it again.⁴
- **Baku's Refusal to Remove Snipers:** International mediators have repeatedly called for both Armenian and Azerbaijani forces to withdraw snipers from the area. Armenia and the Nagorno Karabakh Republic have agreed, but Azerbaijan continues to oppose the proposal.⁵
- **Bigoted State Policies:** Azerbaijan routinely denies visas to any citizen of Armenian ancestry⁶ or anyone who is married to an Armenian.⁷ The State Department warns Americans of Armenian ancestry to remain “particularly vigilant,” if they travel to Azerbaijan, since the government of Azerbaijan has explained that it is “unable to guarantee your safety.”⁸ Also, dozens of Azerbaijani citizens were brought in for questioning by the national security ministry, because they voted for Armenian artists during a European song contest.⁹

¹ <http://www.armenialiberty.org/archive/english/20120921/1089/1089.html?id=24715578>

² <http://www.news.az/articles/official/82721>

³ <http://en.president.az/articles/4423>

⁴ <http://www.news.az/articles/official/82721>

⁵ http://www.rferl.org/content/snipers_karabakh_armenia_azerbaijan/24402333.html

⁶ <http://cpj.org/2011/07/citing-ethnicity-azerbaijan-bars-photojournalist.php>

⁷ <http://www.panorama.am/en/society/2013/08/14/anna-sahakyan/>

⁸ http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_978.html

⁹ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2009/aug/18/azerbaijan-authorities-interrogate-music-fans>

- **Destruction of Holy Sites:** Azerbaijan demolished an over 1,300 year old sacred cemetery with thousands of Armenian tombstones, which was videotaped,¹⁰ condemned by the international community,¹¹ and documented by the American Association for the Advancement of Science.¹²
- **Attacking Novelist for Expressing Sympathy for Armenians:** In February 2013, President Aliyev stripped an Azerbaijani writer of his state honors and pension, because he wrote sympathetically about Armenians in his novel. His wife and son were also fired from their government jobs, before a political party supportive of President Aliyev rescinded its bounty of over \$12,000 for anyone, who would cut off the novelist's ear.¹³ An aide to Azerbaijan's President Aliyev insisted, "The Azerbaijani people must express public hatred towards these people."¹⁴
- **Abusing Prisoners of War:** Against well-established international norms and laws of war, Azerbaijan has paraded Armenian prisoners of war on television and forced confessions. In one case, an Armenian shepherd, who accidentally crossed the border, was captured, denied visits from the International Red Cross, paraded on television, and subsequently killed in custody.¹⁵
- **Threatening to Shoot Down Civilian Airplanes:** Azerbaijan, as recently as July of 2012,¹⁶ threatened to shoot down civilian planes that fly from Armenia to Nagorno Karabakh. In March 2011, Radio Free Europe reported the Azerbaijan Civil Aviation Administration Director's intention to commit a terrorist act and shoot down civilian planes flying over Nagorno Karabakh.¹⁷
- **Ceasefire Violations Increasing:** Azerbaijan's ceasefire violations along the Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh border have increased by over 2100% between 2006 and 2011. According to these figures, Azerbaijan has already violated the ceasefire regime 6,000 times during the first 5 months in 2012.¹⁸ (See Graph A)
- **Attacks into Armenia More Frequent:** Azerbaijan is increasingly attacking not only the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, but also the Republic of Armenia, including a brazen and fatal incursion into Armenian territory (Tavoush region) just hours before the June 2012 visit to Armenia by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.¹⁹
- **Azerbaijan's Military Budget Increasing:** In January 2013, President Aliyev announced a sharp increase in the country's military and defense budget from \$3 Billion to \$3.7 Billion for 2013.²⁰ The most recent SIPRI figures show a consistent increase in military spending levels over the past decade, whereas Azerbaijan's military spending surpasses Armenia's entire budget. (See Graph B)

¹⁰ <http://www.djulfa.com/film/>

¹¹ <http://www.archaeology.org/online/features/djulfa/>

¹² <http://www.aaas.org/news/releases/2010/1208azerbaijan.shtml>

¹³ <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2013-02-13/azeri-party-offers-13-000-bounty-for-cutting-off-writer-s-ear>

¹⁴ <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/02/12/azerbaijan-stop-harassing-writer>

¹⁵ <http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/2182797.html>

¹⁶ <http://www.armenialiberty.org/content/article/24647074.html>

¹⁷ http://www.rferl.org/content/azerbaijan_threatens_to_shoot_down_karabakh_flights/2340659.html

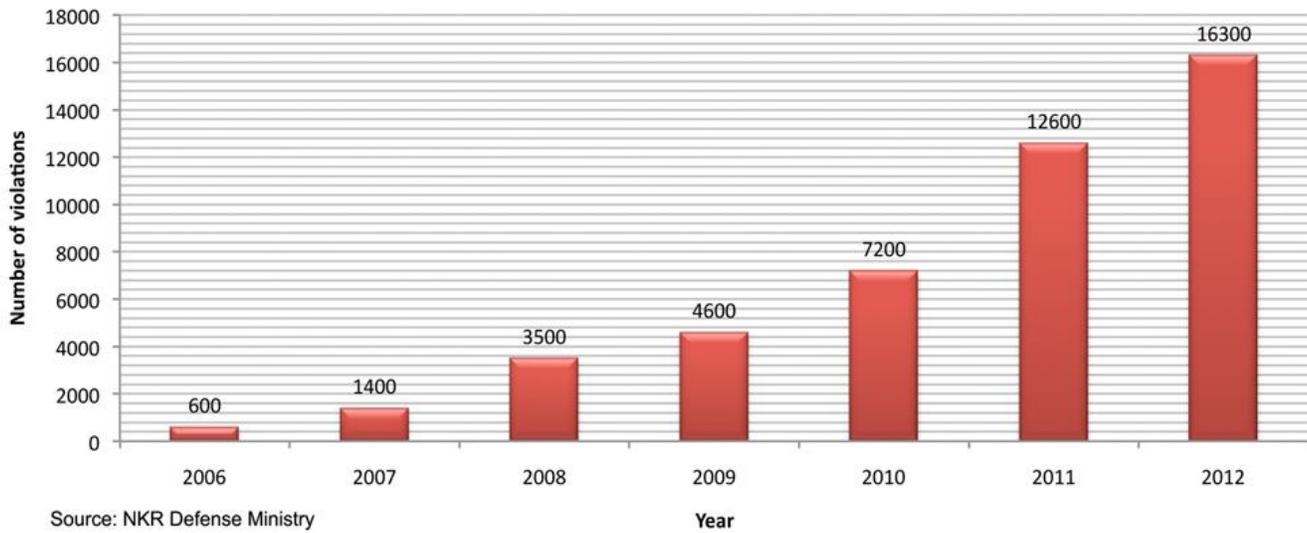
¹⁸ <http://news.am/eng/news/105162.html>

¹⁹ <http://www.rferl.org/content/clinton-armenia-azerbaijan-georgia-tour/24602702.html>

²⁰ <http://www.acus.org/natosource/azerbaijan-sharply-increases-military-spending>

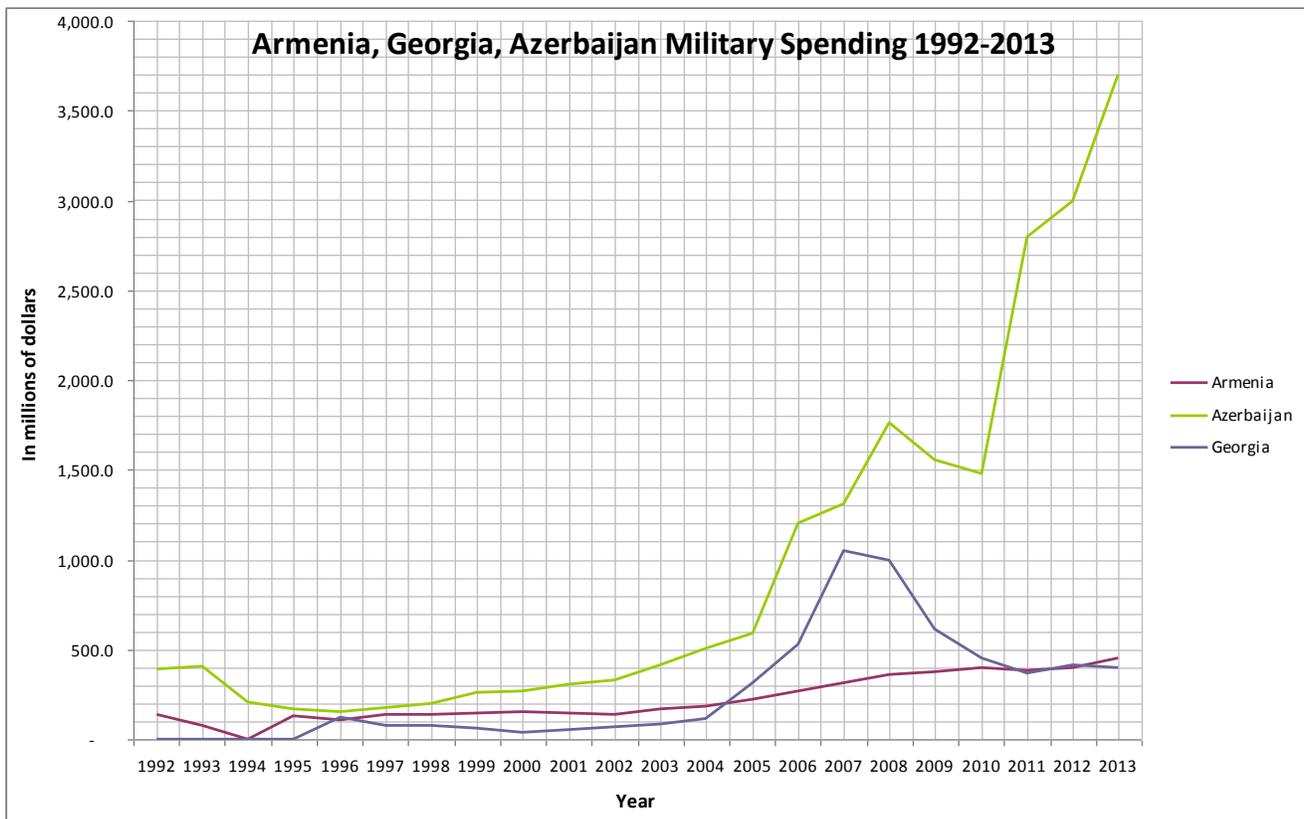
Graph A

Azerbaijani Ceasefire Violations 2006-2012



Graph B

Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan Military Spending 1992-2013



Sources: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2012/apr/17/military-spending-countries-list#data>
<http://asbarez.com/107712/baku-hikes-military-spending-to-3-7-billion/>
<http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64489>
<http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65076>
http://i-hls.com/2013/06/future-of-the-georgian-defense-industry-including-hls/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=future-of-the-georgian-defense-industry-including-hls