

Ambassador Matthew Bryza
Interview with ITV
September 10, 2011

ITV: Mr. Bryza, as you know, the first part of our interview is about 9/11. So my first question is after 9/11 the U.S. started an active worldwide campaign against terrorism. To what degree has the U.S. attained its goals during the past ten years? How has the U.S. done with respect to hitting its targets?

Ambassador Bryza: First I'd like to make the point that it wasn't just the United States that was targeted by September 11th and the aftermath. There were attacks against people, totally innocent people -- Muslims and non-Muslims -- all over the world including London and Istanbul, Bali, Casablanca, and even attempts to attack people here in Baku.

Fortunately when it comes to Azerbaijan we have such effective and strong cooperation that the plots that were to take place here never happened. We are deeply grateful for continuing help from the government of Azerbaijan to keep us safe in our community here and to help us continue the fight against al-Qaida all around the world.

Our effort, the main focus of our counter-terrorism effort is to disrupt, to dismantle and to defeat al-Qaida. I'd argue we're doing well. In the last two and a half years we've been able to eliminate many of the top leaders of al-Qaida, more than had been captured or killed since September 11, 2001, so we're making a lot of progress. Of course most notably we were able to eliminate Osama bin Laden himself, the only leader al-Qaida has ever known. These have been joint efforts with our foreign partners in the coalition, and our allies and our friends like Azerbaijan.

Finally I'd like to note that I will never forget the step that Azerbaijan and President Heydar Aliev took on September 12, 2001. I happened to be working in our White House on that day and was among people who evacuated the White House as we thought a plane was heading for it and went home that day as we tried to figure out what we were supposed to do. When I returned to work the next day I had a burning desire to make an impact, make a contribution to what I could see was going to be our country's number one concern for a long time to come. Thanks to Azerbaijan and a decision by President Heydar Aliev, I was able to, because Azerbaijan granted the United States full over-flight clearance for our

non-military flights to Afghanistan and a range of other cooperation that underscored what friendship really means.

ITV: Mr. Bryza, which terror centers have been targeted by the U.S.?

Ambassador Bryza: We have pursued al-Qaida everywhere in the world. Everybody is aware of how extensive our efforts have been in Afghanistan. But we have pursued al-Qaida and its affiliates wherever they may be.

ITV: As you mentioned, when the U.S. started anti-terror campaign Azerbaijan stands the next to the U.S. Azerbaijan permitted the U.S. and NATO to transport non-military supply to Afghanistan over its territory. At present Azerbaijan is suffering from terror. The Azerbaijani territory is recognized by international community, but Armenia turned occupied into the terror nests. Even drugs are delivered from this place to other countries. What does the U.S. do to stop terror in occupied Azerbaijani territories?

Ambassador Bryza: The main problem in terms of security in Azerbaijan and Armenia is the non-resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We are doing everything we can to resolve it peacefully in a negotiated way, and as a former co-chair I can say we have developed positive, reasonable, and good ideas. The co-chairs continue to work with great energy. In fact they met just today in Vienna. And what they have put on the table is a workable solution. A workable framework for a final peace settlement.

I'm confident a settlement can be reached, and once there is one I think a broad range of problems that are plaguing both sides will melt away and we will see hopefully a new era of cooperation. But there is still a long way to go.

ITV: You mentioned the co-chairs met today?

Ambassador Bryza: They met today in Vienna, yeah.

ITV: That's news for us.

Ambassador Bryza: I just saw their statement.

ITV: All of them?

Ambassador Bryza: The three co-chairs met in Vienna.

ITV: What is the main discussion matter?

Ambassador Bryza: I was here, so -- The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

ITV: I know, but which details?

Ambassador Bryza: I've been sitting here. I don't know what details, but generally you can surmise that they're talking about how to advance the process after the meeting in Kazan on June 25th.

ITV: That is news for us.

The second part of our interview, it's about Azerbaijan, about Nagorno-Karabakh, and about United States policy towards Azerbaijan. Pro-Armenian congressmen who opposed your appointment to Azerbaijan, demands to provide to separatist Nagorno-Karabakh \$10 million financial assistance. If it is humanitarian assistance why instead of delivery of this assistance to Azerbaijani IDP's from Karabakh, it should be delivered to separatists?

Ambassador Bryza: For the last few years, since about 2004, the United States has provided around \$2 million a year in humanitarian assistance to the residents of Nagorno-Karabakh. That assistance has gone essentially towards demining efforts and water. Water use, in a humanitarian sense. At the same time the United States has provided a similar amount of money over that period to Azerbaijani internally displaced persons and for demining efforts as well. So our concern is for the internally displaced persons, regardless of what their ethnicity may be. I myself will visit a camp for internally displaced persons this Sunday as part of our commemoration of September 11th, during which our President has asked us to perform public service as a way to remember the victims, but more importantly, to remember how we came together with so many countries around the world including Azerbaijan.

ITV: I want to make for me one matter clear. How would this demand be given to Nagorno-Karabakh? In which way?

Ambassador Bryza: I don't know how. Congress makes these decisions. I'm not there. But generally I can tell you that the money goes to implementing partners who often are usually non-governmental organizations that provide the assistance. To clarify, that's the way it's happened in the past. I'm just not

familiar with what the congressional plans are right now, at this moment, but I anticipate it will be the same way.

ITV: Mr. Bryza, Several US companies are operating in NK. The U.S. citizens are travelling there without Azerbaijan's permission. As the U.S. Ambassador what kind of steps you do to inform your management about it.

Ambassador Bryza: What we do is inform these Americans number one, of the fact that neither Armenia nor the United States or any country recognizes Nagorno-Karabakh as an independent entity. So there is no way for us to provide any services to those Americans who decide on their own volition to travel to Nagorno-Karabakh.

In our country we have no restrictions on personal travel in an area like that, but we do have restrictions on U.S. officials traveling to Nagorno-Karabakh. For many years, long before I was the U.S. co-chair, it was decided that the only U.S. officials who would travel to Nagorno-Karabakh were the co-chair and his or her assistants.

ITV: Some political experts affirm that the U.S. is occupied with Middle East and North Africa, so South Caucasus is forgotten and this region is area of Russia's interests. Is it really so?

Ambassador Bryza: I wouldn't comment on whether this is an area of Russia's interest other than to say historically we all know what's happened here. But I would say it's absolutely not true that the United States government at the highest possible level doesn't pay attention to Azerbaijan. It does. I know from my own personal discussions with the President, with the Secretary of State that they're very interested and concerned about what's happening here and in particular are willing to do what they can and what is necessary to help the parties finalize the basic principles outlining a full peace settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh.

And you'll recall, as well, a little bit over a year ago Secretary Clinton visited here, as did Secretary of Defense Gates, and from a strategic perspective I know that our top leaders understand what's at stake here in this part of the world which is a full range of very significant U.S. interests.

I think one thing that we are understanding is that Azerbaijan is a secular state with a Muslim majority population that borders Iran, that is working on democratic and market economic reforms and that wishes to be our partner on a

range of issues, is a very important friend to have. As Azerbaijan succeeds in its reforms, in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and continuing its cooperation with us on so many issues, its success makes an important contribution also in defeating the ideology of al-Qaida. Because as Azerbaijan succeeds in all of these areas, it demonstrates to everybody that what al-Qaida has tried to do is to manipulate a religion for political objectives and to justify violence. Azerbaijan is working in the opposite direction, embracing secular norms, working towards democratic and market economic reforms in partnership with us, rather than what al-Qaida is trying to do which is terrorism.

ITV: Mr. Bryza, as I mentioned before the U.S. and Azerbaijan had the same position in anti-terror operations. Both countries relations are based on a strategic partnership. Don't you think that 907 Amendment's existence opposes the strategic partnership?

Ambassador Bryza: I think our strategic partnership is strong and is getting stronger. I've felt it strengthening in the months that I've been here. So we're moving forward, whether it be on security, cooperation with regard to Afghanistan, or fighting terror or energy or democratic and market economic reform. And as you know, since 2002 the President of the United States has had a waiver at his disposal to allow us to advance our full range of cooperation with Azerbaijan. That was a waiver granted by the United States Congress in response to Azerbaijan's immediate help right after September 11th. Each year our President has decided to use that waiver and continue our assistance and cooperation.

ITV: What is the main obstacle to stop 907 in general, not every year?

Ambassador Bryza: The way our political system works and our government system works is that the United States Congress has to decide whether to provide money for any government function and therefore has the right to place whatever restrictions it wishes on that assistance. Congress doesn't always agree with the President. So what has to happen is that dialogue must continue, political discussions must continue between the President's part of the government and the Congress, so that or until the point that Congress takes a decision on its own power because Congress is completely independent of the President.

Secretary Clinton has expressed her view on Section 907 and her hope and belief it should be repealed. So she certainly speaks for the U.S. Department of State.

ITV: Thanks for your effort and thanks for your interview this morning.

Ambassador Bryza: Thank you for your excellent questions and for a chance to speak to you today.

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