

Transcript

Representative Dan Burton Press Roundtable

September 4, 2012

Baku American Center, Azerbaijan

Representative Burton: Ladies and gentlemen, I'm at your disposal. I'll be glad to try to answer any questions that you have.

I've had a great visit. I've had the opportunity to meet with your President. It was a very good meeting. We had an opportunity to meet with the Speaker of the House and Members of Parliament. And we had an opportunity to meet with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. We had great meetings talking about a multitude of subjects and I think it's been very enlightening. I'm very happy that I've been here, and it's great to have friends like we have in Azerbaijan.

I'm open for any questions that you might have.

Question: What kind of questions have you discussed with the President?

Representative Burton: We talked about Azerbaijan-United States relations. We talked about problems that deal with Iran and some of the other issues for this entire area. We talked about some of the more recent problems like the one that we've all read about in the papers, about the Safarov case. So it was a very informative meeting.

Question: [Through Interpreter]. My question is about the pardoning act by the President on the Azerbaijani army officer who was transferred from Hungary to Azerbaijan and was pardoned by the President. And the United States government expressed its concern regarding the pardon act. I would like to get your opinion, elaboration on this.

Representative Burton: I think my answer would be consistent with what we've already stated from the United States of America. I don't see any difference in the position that I would state from what we've already said. The only thing I would add is I think it's extremely important that the talks between Armenia and

Azerbaijan not be imperiled by what's happened. I think those talks are extremely important on the disputed territory and I think those talks should go on.

Question: [Through Interpreter]. Voice of America. Recently one of the Congressmen raised the issue of independence of Iranian Azerbaijanis before the President to consider this issue. Would you like to be the second Congressman to support or to come forward with such an idea?

Representative Burton: You're talking about Congressman Rohrbacher?

Question: Yes.

Representative Burton: No. I do not agree with that. You can see that Congressmen don't always agree with one another.

Question: My question is on Iran. You have said that the regime is dangerous. Could you give more details about that? And lastly the region about Iran [inaudible], and some Israeli officials say that they would attack against Iran with support of U.S. soldiers. Does the President and the U.S. hope for Azerbaijan's support?

Representative Burton: We discussed the nuclear program of Iran and the problems that creates not just for Azerbaijan but the entire region. I think the President and your government is also very concerned about that. And as far as any kind of military action by Israel or the United States working with Israel in the event that Iran does not stop its nuclear development program, you have to forgive me, but I can't comment on that because if I had information that something might be taking place I certainly couldn't tell you about it anyhow. But I will just say this. Iran should stop its nuclear program now. I am convinced that Israel is very serious about protecting its people in the event that Iran does get nuclear capability, and I believe that Israel will do whatever is necessary to protect the people of Israel in the event that there is a nuclear weapons program that's completed by Iran.

Question: [Through Interpreter]. ANS TV. First of all I would like to mention that high-ranking U.S. officials as well as new coming Ambassador mentioned

repeatedly that Azerbaijan is an important country for United States. But the fact is that the ambassadorial post of United States to Azerbaijan was vacant for quite a long time and the former Ambassador was able to function for just a year. My question is, is Armenian lobby in United States so strong and the Armenian [forces] so strong that United States cannot do anything in this regard to ensure its interests?

Representative Burton: The only thing I can say about that is I think it's extremely important that we have an Ambassador, and Ambassador Morningstar is now here. He presented his credentials to the President I believe yesterday. I think he will do an excellent job.

I think that a country like Azerbaijan that is so important to this region and to the United States and stability in this area is extremely important and they deserve to have an Ambassador. I wish it hadn't taken so long to get an Ambassador, but I'm glad that the problem has been solved.

I hope that the Azerbaijani people realize that the friendship that the United States has with Azerbaijan is extremely important. We consider Azerbaijan to be a great friend and ally and we will continue to try to do our best work with Azerbaijan in the future on issues of mutual concern.

Question: [Through Interpreter]. Did you discuss the issues of human rights in Azerbaijan?

Representative Burton: We did not get into details about human rights in Azerbaijan. I think the President and the Speaker of the House and the Deputy Foreign Minister all understand that the United States stands for human rights, freedom, and all the things that I think you would want to talk about. So I didn't think it was necessary to go into details about human rights because I think the United States position is very well known.

Thank you very much.

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