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-----AD4D12 191343Z /38

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FM AMEMBASSY BAKU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5356
INFO AMEMBASSY YEREVAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TBILISI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USOSCE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAKU 005748

EXDIS CEDAR

DECAPTIONED

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/18/10
TAGS: PREL, OSCE, AJ, AM
SUBJECT: MINSK GROUP MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ALIYEV

(U) CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR ROSS WILSON. FOR
REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: ON DECEMBER 11 PRESIDENT ALIYEV
AND THE MINSK GROUP CO-CHAIRS REITERATED THE
IMPORTANCE OF AND THEIR COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVING A
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PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT OVER NAGORNO-
KARABAKH. THEY EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANT ROLE
TURKEY WOULD PLAY IN THE SETTLEMENT OF THE
CONFLICT AND NOTED THE BENEFITS OF RESTORING THE
ENERGY AND TRANSPORTATION LINKS CONNECTING
NAKHCHIVAN TO AZERBAIJAN AND ARMENIA TO TURKEY AND
IRAN THAT WOULD COME WITH A PEACE SETTLEMENT.
THEY DISCUSSED THE PLANS OF THE ARMENIAN AND
AZERIBAIJANI DEFENSE MINISTERS TO MEET AT THE
NAKHCHIVAN - ARMENIA BORDER ON DECEMBER 15 AND FOR
THE TWO PRESIDENTS TO MEET IN STRASBOURG IN
JANUARY. ALIYEV TOLD THE MINSK GROUP THAT HE AND
KOCHARIAN HAD NOT HAD USEFUL SUBSTANTIVE
DISCUSSIONS IN MINSK AT THE CIS SUMMIT. HE HAD
TOLD KOCHARIAN THAT "THE BALL IS IN YOUR COURT."
AMBASSADOR CAVANAUGH SUGGESTED THAT KOCHARIAN
SEEMS TO BE CONSIDERING NEW IDEAS AND, BASED ON
THE GROUP'S MEETING EARLIER THAT DAY WITH
PRESIDENT KOCHARIAN, IT IS POSSIBLE HE WILL HAVE A
NEW PROPOSAL TO DISCUSS WITH ALIYEV IN JANUARY.

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Martin McLean, Senior Reviewer

ALIYEV PERSONALLY APPEALED TO THE MINSK GROUP CO-CHAIRS TO SUPPORT AZERBAIJAN'S PROPOSED ADDITION TO THE UNGA'S ANNUAL RESOLUTION ON COOPERATION WITH THE OSCE, WHICH WOULD DESCRIBE NAGORNO-KARABAKH AS "THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH REGION OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN." END SUMMARY.

2. (U) BEFORE THE ASSEMBLED PRESS ON DECEMBER 11, PRESIDENT ALIYEV PREFACED HIS DIALOGUE WITH MINSK GROUP CO-CHAIRS CAREY CAVANAUGH (U.S.), JEAN JACQUES GAILLARDE (FRANCE), AND NIKOLAI GRIBKOV
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(RUSSIA), WITH THE STATEMENT THAT SETTLEMENT OF THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR THE CAUCASUS. CAVANAUGH NOTED THAT SECRETARY ALBRIGHT HAD STRESSED THIS VERY POINT DURING HER RECENT SPEECH AT THE OSCE MINISTERIAL IN VIENNA.

3. (U) CAVANAUGH OUTLINED THE MINSK GROUP ITINERARY, WHICH BEGAN WITH MEETINGS IN ANKARA WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CEM, FOLLOWED BY A FLIGHT TO KARS, A LAND CROSSING FROM TURKEY TO NAKHCHIVAN THROUGH THE SADARAK PORT OF ENTRY OPENED IN MAY 1992, A MEETING WITH AZERBAIJAN REFUGEES IN YENI KARKI, ANOTHER CROSSING FROM NAKHCHIVAN INTO ARMENIA, WHERE TWO SOLDIERS HAD BEEN KILLED IN AUGUST, DRIVING TO STEPANAKERT TO MEET WITH ARKADY GHUKASIAN, DRIVING TO YEREVAN TO MEET WITH KOCHARIAN, AND FLYING TO BAKU TO MEET WITH ALIYEV. HE OBSERVED THAT THE ITINERARY EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANT ROLE TURKEY WOULD PLAY IN ANY SETTLEMENT. FM CEM SAID TURKEY STRONGLY SUPPORTS PEACE AND IS READY TO DO WHAT IT CAN TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE REGION. CAVANAUGH NOTED THE DIFFICULT ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND SOCIAL SITUATION FACING THE PEOPLE OF NAKHCHIVAN, WHO HAVE DIRECTLY SUFFERED FROM THEIR ISOLATION FROM THE REST OF AZERBAIJAN BY THE CONFLICT. HE REPORTED KOCHARIAN'S RENEWED COMMITMENT TO DO WHAT WAS NEEDED TO HALT CASUALTIES ON THE BORDER, AND KOCHARIAN'S VIEW THAT CEASE-FIRE VIOLATIONS ARE UNACCEPTABLE. THE CO-CHAIRS UNDERSTOOD, CAVANAUGH
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SAID, THAT AZERBAIJAN WAS TAKING STEPS, TOO, TO ENHANCE BORDER SECURITY.

4. (U) ALIYEV CONCURRED THAT TURKEY PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN SOLVING THE CONFLICT. DESPITE SEVERAL RECENT ATTEMPTS TO ENACT ARMENIAN GENOCIDE RESOLUTIONS IN THE U.S., FRANCE, ITALY, AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, TURKEY REMAINS COMMITTED TO

PEACE IN THE REGION. ALIYEV OBSERVED THAT THESE RESOLUTIONS HAVE STRENGTHENED CONFRONTATION IN THE REGION AND WEAKENED THE PEACE PROCESS.

5. (U) ALIYEV EXPRESSED ATISFACTION THAT THE CO-CHAIRS HAD VISITED NAKHCHIVAN TO SEE THE EFFECT OF THE CONFLICT ON THE PEOPLE THERE. HE CALLED THE BRIDGE OVER THE ARAZ RIVER CONNECTING AZERBAIJAN TO TURKEY A LIFE-LINE FOR THE PEOPLE OF NAKHCHIVAN. FIGHTING HAD ISOLATED NAKHCHIVAN FROM

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ITS TRADITIONAL SUPPLIES OF ELECTRICITY AND GAS, AS WELL AS ITS ROAD AND RAIL CONNECTIONS TO THE MAINLAND. HE REMARKED THAT HIS THREE YEARS IN NAKHCHIVAN (1990-93) HAD BEEN HARD.

6. (U) ALIYEV VOICED SATISFACTION WITH KOCHARIAN'S
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RENEWED COMMITMENT TO THE CEASEFIRE. HE SPECULATED WHETHER THE RUSSIAN ARMY, WITH BASES IN ARMENIA, AND IN THE PROCESS OF MAKING TLE TRANSFERS FROM GEORGIAN TO RUSSIAN BASES IN ARMENIA, WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO BETTER HELP THE N-K ARMENIANS. HE EXPRESSED AGREEMENT WITH THE CO-CHAIRS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DIRECT DIALOGUE WITH KOCHARIAN, WHICH HAD BROUGHT THE

NEGOTIATIONS TO A "CERTAIN STAGE" IN 1999. THE CO-CHAIRS HAD WAITED TO "SEE WHAT RESULTS WOULD EMERGE," SO ALIYEV SAID HE HAD NOT APPEALED TO THE CO-CHAIRS TO DO MORE. NOW HE HAD DECIDED TO APPEAL TO THE CO-CHAIRS TO INTENSIFY AND EXPAND ITS ACTIVITIES IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DIRECT DIALOGUE.

7. (U) CAVANAUGH RESPONDED THAT THE GROUP HAD DISCUSSED THE POWER AND TRANSPORT CONNECTIONS WITH BOTH AZERBAIJANI AND ARMENIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. A RESTORATION OF THE TRADITIONAL LINKS BETWEEN NAKHCHIVAN AND THE REST OF AZERBAIJAN, AS WELL AS AMONG ARMENIA, TURKEY AND IRAN, WILL ENSURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENTIRE REGION. THE MINSK GROUP HAS BEEN WORKING TO ENSURE THAT THEIR SUPPORTING EFFORTS WORKED IN HARMONY WITH THE DIRECT DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE TWO PRESIDENTS.

8. (U) CAVANAUGH NOTED THAT THE ARMENIAN AND AZERBAIJANI DEFENSE MINISTERS PLAN TO MEET ON THE NAKHCHIVAN-ARMENIA BORDER AT SADARAK ON DECEMBER 15 TO DISCUSS THE CEASE-FIRE. HE ALSO EXPRESSED
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THE HOPE THAT ALIYEV WOULD BE ABLE TO MEET WITH KOCHARIAN IN STRASBOURG IN JANUARY. ALIYEV RESPONDED POSITIVELY. NOTING THE ISOLATION OF NAKHCHIVAN, CAVANAUGH SAID THE VISIT THERE WAS PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE FOR THE CO-CHAIRS OVER THE LAST YEAR. HE STRESSED THAT IF TURKEY HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN BUILDING BETT ER RELATIONS WITH SYRIA AND GREECE THIS WAS ALSO POSSIBLE WITH ARMENIA. CAVANAUGH SAID THE CO-CHAIRS HAVE TRIED TO GEAR THEIR WORK CLOSELY TO THE DIRECT DIALOGUE. AS THAT DIALOGUE INCREASES, SO WILL THE CO-CHAIRS ACTIVITIES, TAKING CARE NOT TO DO ANYTHING THAT WOULD UNDERMINE THE DIRECT DIALOGUE. HE NOTED THAT ALIYEV'S REMARKS ABOUT THE MINSK GROUP AND THE DIRECT DIALOGUE MIRRORED THOSE MADE BY KOCHARIAN EARLIER THE SAME DAY INCLUDING THE UNDERLYING FRUSTRATION THAT THE PEACE PROCESS HAD NOT VOWED MORE.

9. (C) AFTER DISMISSING THE PRESS, ALIYEV SAID THAT, ALTHOUGH THEY HAD TALKED FOR A LONG TIME, HE AND KOCHARIAN HAD NOT HAD CONCRETE DISCUSSIONS AT THEIR MEETING AT THE CIS SUMMIT IN MINSK EARLIER THIS MONTH. ALIYEV SAID HE TOLD KOCHARIAN THAT THE BALL WAS IN HIS COURT SINCE ALIYEV HAD MADE THE LAST PROPOSAL, WHICH HAD BEEN REJECTED IN THE END BY KOCHARIAN. KOCHARIAN COUNTERED WITH THE COMMON STATE CONCEPT, WHICH ALIYEV PROMPTLY REJECTED ARGUING THAT IT SHOULD NOT BE RAISED AGAIN. ACCORDING TO ALIYEV, THE TWO PRESIDENTS

ALSO REHASHED EARLIER MINSK GROUP PROPOSALS, WHICH
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HAD BEEN REJECTED BY ONE OR THE OTHER SIDE.

10. (C) ALIYEV NOTED THAT HE HAD BEEN SHARPLY
CRITICIZED BY THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION IN
AZERBAIJAN DURING THE RECENT PARLIAMENTARY
ELECTIONS FOR NOT BEING ABLE TO SOLVE THE
CONFLICT. HE WAS NOT AFRAID OF BEING OVERTHROWN,
BUT "THE PEOPLE'S TRUST" IS FADING BECAUSE OF THE
GOVERNMENT'S INABILITY TO RESOLVE N-K. KOCHARIAN
HAD TOLD HIM THAT 2001 WOULD SEE A TURNING POINT
IN THE PEACE PROCESS. ALIYEV SAID HE RESPONDED BY
NOTING HE HAD PUBLICLY STATED THE SAME WITH REGARD
TO 2000 AND NOW WAS BEING CRITICIZED FOR IT.

11. (C) CAVANAUGH TOLD ALIYEV THAT FM OSKANIAN HAD
NOTED THE ARMENIANS WERE ALSO MORE AND MORE
DISSATISFIED WITH THE SITUATION. OSKANIAN HAD
TOLD THE GROUP EARLIER THAT DAY THE ARMENIAN

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PEOPLE RECOGNIZED THAT THE STATUS QUO WAS
UNACCEPTABLE. CAVANAUGH SAID ARKADY GHUKASIAN
STRESSED THE NEED FOR RESOLUTION EVEN MORE BY
INCREASINGLY NOTING THAT THE N-K ARMENIANS ARE IN
LIMBO NOW. KOCHARIAN HAD INDICATED TO THE GROUP

THAT HE WAS, CRYSTALLIZING HIS THINKING ABOUT
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IDEAS AND SEQUENCING OF STEPS, CONSIDERING SOME
NEW ELEMENTS OF A POSSIBLE SOLUTION. CAVANAUGH
OBSERVED THAT IT WAS THE CO-CHAIR'S HOPE KOCHARIAN
WOULD PUT FORWARD CONCRETE IDEAS. HE HAD MADE
CLEAR THAT HE WOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ALIYEV'S
CONCERNS IN DEVELOPING THOSE IDEAS.

12. (C) ALIYEV RAISED AZERBAIJAN'S PROPOSED
ADDITION TO THE UNGA'S ANNUAL RESOLUTION ON
COOPERATION WITH THE OSCE. HE NOTED THAT BEFORE
LAST YEAR, THE U.S. HAD ALWAYS SUPPORTED
AZERBAIJAN'S POSITION THAT THE TEXT OF THE
LANGUAGE SHOULD REFER TO THE "NAGORNO-KARABAKH
REGION OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN." LAST YEAR
54 STATES HAD SUPPORTED AZERBAIJAN'S AMENDMENT TO
THE TEXT - THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COUNTRIES
HAD MADE PASSAGE POSSIBLE, BUT THE THREE MINSK
GROUP CO-CHAIR COUNTRIES HAD ABSTAINED. HE NOTED
THAT THE EU MEMBER STATES WOULD PROBABLY FOLLOW
THEIR LEAD. ALIYEV ASKED WHETHER THE GROUP HAD
ALREADY DECIDED THAT N-K IS NOT PART OF
AZERBAIJAN. ALIYEV ARGUED THAT NOT SUPPORTING THE
AZERBAIJANI AMENDMENT WOULD ENCOURAGE THE
ARMENIANS TO PUSH FOR FULL INDEPENDENCE AND THIS,
FOR AZERBAIJANIS WOULD CREATE A DOUBT ABOUT THE
INTENTIONS OF THE CO-CHAIRS. ALIYEV PERSONALLY
APPEALED TO THE MINSK GROUP CO-CHAIRS TO SUPPORT
THE AZERBAIJANI LANGUAGE IN THE UNGA. CAVANAUGH,
GAILLARDE, AND GRIBKOV SAID THEY WOULD HAVE TO
CONSULT WITH DECISION-MAKERS IN THEIR CAPITALS.

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13. (U) THIS MESSAGE WAS CLEARED BY AMBASSADOR
CAVANAUGH.

WILSON

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