
WASHINGTON TIMES: WHY TRUMP MUST ENGAGE AZERBAIJAN

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Trend (11 October 2017)

As President Trump and his foreign policy team focus on the challenges posed by North Korea's reckless nuclear ambition, Russia's increasing belligerent stance, China's patient but determined quest for hegemony in Asia, and a resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan, we should not ignore one of America's most steadfast and reliable allies: Azerbaijan, wrote Rob Sobhani, director general of the Caspian Group Holdings, in his article published by the Washington Times.

He says that in fact, there are several critical reasons why the Trump administration should immediately engage with this Muslim country of 9 million sandwiched between Iran and Russia.

First, the role of Azerbaijan in Mr. Trump's recent decision to increase American military engagement in Afghanistan will be critical. Not only does Azerbaijan have troops in Afghanistan fighting alongside American servicemen, but the fact that Azerbaijan allows its airspace to be used by the Pentagon's Transportation Command is vital to the success of the president's mission in Afghanistan.

"On his last visit to Azerbaijan, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates remarked: Clearly, the ability to overfly Azerbaijan and the ability to use ground transportation through Azerbaijan is obviously important. These are the most effective, most cost-efficient ways to get supplies to the international coalition in Afghanistan," the article reads.

"Mikhail Yevdayev, head of the Mountain Jews of Azerbaijan, recently stated: I always repeat these words to Jewish people everywhere that if they don't have a place to live, let them come to Azerbaijan," he reminded.

Also, at a time when extremism is on the rise, the author calls on President Trump to highlight Azerbaijan as a model for other Muslim countries to emulate.

"Showcasing Azerbaijan's vital role as an energy corridor to Europe is another reason why the Trump team must engage with Baku. The United States and Azerbaijan share the common goal of uninterrupted exploration, development and transportation of oil and gas from the Caspian Sea basin to markets in Europe and beyond," the article further reads.

"The export of Azerbaijan's gas to Europe, scheduled to begin in 2020, can diversify the continent's energy imports and lessen reliance on Russia. Mr. Trump can demonstrate a strategic vision for Europe's long-term energy security by renewing America's 100 percent support for a trans-Caspian

gas corridor originating in Azerbaijan."

"On any given day, the president of the United States and his team face daunting challenges, such as a madmans shooting rampage, natural disasters that leave our fellow citizens homeless, or a trigger-happy dictator in North Korea. And yet amid all these legitimate concerns, we cannot forget our friends and allies. Azerbaijan is one such American partner that deserves the Trump teams immediate attention," noted the author.

Kaynak/Source: