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ARMENIA'S ARM SALES TO IRAN

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Among the WikiLeaks documents, the most significant document related to Armenia is its arm sales to Iran. Armenia has bought 1.000 anti-tank rockets and 260 heavy machine guns from Bulgaria in 2003, but has immediately sold them to Iran, although a written guarantee had been given to Bulgaria that the weapons would remain in Armenia. It has been identified later that these weapons have been used during an attack in Iraq by the Shiites in which a US soldier was killed and six others were wounded. Therefore, Armenia has indirectly become responsible for the death and injuries of American soldiers. The key individual responsible for this event is President Sarkisian who was Armenias Minister of Defense in 2003 and the buying of weapons from Bulgaria and their immediate transfer to Iran was conducted with his approval. When it was revealed in 2007 that Armenia had sold the weapons to Iran, US Foreign Minister of that period Condoleezza Rice had warned Sarkisian, but did not receive a satisfying response from him. Therefore, the US Deputy Secretary of State John D. Negroponte had sent a letter to Sarkisian regarding this matter through the American Embassy in Yerevan. This is the document revealed by WikiLeaks. In his letter, Negroponte has stated that neither the US Administration nor the Congress can overlook this case. By law the transfer of these weapons requires whether there is a basis for the imposition of US sanctions and if sanctions are imposed, penalties could include the cutoff of US assistance and certain export restrictions. To avoid such sanctions, its essential to present compelling evidence that such transfers do not occur in the future and to convince the US that it does not happen again and to that end, the US seeks a written agreement from Armenia. This document will memorialize Armenias intent to implement measures that will prevent it from becoming a source of weapons for Iran or other states or groups involved with terrorism. Among these measures lie unannounced visits to Armenia by US experts. The letter is strongly-worded and looks almost like an ultimatum. On the other hand, it also entails certain contempt without actually naming it, because Negroponte is Deputy Secretary of State and formally such a letter should be sent to President Sarkisian by the US President himself. Sarkisians response to this letter has not been made public. However, no sanctions being imposed on Armenia and no serious problems existing in the relations between the two countries show that Sarkisian has provided the required written document. An interesting point here is that the US Government has kept this important event from its own public and especially from the Congress. It is known that US Governments have a high capacity to forgive or excuse the mistakes or wrongdoings of Armenians (and Jews and Greeks). However, the same flexibility might not be found in the Congress and within public opinion. In fact, Adam

Schiff who is the foremost defender of Armenian interests within the House of Representatives and who has submitted the draft resolution H.Res.252 concerning the Armenian genocide allegations to the House, has described this event as enormously troubling. On the opposite, Aram Hamparian, the Director of the American Armenian National Committee (ANCA) which is a Dashnak institution, has stated that he doubts this document would affect the fate of this draft resolution. Van Krikorian, the Spokesman of the Armenian Assembly of America (AAA), also an important Armenian organization in the US, has expressed the same views. The term of the US House of Representatives will expire at the end of this month and the new House will be convened in January. The H.Res.252 draft resolution mentioned above will become invalid. ANCAs directors of the East and West coasts have sent a joint letter on December 7 to Nancy Pelosi, who will lead the House of Representatives until the end of the month, and have requested from her to immediately put the draft resolution up for voting. In short, although the death and injuries of US soldiers is a very serious matter, the Armenian organizations in the US minimize this and maintain their persistence in their initiatives regarding the genocide draft resolution.

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