

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 20, 2020

Hon. Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Hon. Mark Esper
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1300 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretaries Pompeo and Esper:

We are gravely concerned about the military exercises reported to be held by the Republic of Azerbaijan from May 18 to 22, 2020. These exercises are dangerous, violate diplomatic agreements and have the potential to destabilize security in the South Caucasus at a time when the COVID-19 global pandemic has taken hundreds of thousands of lives and threatened the health of many more. We strongly urge the Department of State and the Department of Defense to condemn these egregious actions taken by the Azerbaijani military.

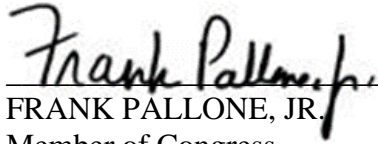
Even in normal circumstances, these exercises would be unacceptable due to their offensive nature and the failure to follow diplomatic notification practices. On May 14, the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry released information describing military exercises that would take place from May 18 to 22. Azeri reports state that the exercises are expected to include 10,000 servicemen, 120 artillery and armored vehicles, 200 missile systems, 30 aviation units, and various unmanned aerial vehicles. The failure to provide adequate notification as prescribed under the OSCE sponsored 2011 Vienna Document and the size of the exercises demonstrates Azerbaijani President Aliyev's intention of further aggravating historical tensions with the Republic of Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh.

We are especially concerned that over \$100 million in security assistance the United States has sent to Azerbaijan over the last two years through the Section 333 Building Partner Capacity program has emboldened the Aliyev regime. This taxpayer funding defies almost two decades of parity in U.S. security assistance to Armenia and Azerbaijan. The aid appears to have allowed Azerbaijan to shift resources toward offensive capabilities and further threaten Armenian lives and regional stability as the Co-Chairs of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues warned in letters sent to you in September and November of 2019.

We cannot allow Azerbaijan to use the global coronavirus pandemic as cover for these dangerous military operations. We urge you to immediately condemn the reckless actions of the Azerbaijani military and to work with our allies and international partners to halt the provocative actions being taken by the Aliyev Regime.

We look forward to your prompt reply to this request.

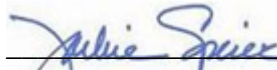
Sincerely,


FRANK PALLONE, JR.

Member of Congress


GUS M. BILIRAKIS

Member of Congress


JACKIE SPEIER

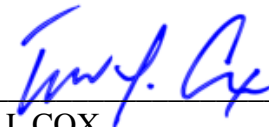
Member of Congress


ADAM B. SCHIFF

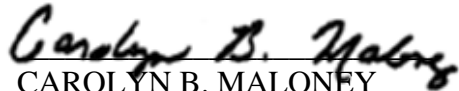
Member of Congress


JIM COSTA

Member of Congress


T.J. COX

Member of Congress


CAROLYN B. MALONEY

Member of Congress


JUAN VARGAS

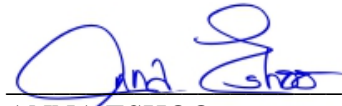
Member of Congress


LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ

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GRACE F. NAPOLITANO

Member of Congress


ANNA ESHOO

Member of Congress


RAVI KRISHNAMOORTHY

Member of Congress


JUDY CHU

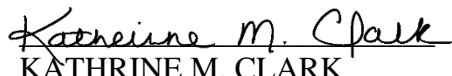
Member of Congress


ALBIO SIRES

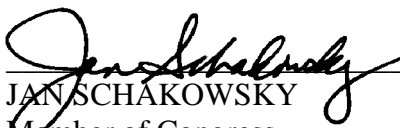
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