

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 26 January 2011

Aliyev publicly admits to information war with Armenia – a war preparation?

Recent signs of increased war preparations by Azerbaijan deeply worry European Friends of Armenia (www.eufoa.org) and require international attention. We have observed greatly intensified activities in three areas:

1. Increased lobbying and propaganda activities
2. Increasingly obstructive peace negotiation strategies coupled with public war threats
3. Increased military acquisitions

Numerous examples back up these points, some of which are listed below. The key question, however, is whether Europe is any better prepared than before the war between Georgia and Russia in 2008. "We do not know what will happen this year but while the war risk has never been so high, nobody seems to be prepared. President Aliyev says publicly that he is proud of his propaganda machine. It is important that politicians and media in Europe know who is dealing with them and who is trying to misuse them. Meanwhile, Armenian NGOs and governmental communicators should resist the temptation of following such propaganda tactics. We will never have more resources than Azerbaijan and our credibility is all that counts."

The Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev praised his country's propaganda in a remarkable speech delivered upon the occasion of receiving the "Journalists' Friend Award" – an act described by Reporters Without Borders as "a bad joke". The quotation given by his own state news agencies is worth reading: "Today I can say with confidence that we are winning the fight against Armenia and the Armenian lobby. [...] Azerbaijan is already engaged in offensive diplomacy. We have all the resources for this. Information warfare is our priority. We must make maximum use of modern potential in this area."¹

Beyond "information warfare" and war threats², we have received more worrying signs of war preparations Azerbaijani statements since the OSCE Astana summit suggest that Baku is trying to convince the world that these negotiations have failed. Meanwhile there have been more than 80 cease-fire violations, involving more than 500 shots onto Nagorno-Karabakh during the Christmas and New Year period and another 90 violations between 16-22 January³. Even official UN and OSCE sources show that Azerbaijan has been extensively buying new offensive military equipment⁴. Other sources reveal that

¹ <http://www.news.az/articles/society/29163>

² For a collection of war threat statements, please confer <http://www.eufoa.org/uploads/Documents/AliyevWarThreats.pdf>

³ <http://www.a1plus.am/en/official/2011/01/10/army> ; <http://news.am/eng/news/45559.html>

⁴ For the UN review of 2009, confer http://unhq-appspub-01.un.org/UNODA/UN_REGISTER.nsf ; for the OSCE (arms exported by Bosnia and Herzegovina): SEC.FR/516/10 dated 24 September 2010 (Mission Bi-weekly Report No 13/2010)

Azerbaijan seems to have tried to strike a deal with Iran about logistic aid for military operations against Karabakh⁵.

The EU should prepare and engage pro-actively within its own framework:

1. Condition all agreements within the ongoing Association Agreement negotiations to the strict non-use of force or threat of force.
2. Redouble efforts to promote a ceasefire consolidation agreement, removing the snipers and installing international observers along the line of contact.
3. EU Foreign Ministers to agree about concrete conflict prevention and crisis management steps for Nagorno-Karabakh.

EuFoA is happy to provide commenting or background analysis in English, German, French, Italian, Polish, Russian and Armenian. Members of the Europe-Armenia Advisory Council may also be available for comments; for enquiries please contact our secretariat.

For more information on EuFoA and the Europe-Armenia Advisory Council, please visit our website at www.EuFoA.org.

High resolution picture material is always available on our website and upon request. It is free to use with a reference "Copyright: www.EuFoA.org".

⁵ <http://echo.az/index.php?aid=701> and our own sources