



## Promoting a Lasting Partnership Between Azerbaijan and America

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### **Azerbaijan plays important role in facilitating land and air transit to and from Afghanistan**

*In Afghanistan, Azerbaijani servicemen serve shoulder to shoulder with American soldiers and Azerbaijan provides specialized training for Afghani police, border guard officers and civilian and military doctors.*

**Baku, Azerbaijan — December 10, 2013** The U.S. is deeply grateful to the people and government of Azerbaijan for their efforts in bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan, the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, Eric Rubin said in Baku on Dec. 5.

Trend.az reports, "Azerbaijan plays a very important role as a key ISAF partner. It also plays a very important role in facilitating land and air transit to and from Afghanistan," Rubin said. He went on to say that the U.S. believes that Azerbaijan will not only continue playing an important role but also can contribute to mission change and help all the countries involved, as well as train and prepare the Afghan military and security forces.

While showing solidarity with Afghan people and the international community, Azerbaijan joined the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operation. The country doubled the number of its servicemen in 2009. Currently, some 90 Azerbaijani servicemen are serving in ISAF.

As a key component in NATO's Northern Distribution Network, Azerbaijan provides a secure route for 40 percent of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force's (ISAF) multi-modal transit into Afghanistan. Working closely with the US Transportation Command and the US Air Mobility Command, Azerbaijan has aided important over-flight clearance, medical evacuation flights as well as landing and refueling operations for US and NATO efforts supporting the ISAF.

Moreover, back in 2011, an Azerbaijani tanker plane crashed in Afghanistan en route to U.S./NATO Bagram Air Base with a load of fuel, killing the nine crew members who were on board. This accident should serve as a reminder of the invaluable contributions and sacrifices that this small, predominately Muslim country has made for NATO and American forces when other coalition allies have been pulling out of Afghanistan. It should also make us appreciate the important roles small allies have played for America and will continue playing in the future.

"We believe that military transit to and from Afghanistan will continue for quite some time and the number of missions will decline. This is an important opportunity for Azerbaijan to realize its ambitions, its vision, and share it with neighboring countries," Rubin said.

The roots of US-Azerbaijan joint operations run deep; over the years the Azerbaijani military also assisted in American-led efforts in Iraq and in the Balkans. Azerbaijan is an active participant of international anti-terror efforts. Azerbaijan and the United States work together to counter nuclear proliferation and narcotics trafficking, and to promote security in the wider Caspian region and beyond.

In addition, Azerbaijan's military partnered directly with Oklahoma's National Guard as part of the National Guard State Partnership Program. Azerbaijan also enjoys strong relations with Capitol Hill. The Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus plays an important role in fostering the growing partnership between the United States and Azerbaijan and advancing US interests in the pivotal Caspian region. In recent years, Azerbaijan has intensified its outreach at the state and local levels.

Rubin noted that participation in such projects will positively affect Azerbaijan's development.

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