FOREIGN OPERATIONS APPROPRIATIONS/Azerbaijan Aid

SUBJECT: **Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill for FY 2000 . . . S. 1234. McConnell/Abraham/Sarbanes amendment No. 1119 to the Brownback amendment No. 1118.**

ACTION: AMENDMENT AGREED TO, 53-45

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. 1234, the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2000, will provide a total of $12.74 billion in new budget authority for foreign aid programs, which is $18.98 billion less than appropriated for FY 1999 (the large difference is due primarily to a one-time appropriation of $17.86 billion that was made for International Monetary Programs last year) and is $1.87 billion below the Administration's request of $14.62 billion.

The Brownback amendment would enact the "Silk Road Strategy Act." That Act would amend the Foreign Assistance Act to authorize the provisions of assistance to the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Aid to promote reconciliation and recovery from regional conflict, economic development aid, infrastructure development aid, border control assistance, and democracy development aid would be authorized. Additionally, the amendment would permit the President to waive section 907 of the Freedom Support Act (that section bars the United States from giving certain types of bilateral assistance to Azerbaijan unless it takes steps to lift its embargo of Armenia) if he determined and certified to Congress that continued application of that section would not be in the national interests of the United States.

The McConnell/Abraham/Sarbanes amendment would strike the provision of the Brownback amendment that would permit the President to waive section 907.

Background: Azerbaijan has a Turkic Moslem population of approximately 7 million people. It is bordered by Turkey, Russia, Georgia, and Armenia. Armenia has a population of approximately 3.5 million people. Azerbaijan has an ethnic enclave of mostly Christian Armenians in a region called Nagorno-Karabakh. In the late 1980s nationalist sentiments began to rise in the region. Armenia pressed Azerbaijan to allow Nagorno-Karabakh to secede and join Armenia. Violent anti-Armenian demonstrations started

(See other side)

YEAS (53)			NAYS (45)			NOT VOTING (2)	
Republicans (19 or 36%)	**Democrats (34 or 76%)**		**Republicans (34 or 64%)**		**Democrats (11 or 24%)**	**Republicans (2)**	**Democrats (0)**
Abraham	Akaka	Johnson	Allard	Kyl	Bingaman	Mack-[2]	
Bennett	Baucus	Kennedy	Ashcroft	Lott	Byrd	Voinovich-[2]	
Bond	Bayh	Kerrey	Brownback	Lugar	Conrad		
Bunning	Biden	Kerry	Chafee	McCain	Dodd		
Burns	Boxer	Kohl	Cochran	Murkowski	Dorgan		
Campbell	Breaux	Leahy	Coverdell	Nickles	Landrieu		
Collins	Bryan	Levin	Crapo	Roberts	Lautenberg		
Craig	Cleland	Mikulski	Domenici	Roth	Lieberman		
DeWine	Daschle	Moynihan	Frist	Sessions	Lincoln		
Enzi	Durbin	Reed	Gramm	Shelby	Murray		
Fitzgerald	Edwards	Reid	Grams	Smith, Bob	Wyden		
Gorton	Feingold	Robb	Hagel	Smith, Gordon			
Grassley	Feinstein	Rockefeller	Helms	Snowe			
Gregg	Graham	Sarbanes	Hutchinson	Thomas			
Hatch	Harkin	Schumer	Hutchison	Thompson			
McConnell	Hollings	Torricelli	Inhofe	Thurmond			
Santorum	Inouye	Wellstone	Jeffords	Warner			
Specter							
Stevens							

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:
1—Official Business
2—Necessarily Absent
3—Illness
4—Other

SYMBOLS:
AY—Announced Yea
AN—Announced Nay
PY—Paired Yea
PN—Paired Nay

throughout Azerbaijan and thousands of ethnic Armenians were killed. In 1988 Azerbaijan imposed an embargo on Armenia, including of food, medicine, and humanitarian aid. In 1990, open warfare broke out between the countries. In 1992, at the height of the conflict, Congress imposed section 907, which conditions most United States bilateral foreign assistance to Azerbaijan on its taking steps to lift its embargo. Turkey (which in World War I killed more than 1 million Armenians and drove the remainder out of that part of Turkey that was traditionally Armenian) imposed an embargo on Armenia, including of food and humanitarian aid, in 1993. In 1992 Armenia established a close military relationship with Russia (its traditional ally) and received large amounts of military aid. It began to win the war. In 1994 a cease-fire was signed, leaving Armenia with effective control of Nagorno-Karabakh, the territory between its border and the enclave and the territory between Iran's border and the enclave (Iran also sided with Armenia in the conflict). The cease-fire has held without major incident since 1994. Azerbaijan has continued its embargo, and section 907 has remained in effect. Russia, Turkey, and Iran compete for influence in the region. The region is believed to have large oil reserves. Azerbaijan has signed 16 contracts with major oil companies from around the world. Several possible pipeline routes could be used if Azerbaijan's reserves were developed. The countries through which the oil was routed would benefit economically. Recent statements by some Azeri officials indicate that Azerbaijan would welcome North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) bases in Azerbaijan and a NATO peacekeeping force in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Those favoring the amendment contended:

For nearly a decade, the Government of Azerbaijan has prevented the transport of food, fuel, medicine, and other vital commodities to Armenia and to Nagorno-Karabakh, causing immense human suffering. Turkey has enforced a similar embargo, leaving only routes through Georgia, which is embroiled in civil conflict, and Iran, which is led by a radical Islamic government, as the only routes through which this tiny, land-locked country may gain any vital supplies. During winters, much of the Armenian population has had to live without heat, electricity, or water. Schools and hospitals have been unable to function, and most Armenian industries have been forced to close down, crippling the economy and producing widespread unemployment and poverty. Armenia and Azerbaijan went to war in the 1990s, and, if Russia had not come to Armenia's aid in 1992, we would not have been surprised if the genocide against Armenians, which Turkey started in World War I, had been completed. Also in 1992, the United States put very mild pressure on Azerbaijan by enacting section 907, which conditions some foreign aid on Azerbaijan beginning to lift its embargo. That section does not forbid all aid, just most government-to-government bilateral assistance, and it does not even require the embargo to be lifted, only that steps be taken in that direction. Due to Russia's military help, Armenia did well in the war, and a cease-fire was reached, but Azerbaijan has still refused to lift its embargo, and as a consequence there is still widespread scarcity and suffering in Armenian and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Though the embargo has not been lifted, our colleagues have proposed an amendment that would allow section 907 to be lifted. Our colleagues believe that this action would encourage a settlement between Azerbaijan and Armenia; we believe that it would have the opposite effect and that it could have huge negative consequences. Lifting section 907 would have a huge symbolic effect. Every country in the region would take it as an abandonment of the status quo by the United States in favor of Azerbaijan and Turkey. Russia and Iran would both take it to mean that the United States intended to interfere to make certain that when Azerbaijan oil reserves were developed the pipeline would run through Turkey, and the economic development that occurred throughout the region would be controlled by western, NATO nations. The region would be integrated economically, and the mutual benefits from economic development that occurred would be between the Silk Road countries and the West rather than between those countries and Iran or Russia. Neither Iran nor Russia would take this meddling by the United States in what is essentially their own backyard with equanimity. Iran presents a huge terrorist menace to the United States, and Russia has thousands of nuclear weapons. The United States has already angered Russia by expanding NATO closer to its borders and by attacking and defeating its close ally Serbia. Now our colleagues are asking us to stick our thumb in Russia's eye by allying ourselves with Azerbaijan. Our colleagues may think that lifting section 907 does not promise anything more, but Azerbaijan officials are already publicly talking about how they would like to have NATO station forces in their country and enforce peace in Nagorno-Karabakh, and the Clinton Administration has not rejected the idea. No fighting has occurred for the past 6 years in the region, but Azerbaijan clearly is hoping that NATO will join it in attacking and retaking Nagorno-Karabakh.

Interestingly, if we were to follow that path, we would be taking almost exactly the opposite side that we took in Kosovo. In Kosovo, the ethnic minority lost, and we went in to help that minority; in this case, the ethnic minority has so far won, and if we sent in troops it would be to help the ethnic majority regain its control over the people against whom it has been enforcing a genocidal embargo. Unlike in Kosovo, though, or Bosnia, there actually is something of monetary value in Azerbaijan--oil. There is a huge amount of oil, and Turkey, Russia, and Iran all want to share in the economic benefit that will come from extracting it. In other words, there is more for which to fight, and there are more and much better armed combatants in the region than in the Balkans. Making matters worse, this region is characterized by the same type of bitter, ancient, and genocidal conflicts that have plagued the Balkans, with the additional complication that there are more factions fighting.

If we do not agree to this amendment to keep section 907, the United States may find itself drawn into a conflict that is larger

and more dangerous than either the conflicts in Bosnia or Kosovo. We are not willing to spend tens of billions of dollars, and risk American lives helping Azerbaijan fight Armenia. If we abandon section 907, Azerbaijan, Russia, and Iran will all believe we are moving toward giving that support. The McConnell amendment, by sticking with the status quo, would prevent that impression from being given and would thus make it more likely that the region will remain calm. Therefore, we strongly support the McConnell amendment.

Those opposing the amendment contended:

Section 907 has worked as an impediment to peace rather than a promoter of peace, as intended, and it is standing in the way of the United States pursuing its interests in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. This region is comprised of eight obscure, impoverished, undeveloped nations the names of which few Americans have even heard. The old "Silk Road" trading route connecting Europe and Asia runs through these nations, which have a combined population of approximately 70 million people. Throughout most of this century, they were controlled by the Soviet Union, and Russia still has forces stationed throughout the region. Iran has also traditionally exercised influence in the region, and it is attempting to foment radical Islamic fundamentalism in order to overthrow the moderate, secular governments which are currently in power. Afghanistan is also involved in those efforts. Finally, China is trying to gain power in this region. This region, in addition to having a large land mass and a large population, has natural resources that can be exploited, particularly oil. All of the countries are pro-western and want help in developing, but they are weak and are under pressure from Russia, China, Iran, and Afghanistan, all of which want to dominate them. All Senators agree that United States interests would be served if these countries were developed and remained free, pro-western nations. All Senators also agree that United States interests would be served if these countries settled their differences peacefully. Section 907 was enacted with the purpose of pressuring Azerbaijan to reach a peaceful settlement of its differences with Armenia. At the time that section was enacted, the countries were at war, Azerbaijan had an embargo in place against Armenia, and Armenia was in dire straits. Section 907 was intended to get Azerbaijan to lift its embargo. Since that time, though, Armenia basically won the war and occupied a large part of Azerbaijan, resulting in hundreds of thousands of Azeri refugees. Basically, the rationale of pressuring the more aggressive side has been removed, so the pressure should be removed as well. If it is not, we will be unable to provide as much assistance to Azerbaijan as to other countries in the region, and it will be more susceptible to falling under Russian or Iranian domination. Even though we believe the pressure against Azerbaijan should be removed, we did not go that far in the underlying Brownback amendment. Instead, all we did is give the President the option of ending the aid restrictions. The McConnell amendment would deny the President that option. We urge the rejection of this amendment.