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American expert: Azerbaijan and Armenia should continue working towards an agreement

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Washington. Isabel Levine – APA. APA's Washington DC correspondent's interview with Doug Bandow, a former White House special assistant (during President Reagan's term), who currently serves as a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy in Washington DC

- Will the WikiLeaks disclosures damage US's relations between states, with Azerbaijan in particular?

- I don't believe the WikiLeaks disclosures will have much long-term impact. Some foreign officials may be more cautious in expressing their opinions to US diplomats, but foreign governments will still work with America because it is in their interest to do so.

I believe US relations with Azerbaijan will survive as well. Washington is concerned about Central Asia and Azerbaijan has many reasons to build a good relationship with the U.S. The WikiLeaks disclosures don't change these factors.

- What is your comment on the fact that there is still no US ambassador in Azerbaijan? Doesn't this harm bilateral relations?

- Ambassadorial appointments are important symbolically, but most inter-government relations can be conducted capital-to-capital. The Obama administration has been slow making judicial appointments in America as well as ambassadorial appointments to other nations. Hopefully relations between the US and Azerbaijan will pick up quickly after the ambassador is named.

- Can 2010 be described as a year of frustrated expectations on resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh? What are the prospects of resolving this issue today?

- There are a number of seemingly intractable conflicts around the world, including Nagorno-Karabakh. Obviously, little was achieved in 2010, but we see many of the same frustrations in the Israel-Palestinian dispute and Cyprus deadlock. Azerbaijan and Armenia both have much at stake in resolving the dispute and improving relations. They should continue working towards an agreement, since, in the end, whatever the positions of outsiders, only the two countries can resolve the conflict.

