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Justice Dept. Records Reveal: Azerbaijan Pays Millions to U.S. Firms

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Awash in billions of petrodollars, but lacking a moral compass, Azerbaijan has been busy handing out loads of money to anyone who is willing to heed its propaganda.

Baku's bribery scheme, known worldwide as "caviar diplomacy," has now ensnared Washington's movers and shakers. Apparently, there is no shortage of Americans who are eager to sell their souls for a fistful of dollars. As a novice in the field of lobbying, Azerbaijan has quickly learned the tricks of the trade from its 'elder brother' Turkey, a well-versed master of political deception.

**PATTON
BOGGS^{LLP}**

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The website of the U.S. Dept. of Justice lists the names and amounts paid by various Azeri entities to 11 American firms:

-- Azerbaijan's Embassy in Washington pays \$35,000 per month to Patton Boggs "for advice and assistance on U.S.-Azerbaijan bilateral relations"; \$18,250 per month to Melwood Communications to assist in "media relations and communications strategy"; \$20,000 per month to the DCI Group for "public relations and media outreach, and building relationships with think tanks"; and \$45,000 per month to The Podesta Group to carry out public relations.



-- The Livingston Group, named after former House Speaker Bob Livingston, who left public office in disgrace, has so far received close to \$2 million for lobbying on behalf of Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry.

-- The International Bank of Azerbaijan pays Jefferson Waterman International (JWI) \$25,000 per month "to develop relations with American institutions" and "media relations strategy." JWI receives another \$25,000 per month from "The Presidency of Azerbaijan" for counseling on media strategy. Azerbaijan's Ministry of Finance owns 51% of the shares of the International Bank of Azerbaijan.

-- The Azerbaijan America Alliance has so far paid Fabiani & Company \$2.4 million "for planning and executing strategies to encourage research and advocacy about the Azeri people, country, culture and international relations." A recent gala dinner in Washington, hosted by

Bob Livingston

country, culture and international relations." A recent gala dinner in Washington, hosted by

the Azerbaijan America Alliance, was attended by 700 guests, including Obama administration officials, members of congress, and foreign diplomats. Notorious congressional opponents of Armenian issues attended the banquet, including Senators Saxby Chambliss and Richard Burr, House Speaker John Boehner and former Cong. Dan Burton.

-- Roberti White LLC is paid \$20,834 per month by SOCAR USA, the American subsidiary of the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan, to explore business opportunities in the United States.

-- Since money is no object, even the Consulate General of Azerbaijan in Los Angeles can afford to hire its own public relations firm. Over the years, it has engaged the services of Sitrick and Company (\$50,000 per year); The Toolshed Group LLC (\$35,000), founded by Jason Katz, former Director of Public Affairs for the American Jewish Committee; and The Potomac Square Group (amount undisclosed) "to provide media outreach...and interaction with editors."



Saxby Chambliss



Dan Burton

McMahon also handled the development and construction of Turkey's expanded Consulate in New York City.

It is, therefore, not surprising that McMahon's name surfaced last week, trying to legitimize Pres. Ilham Aliyev's falsified re-election in which he gained 85% of the vote, while his nine opponents collectively received the remaining 15%!

While international observers criticized Aliyev's re-election as "unfair and rife with fraud," The New York Times quoted McMahon as stating that the vote was "honest, fair and really efficient. There were much shorter lines than in America, and no hanging chads," a reference to the disputed ballots in Florida during the 2000 U.S. presidential race.

Now comes yet another ex-congressman who is chasing Azerbaijan's Almighty Dollar! Former New York Cong. Michael McMahon is handling public affairs/government relations for the so-called "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus," a territory recognized only by its occupying power -- Turkey! McMahon, who served on the House Foreign Affairs Committee until his defeat in 2010, is leading the lobbying effort on behalf of Herrick, Feinstein LLP of New York which won a \$200,000 per year contract to arrange congressional visits to occupied Northern Cyprus and improve its public image in the media.



Michael McMahon

Shockingly, The N.Y. Times fell victim to McMahon's ploy, deciding to title its article on the fraudulent vote as "Observers Differ on Fairness of Election in Azerbaijan." The Times thus equated one man's pro-Azeri propaganda with the overwhelming evidence of widespread fraud confirmed by respectable international observers, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Fortunately, The Times pointed out that "the split in assessments seemed to reflect an aggressive lobbying effort by the Aliyev government to portray the election as fair."

Armenian-Americans cannot compete with Azerbaijan's lavish handouts. They don't have to. Since the truth is on their side, they do not need to spend millions on lobbying to present the facts as they are!