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FILE TITLE:

RELATIONS

SERIES

ARMENIA

PART:

1

PART BEGINS:

11 MARCH
2001 1997

PART ENDS:

28 October 1999
~~2011 2001~~

CAB ONE:

Labour Administration

Part closed

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PART

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DATE CLOSED

7 JUNE 2001

Series : **ARMENIA**
File Title : **Relations**
Part : **1**

Date	From	To	Subject	Class	Secret
20/04/1999	DID	GR	Armenia - Impact of Drought: Letter from Armenian Prime Minister se	U	0
16/06/1999	FCO	FA/APS	Message of congratulations from PM to new Armenian PM	U	0
28/10/1999	FCO	FA/APS	Assassination of Armenian Prime Minister and Speaker	U	0



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Prime Minister

The assassination of the Armenian Prime Minister was a genuinely horrifying act - the Prime Minister, Speaker and 6 deputies all gunned down in parliament on live tv. Motives of the gunmen are unclear - the current assumption is that they were unhinged fanatics rather than operating under some deep political agenda.

Too soon to judge the political implications in Armenia. Some risk that it will allow military hardliners to increase their influence but the early signs are of power centralising still further under President Kocharian.

Letter of condolence to the Armenian President is attached for signature.

Michael Pathan

- done & already.

Top-MT
cc JS
JB
PB
AC
JB



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

28 October 1999

Dear Hilda,

Assassination of Armenian Prime Minister and Speaker

We now have a better picture of yesterday's tragic events in Armenia.

At around 1200 GMT yesterday (1700 local), four gunmen entered the Armenian Parliament with automatic rifles and pistols and opened fire. Journalists were ejected from the National Assembly building but the remaining deputies were kept as hostages. After an overnight siege, the hostages were released at 0620 GMT (1120 local) this morning and the gunmen taken into custody. President Kocharian was in direct negotiations with the gunmen throughout the night. Russian Special forces were also reported as being in the building but played no part in the ending of the siege.

There is no firm evidence of motive. One of the gunmen reportedly told reporters it was time to "get rid of the bloodsuckers who are drinking our blood". One has been identified as a former member of the revolutionary nationalist Dashnak party.

The full list of those confirmed as killed in Parliament during the attack is:

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Vazgen Sarkissian | Prime Minister |
| Karen Demirchian | Speaker of Parliament |
| Leonard Petrosian | Minister for Operative Issues
(mainly energy) |
| Yuri Bakhshyan | Deputy Speaker |
| Rouben Miroyan | Deputy Speaker |
| Henrik Abrahamian | MP |
| Armenak Armenakian | MP |
| Mikhail Kotanian | MP (died as a result of a heart
attack he suffered during
the shooting) |

There is still no news on the Finance Minister, Levon Barkhoudaryan, who was reported last night to be amongst the casualties.



... I enclose a draft letter of condolence from the Prime
Minister to President Robert Kocharian. A message from the
Secretary of State to his opposite number was delivered this
... morning (copy enclosed).

Arrangements
for funerals are not yet known, but we shall consult with
partners on the level of representation.

Yours ever,

T. Barrow

(Tim Barrow)
Private Secretary

Michael Tatham Esq
10 Downing Street

Temporarily Retained
THIS IS A COPY. THE ORIGINAL IS
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OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

DRAFT MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO:

^{HE}
President Robert Kocharian
Republic of Armenia

I was horrified and saddened to hear the news yesterday of the brutal murder of Prime Minister Sarkissian and Speaker of Parliament Demirchian, together with six of their colleagues. Please accept my deepest condolences, on behalf of the British people. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Sadly, we in Britain have in the past also had to deal with the tragic consequences of violent attacks on the institutions of democracy. I know that the British Embassy has already been in touch with your office, but I want to reiterate that if there is any assistance which you think we could provide, you should not hesitate to ask.

R L Wood
Eastern Dept, FCO

270 3828

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FM FCO
TO IMMEDIATE YEREVAN
TELNO 61
OF 271908Z OCTOBER 99

YOUR TELNO 142

FROM PRIVATE SECRETARY

SUBJECT: MESSAGE FROM THE FOREIGN SECRETARY TO OSKANIAN

1. Please pass the following message from the Foreign Secretary to Oskanian:

BEGINS

I was horrified to hear of the senseless killings in your Parliament. On behalf of the British Government and people, I extend our deepest sympathies to your Government, to the families of those who have died and to the Armenian people as a whole. Britain abhors and condemns all acts of terrorism unreservedly. As our Embassy has made clear to the President's office, we stand ready to offer assistance to help resolve this situation.

ENDS

2. There will be no (no) signed original.

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[BRADLEY]

MAMIAN 5404

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✓ COS
FA/PS
AC/Press

Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

16 June 1999

file - told FCO to issue.

PAZ
17/6

Dear Philip.

Message of Congratulations from the Prime Minister to the
Newly Appointed Prime Minister of Armenia

... I enclose a draft message from the Prime Minister to
... the newly appointed Prime Minister of Armenia, Mr Vazgen
Sarkissian. His CV is enclosed.

Sarkissian, who is 40, was appointed Prime Minister on 11 June following Parliamentary elections in Armenia on 30 May 1999. Sarkissian led half of the electoral alliance, known as the Unity Alliance, with former Communist leader Karen Demirchian, which won 41% of the vote - some 30% ahead of their nearest rivals. Demirchian has been appointed Chairman of Parliament. The OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission reported an improvement in the conduct of the elections over last year's flawed Presidential elections, although there remain some areas of concern.

Sarkissian previously served as Defence Minister from 1991-93 and again from 1995-99. He was widely seen as responsible for the political demise in February 1998 of former President Ter-Petrossian, objecting to the President's relatively conciliatory policy towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. With success in the latest parliamentary elections behind him, Sarkissian is unlikely to allow any softening of the Armenian position towards negotiations with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. The Azeris are likely to be down beat about his appointment.

The UK continues to urge both sides to engage in direct and substantive negotiations to resolve the conflict. The Prime Minister met the President of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliev, in July 1998 and the Foreign Secretary had a bilateral meeting with the Armenian Foreign Minister in March 1999. With a strong political

SKP 17/6/99



power base to support him, Sarkissian will undoubtedly be a key figure in the new government, particularly in forming Armenia's policy to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. A message of congratulations from the Prime Minister would be appropriate.

Yours ever,
Tim

(Tim Barrow)
Private Secretary

Philip Barton Esq OBE
10 Downing Street

D R A F T

UNCLASSIFIED

FM FCC

TO PRIORITY YEREVAN

TELNO

OF 161200Z JUNE 99

SUBJECT: MESSAGE OF CONGRATULATIONS FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

1. Please pass the following message from the Prime Minister to Mr Vazgen Sarkissian.

BEGINS

Please accept my congratulations on your appointment as Prime Minister of Armenia.

I attach great importance to relations between Britain and Armenia. The recent visit to Britain of Foreign Minister Oskanian was a welcome opportunity to discuss further bilateral co-operation at ministerial level and I hope this will continue. The entry into force of the EU Partnership and Co-operation Agreement next month creates a framework for a regular political dialogue and will strengthen Armenia's links with the EU and European institutions.

I know that your government will continue to search for a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. A permanent settlement would of course benefit not only Armenia but the region as a whole. The United Kingdom stands ready to offer any assistance which would help the parties to reach an agreement.

I look forward to working with you in the years ahead.

ENDS

2. There will be no (no) signed original.

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Vazgen SARKISSIAN

Prime Minister of Armenia

Sarkissian was appointed Prime Minister of Armenia on 11 June 1999.

Sarkissian was a well-known author before becoming involved in Armenian nationalist politics. He joined the Armenian Pan-National Movement and became Commander of the Armenian Self-Defence Forces in January 1990. He then occupied high-level posts in the Armenian Parliament and Government involving defence matters. He was appointed Defence Minister in 1991 and then a State Minister in March 1993.

Sarkissian was appointed Minister of Defence again in July 1995 and was regarded as the power behind the throne of successive presidents. Together with Minister of National Security Serge Sarkissian (unrelated) he played a key role in engineering the election of former President Ter-Petrosian in 1996 and then deposing him in February 1998.

Sarkissian keeps close links with Russian military and advocates an uncompromising position on Nagorny Karabakh (NK). He has built a political power base on the Yerkrpah organisation which unites veterans from the NK conflict. In early 1999 the Republican Party was formed on the basis of the Yerkrpah. In April 1999 the centre-right Republican Party united with Karen Demirchian's (centre-left) People's Party to form the *Unity* bloc which went on to win 57 out of the 131 seats in the May parliamentary elections.

Background

Sarkissian was born in 1959. In 1979 he graduated from Yerevan State Pedagogical Institute in physical education and went on to work as a teacher. In 1989 he became a member of the Armenian Union of Writers; he wrote a collection of short stories "Experiences of an Armenian" and published articles for which he received a *Komsomol* (Communist Youth League) prize.

Sarkissian became a board member of the Armenian Pan-National Movement in the late 1980s. In January 1990 he became Commander of the Armenian Self-Defence Forces and in August 1990 was elected

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Chairman of the Defence and Internal Affairs' Committee of the Armenian Supreme Soviet (Parliament). Later he became Chairman of the Committee for Co-ordinating the work of Armenia's Military Departments. He was appointed Minister of Defence in December 1991 but was released from this post in October 1992, becoming a presidential adviser on defence issues. In March 1993 he was appointed a State Minister; he was also Armenia's representative at the Sochi talks on Nagorny Karabakh. He was appointed Minister of Defence in the new Kocharian government in July 1995.

In 1998 Sarkissian was awarded the title of National Hero of Artsakh [Nagorny Karabakh] and the Golden Eagle medal.

Sarkissian is unmarried.

June 1999
Research Analysts, FCO



ARMENIA

Department for
International Development
94 Victoria Street, London SW1E 5JL

Telephone: 0171-917 0134

From the Assistant Private Secretary

(1)

(Also filed on db under
'Armenia')
Dro

Janice Richards
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 0AA

20 April 1999

Dear Janice

Armenia - Impact of Drought: Letter from Armenian Prime Minister Seeking UK Contribution to Relief Programme

Summary

Following a severe drought, the Armenians have appealed for assistance. The World Bank is likely to respond favourably. The EU may also be able to help. We have funding constraints.

Detail

... I enclose a draft reply to Mr Darbinian's letter of 11 March (which we did not receive until 8 April). (Flag A).

The Armenians have circulated this appeal widely (multilaterals and donors). To limit food shortages, they plan a programme of assistance largely comprising the rehabilitation of irrigation wells. The total cost will be \$15.5 million. The Armenia government and the World Bank (under an on-going programme) will meet \$3.36 million. This leaves a balance of \$12 million. The Armenian Prime Minister has written to Tony Blair asking for a UK contribution.

Our Ambassador in Yerevan has confirmed that the drought will cause losses in agriculture, particularly among subsistence farmers. He points out however that as irrigation shortfalls have been a feature of the last seven years the resultant losses are nothing new - though the situation will certainly be worse than in previous years.

The most appropriate source for the \$12 million balance is the EC Humanitarian Office (ECHO), and we should point the Armenians in that direction. The UK provides a sizeable share of both the World Bank and ECHO budgets. In addition, our Ambassador reports that the Americans are also expected to help. (The large Armenian Diaspora in the US ensures that their country receives substantial American aid).

/ We could not find

We could not find additional funds for a specific UK contribution to this relief programme. Any commitment therefore would be at the expense of our existing programme. Furthermore, our 1999/2000 budget for Armenia is less than £1 million - of which a large part is already committed. Given the level of the funds sought by the Armenians, and the current (Kosovo-related) pressures on our budget, we would not wish to make a separate contribution.

yours sincerely

Lynn Foord-Divers

Lynn Foord-Divers
Assistant Private Secretary

SCANNED

His Excellency Dr Armen Darbinian
Prime Minister
Republic of Armenia

April 1999

Thank you for your letter of 11 March about the recent drought in your country.

I was sorry to learn how your agricultural sector has suffered from these severe conditions. I hope that the measures you intend to take will keep food shortages to a minimum.

I understand that the World Bank plans to provide additional assistance to help you with this. The EU through the EC Humanitarian Office - (ECHO) might also be able to provide additional funds. You will know that the UK makes sizeable contributions to the global budgets of each of these important agencies.

I very much hope that this assistance will enable your country to overcome the consequences of the drought.

TONY BLAIR



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EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

~~Ms Haing~~ ^{cel 814} ce Mr Kerby
Grateful for 2 draft replies. a) PS to PS 2010 and b) PM to PM Armenia by 16 April.
e fard ^{8.4.99} (letter only)

FOR/35/99

The Embassy of the Republic of Armenia present its compliments to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and has the honour to kindly request transmission of the enclosed letter from H.E. Armen Darbinian, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, to the Rt. Hon. Tony Blair, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The Embassy avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office the assurances of its highest consideration.

EMBASSY
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

London

Ma Carter.
Grateful if you could provide draft by 15 April.
Thanks
ce
814.

1 April 1999



Does it we week support reasonably it would be from me
e fard more?
ce.

PRIVATE OFFICE
08 APR 99



ՎԱՐՉԱՊԵՏ
PRIME MINISTER

March 11, 1999

Excellency,

Given the unprecedented drought conditions in the fall of 1998 and the first two months of 1999, Armenia will face very dire conditions in its agricultural sector during the rest of 1999. The recent drought has been registered as the worst drought in Armenia in the past 100 years.

The resulting losses in agriculture are estimated at AMD 78 billion (USD 143 million). Since our domestic agricultural production sustains about 60-65% of our national consumption, we will face serious food shortages that will directly impact the food security of the population and the country as a whole.

More than 80% of the crop in Armenia is grown on irrigated lands. However, the current levels of water reservoirs and Lake Sevan are not sufficient to cover the country's irrigation needs; additional water must be extracted from ground wells to supply cultivated arable lands. Of the existing 720 wells in Armenia, only 320 are operational, with the rest in need of repairs and rehabilitation. To do, Armenia will need to invest substantially in repairs and cover the added energy cost. Unfortunately, due to their financial limitations, most farmers are unable to undertake such improvements on their own to protect their crop.

The Government has thus developed an action plan to help farmers in this difficult period and rehabilitate the wells in need of repairs. This plan requires an investment of approximately USD 15.5 million, most of which will also upgrade the existing irrigation network and reduce water shortages. The Armenian Government will provide USD 2.26 million from its state budget for the implementation of this program, with another USD 1.2 million made available by the World Bank's program on "Rehabilitation of Irrigation Systems of Armenia".

Unfortunately, the Armenian Government is not in a position to cover the remainder of the investment in the amount of approximately USD 12 million. The Government would appreciate the assistance of international organizations and individual donors in this investment. I would like to make a personal appeal to the Government of the United Kingdom and to you personally to consider the possibility of participating in the tender or providing direct assistance for the implementation of the Program of Measures.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Armen Darbinian

The Rt. Hon. Tony BLAIR
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
London

A-42
MAR 12 1999

Yerevan, Republic of Armenia

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