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From the Database: Oil in the Caucasus

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The existence of large Caucasian and Central Asian oil fields has helped to focus the attention of the West on the new states in those regions. Given that increased interest, the former Soviet republics are attempting to offset Russia's efforts to dominate the area, as the following excerpt from the Institute's database indicates. Russian analysts have reacted negatively to this development:

With the recent visit by Azerbaijani President Aliyev to Russia and his current visit to America, observers again have focused on Azerbaijani foreign policy in the Caucasus. Vyacheslav Ushakov, scholar and Radio Voice of Russia expert, has been [examining Baku's approach critically]:

As far as the West is concerned, the United States ranks first, and is followed by Britain, France, and Germany. Relations with Russia are even further down the list. Baku now wants to join various European organizations, and it is also establishing relations with NATO.()

(Question) Can you say from now what topics will be discussed in the American-Azerbaijani talks?

(Answer) () [T]here is no doubt that the two sides will discuss the Karabakh problem. Despite the cease-fire in Karabakh and the success scored on some issues in the resolution of the conflict, this problem remains unsolved. () According to information that I have, bringing NATO peacekeeping forces to the region and replacing the Russian peacekeeping forces with them will also be discussed.

Among the economic issues, oil will definitely top the agenda. America is extremely interested in Caspian Sea oil ().

I am worried that recently in America there has been talk about the need to restrict Russia's influence on the [developments] in the Caucasus. Azerbaijan, like the United
States of America, which has made great investments in Caspian Sea oil, is interested in safeguarding stability in the region. After all, oil can be extracted and exported only when there is order in the region. But can stability be achieved by ignoring the interests of Russia and of the other Caspian Sea littoral countries? ()1

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