
Azerbaijan to double troops in Afghanistan

By Editor

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BAKU, Oct 2, 2008 (AFP) - Azerbaijani lawmakers approved plans Thursday to nearly double the former Soviet state's number of troops serving with NATO-led forces in Afghanistan.

Parliament voted 95-1, with one abstention, to support the increase to 90 troops from the previous 46 in a motion that came as US Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte visited the Caucasus nation.

NATO leads the 50,000-strong International Security and Assistance Force fighting the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan.

Azerbaijani soldiers have been deployed mainly in western Afghanistan, where they provide security for reconstruction efforts under Turkish command.

Energy-rich Azerbaijan, a predominantly Muslim country wedged between Russia and Iran, has contributed small numbers of forces to Afghanistan, Iraq and Kosovo as President Ilham Aliyev seeks closer ties with the West.

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