



Europe

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Azerbaijan and Armenia sign peace deal at White House that creates a 'Trump Route' in region

Deal to end four-decade conflict includes creation of transit corridor named 'Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity'

Guardian staff and agencies

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The leaders of Armenia and [Azerbaijan](#) signed a peace agreement at the White House on Friday, in a deal brokered by the US that brings decades of conflict to an end.

The two countries in the South Caucasus signed agreements with each other, as well as the US, that will reopen key transportation routes while allowing the US to seize on Russia's declining influence in the region. The deal includes an agreement that will create a major transit corridor linking Azerbaijan to its exclave of Nakhchivan, with the United States owning development rights to the corridor. It was to be named the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity, the White House said.

Donald Trump said that naming the route after him was "a great honour for me", but "I didn't ask for this". A senior administration official, on a call before the event with reporters, said it was the Armenians who suggested the name.

Separate from the joint agreement, both [Armenia](#) and Azerbaijan signed deals with the United States meant to bolster cooperation in energy, technology and the economy, the White House said. Further details were not released.

The Azerbaijani president, Ilham Aliyev, and the Armenian prime minister, Nikol Pashinyan, shook hands to mark the moment, with Trump in the middle, reaching up and clasping his own hands around theirs.

The agreement was welcomed by a number of global figures on Saturday. The UK's foreign secretary, David Lammy, congratulated Armenia and Azerbaijan "on the bold steps taken in Washington", as well as commending

The presidents of the European Commission and the European Council, Ursula von der Leyen and António Costa, also hailed the deal and called for its speedy implementation, in order for the countries to move towards “full-fledged normalisation”.

Iran’s foreign ministry reacted by issuing a warning against foreign involvement. While it welcomed the end of Armenia and Azerbaijan’s conflict, Iran - which shares a border with both countries - has long opposed the creation of the transit corridor agreed as part of the deal.

The two nations have been locked in conflict for nearly four decades as they fought for control of the Karabakh region, known internationally as [Nagorno-Karabakh](#). The area was largely populated by Armenians during the Soviet era but is located within Azerbaijan. The two nations battled for control of the region through multiple violent clashes that left tens of thousands of people dead over the decades, all while international mediation efforts failed.

Most recently, Azerbaijan reclaimed all of Karabakh in 2023 and had been in talks with Armenia to normalise ties.

Trump has sought a reputation as a peacemaker and made no secret of the fact that he covets a Nobel peace prize. Friday’s signing adds to a series of peace and economic agreements brokered by the US this year.

Both Armenia’s and Azerbaijan’s leaders said the breakthrough was made possible by Trump and his team, and joined a growing list of foreign leaders and other officials who have said Trump should receive the Nobel peace prize.

“We are laying a foundation to write a better story than the one we had in the past,” Pashinyan said, calling the agreement a “significant milestone”.

“President Trump in six months did a miracle,” Aliyev said.

Trump remarked on how long the conflict had gone on between the two countries. “Thirty-five years they fought, and now they’re friends and they’re going to be friends a long time,” he said.

That route will connect Azerbaijan and its autonomous Nakhchivan exclave, which are separated by a 32km-wide (20-mile) patch of Armenian territory. The demand from Azerbaijan had held up peace talks in the past.

For Azerbaijan, a major producer of oil and gas, the route also provides a more direct link to Turkey and onward to Europe.

Trump indicated he would like to visit the route, saying, “We’re going to have to get over there.” Asked how he felt about lasting peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Trump said “very confident”.

The signing of a deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan, both former Soviet republics, also strikes a geopolitical blow to their former imperial master, Russia. Throughout the nearly four-decade conflict, Moscow played mediator to expand its clout in the strategic South Caucasus region, but its influence waned quickly after it launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The [Trump administration](#) began engaging with Armenia and Azerbaijan in earnest earlier this year, when Trump’s key diplomatic envoy, Steve Witkoff, met Aliyev in Baku and started to discuss what a senior administration official called a “regional reset”.

Negotiations over who will develop the Trump Route - which will eventually include a rail line, oil and gas pipelines, and fiber optic lines - will probably begin next week, and at least nine developers have expressed interest already, according to the senior administration official, who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity.

Associated Press and Agence France-Presse

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