



United States Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

MAR 07 2007

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Secretary has asked me to transmit to you the attached joint letter from her and Secretary of Defense Gates. Thank you for your consideration of these views and please contact me if we can be of assistance on this or any other issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeffrey T. Bergner".

Jeffrey T. Bergner
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure:
As stated.

The Honorable
Tom Lantos, Chairman,
Committee on Foreign Affairs,
House of Representatives.

March 7, 2007

Dear Madam Speaker:

We are writing to express our deep concern about the harm that passage of H. Res. 106 would cause U.S. efforts to promote reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia and to advance recognition by Turkey of the tragic events that occurred to ethnic Armenians under the Ottoman Empire. It would also significantly endanger U.S. national security interests in the region.

In solidarity with all Armenians, the President recognizes annually the horrendous suffering that ethnic Armenians endured during the final years of the Ottoman Empire. The United States has never denied these horrific events. It is our hope that, by both recognizing these events and encouraging Turkey to come to terms with its history, both countries and their respective peoples can move toward reconciliation, bilateral relations, and open borders. We remain actively engaged with both governments to encourage progress as quickly as possible.

The recent murder of Hrant Dink, an ethnic-Armenian Turk, was a tragedy for Turks, Armenians, and all supporters of freedom of expression. More than 100,000 citizens from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds took to the streets of Istanbul to express immense outrage at Dink's murder, shouting: "We are all Hrant Dink. We are all Armenians." From this tragedy, some good may come. Citizens are demanding change, and the Turkish government appears ready to expand freedom of expression. Prime Minister Erdogan stated on January 19 that Turkey will "steadfastly continue along the path toward fully realizing freedom of expression." Foreign Minister Gul called for changes to Article 301 of Turkey's penal code, under which Dink was charged for "insulting Turkishness."

In January, Turkey welcomed a high-ranking Armenian official, Deputy Foreign Minister Kirakossian, in connection with Dink's funeral. Armenian and Turkish officials held meetings during Kirakossian's visit to discuss normalization of relations and the two countries' shared historical background. We strongly support the establishment of such Commissions, and we will continue to support efforts by the Governments of Turkey and Armenia, as well as by members of civil society, as they pursue reconciliation. Efforts such as the recent USAID-supported

The Honorable

Nancy M. Pelosi,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

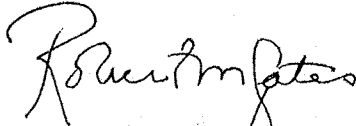
conference in Yerevan entitled "The Social and Economic Consequences of Opening the Armenian-Turkish Border," which was attended by both Armenian and Turkish civil society representatives, demonstrate that the U.S. approach to this difficult issue is, indeed, working. We appreciate the support of Members of Congress for these efforts in their own conversations with officials of both governments.

As we continue to encourage our friends in Turkey to reexamine their past with honesty and to reconcile with Armenia, we also must recognize the important contributions Turkey is making to U.S. national security, as well as security and stability in the broader Middle East and Europe. Turkey remains an indispensable partner to our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, helping our troops accomplish their mission to combat terrorism and build security in both of these young democracies. By providing access to Turkish airspace, military bases, ports, as well as its border crossing into Iraq, Turkey is a linchpin in the transshipment of vital cargo and fuel resources to U.S. troops, coalition partners, and Iraqi civilians. Turkey also has provided training for Iraqi diplomats, political parties, military officers, and security forces; contributes to the NATO Training Mission – Iraq; and is active in reconstruction efforts within Iraq. In Afghanistan, Turkey twice commanded the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force, supports a Provincial Reconstruction Team, provides both counter-narcotics and military training to Afghan Security Forces, and is active in reconstruction, including building and operating several hospitals. Turkish peacekeeping troops serve shoulder-to-shoulder with distinction beside U.S. and other NATO Allies in the Balkans. Turkey is also a transit hub for non-OPEC oil and gas and remains key to our efforts to help the Euro-Atlantic community bolster its energy security by providing alternative supply sources and routes around Russia and Iran.

When the French National Assembly in October 2006 voted in favor of a bill that would criminalize denial of the events of 1915, the Turkish military cut all contacts with the French military and terminated defense contracts under negotiation. A similar reaction by the elected Government of Turkey to a House resolution could harm American troops in the field, constrain our ability to supply our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, and significantly damage our efforts to promote reconciliation between Armenia and Turkey at a key turning point in their relations. We strongly urge you to refrain from allowing the resolution to reach the House floor.

Thank you for your consideration of these views. We request the opportunity to provide you, at your earliest convenience, with a classified briefing to expand, in more detail, on the national security interests at stake.

Sincerely,



Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense



Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State

March 7, 2007

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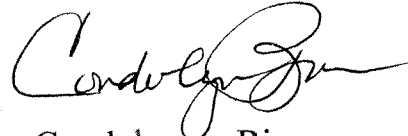
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