



Remarks to the Press Following Meeting With Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey

R. Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary for Political Affairs

Ankara, Turkey

September 19, 2007

Released by U.S. Embassy Ankara

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: Good Afternoon. Ambassador Wilson and I have just had an excellent meeting with Prime Minister Erdogan and we conveyed to the Prime Minister the friendship and best respects of President Bush. We said that it's our President's strong wish, our government's strong wish that we now strengthen our relationship with Turkey for the period ahead. In that respect we said that we will continue to support very strongly Turkey's prospects for accession, full accession, to the European Union. And we will continue to give strong support to Turkey's effort to combat the PKK. We very much sympathize with the Turkish people and the Turkish government that PKK actions against Turkey must be stopped. We condemn the latest PKK action, which again has taken an innocent Turkish life. We also assured the Prime Minister that the US government will continue to oppose any resolution in the United States Congress on Armenian genocide. Finally, we had a very good discussion about the intention of the United States government to try to obviously increase trade and invest with Turkey and to work with Turkey for the effort to find peace between Israel and the Palestinians – an issue in which Secretary Rice is engaged today in Israel itself.

We Americans have an excellent relationship with the government of Turkey. We consider Turkey to be a great friend and ally of our country. We look forward to strengthening that relationship and I think you'll see a lot of activity, many high level meetings between our governments to do that in the months ahead.

Thank you very much.

QUESTION: What is the position of the US government on the natural gas agreement between Iran and Turkey?

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: Thank you very much. I explained to the Prime Minister that the United States is pursuing a peaceful diplomatic strategy towards Iran. We hope very much that we can work with many countries around the world to convince Iran to stop its nuclear research and to agree to negotiations. Iran has refused to do both so far and we think the best course is for the US to work with Turkey and with many other countries -- of the European countries, with Russia and China – to convince Iran that diplomacy and negotiations are the way forward and the responsibility lies with Iran to choose negotiations. So in that sense, if diplomacy is to be effective, we will need the support of all countries in Asia, in the Middle East, in Europe, to contribute to the sanctions against Iran.

QUESTION: Is the India-US nuclear deal in trouble?

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: Thank you. I think that the US-India nuclear deal is firmly intact. It's going to be successful. We're going to move forward on it and you'll see that happen in the next few months.

QUESTION: How is the investigation going into US-made weapons falling into the hands of the PKK?

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: Let me just say this. The Ambassador and I assured the Prime Minister and we will assure all the other Turkish officials with whom we meet today that we are solidly with Turkey. We support Turkey; we oppose the PKK; we give no arms to the PKK; we give no support to the PKK. The PKK is a vicious terrorist organization. It deserves universal condemnation. It will have no support from the United States -- on the contrary. We hope to work with the Iraqi government, the Turkish government and of course our own government to see that these activities, these horrible actions of the PKK, are brought to an end.

QUESTION: Will Secretary Rice come to Turkey for the Iraqi Neighbors meeting in Istanbul?

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: Yes, Secretary Rice has decided that she of course will come to Istanbul to the conference being hosted by the Turkish government for support to Iraq and she looks forward obviously to good meetings with the Turkish leadership when she's here. And in that regard, we view Turkey on the question of Iraq, on the question of Middle East peace between Israel and the Palestinians, to be a central actor and to be an indispensable country in the search for peace in the Middle East in general.

QUESTION: Is there any confirmation on the date of the meeting between the Prime Minister and President Bush in Washington?

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: I think the White House would be the ones to announce that but we are looking forward to a series of high level meetings this year.

Thank you.

Released on September 19, 2007



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