

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 20, 2006
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**PALLONE PRAISES CYPRUS FOR
HELP IN LEBANON EVACUATION**
***Calls On Administration to Improve Relations with
Cyprus
on Eve of 32nd Anniversary of Turkish Invasion***

Washington, D.C. --- U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), a member of the Congressional Hellenic Caucus, last night praised the Cypriot Government and the people of Cyprus for their help in coordinating evacuation efforts out of Lebanon. The New Jersey congressman said the Bush administration must improve its relations with Cyprus in order to reunify the island-nation, which has been divided since Turkish troops illegally occupied the northern third of the island 32 years ago today. Pallone gave the following statement last night on the House floor.

"Mr. Speaker, this week people all around the world are hearing about the small island-nation of Cyprus. Today, Cyprus is serving as a safe haven for thousands of Americans and others who have fled the violence of the Middle East.

"I would suspect, however, that most people around the world don't know that tomorrow Cyprus marks the 32nd anniversary of a very dark day in its history---that's the day Turkey illegally invaded the northern third of Cyprus. At a time when Cypriots are inviting thousands of people to their island as a way to leave behind violence, the actual island itself remains divided.

"I commend the Cypriot government for its effective work in coordinating evacuation efforts with both the U.S. Government and the world community. According to a State Department official, "Cypriots have met every helicopter and ship with sandwiches and water and juice. They're just being fantastic." This is nothing new---- Cyprus has always been a strong ally of the United States.

"I hope Cyprus' actions of the last week will help the Bush administration reevaluate its relationship with the island-nation, a relationship that it has cooled over the last couple of years.

"Until two years ago, both Democratic and Republican administrations consistently condemned the Turkish government for this illegal occupation and pressured the government to come to the negotiating table in an attempt to finally reunify Cyprus.

"Past administration's understood that the invading nation of Turkey was to blame for the division and should therefore be punished accordingly. As a result, past administrations specifically forbid trade with the illegal government of the occupied

north. Our government also prohibited directly flights into the occupied north. As long as Turkey continued its intransigence and refused to leave Cyprus, U.S. administrations correctly believed that they should not be rewarded.

"While this has been consistent U.S. policy, I am deeply concerned that over the past two years we have witnessed a blatant shift in Cyprus policy from the Bush administration, specifically from Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

"The U.S. State Department and Secretary Rice seem much more interested in rewarding those who illegally occupied the northern third of the nation back in 1974 than actually reunifying the island.

"Over the past year, our State Department decided to allow Americans to fly into the occupied north, in direct violation of international law and the law of the Republic of Cyprus. Last year, I joined many of my colleagues from the Congressional Hellenic Caucus in sending a letter expressing our deep concern regarding the legality of these flights.

"In response, the State Department said that it was encouraging the elimination of unnecessary restrictions and barriers that isolate and impede the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot community.

"Unfortunately, it didn't end there. The State Department agreed to resume trade with the occupied north, a direct violation of both domestic law in Cyprus and international law.

"Mr. Speaker, I am deeply concerned that the State Department's new policy towards the government and the people of the occupied north will only delay reunification of the entire island. If the U.S. allows direct trade through routes in the north what incentive do the illegal occupiers have to make any concessions?

"It is as if the State Department has completely forgotten who is responsible for the division of Cyprus in the first place. I have repeatedly encouraged Secretary Rice to take a historic look at the Cyprus problem over the past 32 years.

"Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Bush administration remembers how helpful both the Cyprus government and the people of Cyprus have been over the last week. It's time that we return to the fair-minded policies enacted prior to 2005 so that we can finally bring about real negotiations that will finally reunify Cyprus. The 32 years of occupation must come to an end.

"And so as we recognize this dark anniversary, I hope that the Bush administration rewards the actions of Cyprus over this last week by returning to the policies of the past. They were the right policies then, and they would be the best policies now to foster an environment to end this division."

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