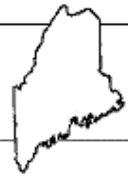




NEWS RELEASE

OLYMPIA SNOWE



U.S. Senator for Maine

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SNOWE DISAPPROVES OF STATE DEPARTMENT MEETING

Cautions Against Lending Legitimacy to “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus”

Washington, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Olympia J. Snowe (R-Maine) went to the floor of the United States Senate to voice her disapproval of a decision by the State Department to meet with Mehmet Ali Talat, the self-declared president of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Following is her statement, as prepared for delivery:

“Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the extremely unfortunate decision by the highest levels of the State Department to meet with Mehmet Ali Talat, the self-declared president of the so-called “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.” For more than 30 years, it has been a tenet of United States foreign policy not to extend de jure or de facto recognition to this self-declared government, which exists only because of the forcible occupation of the northern one-third of Cyprus by more than 43,000 Turkish troops.

“Cyprus was divided by a Turkish invasion in 1974. With the exception of Turkey, all nations recognize that this invasion was illegal and have refused to recognize the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus,” a rump state that proclaims itself the government of the occupied area. Far from honoring the invasion, the world recognizes only the Republic of Cyprus as the legitimate sovereign government for the entire island.

“Both international law and United States statutory law support the free government of Cyprus. Several UN Security Council Resolutions implore nations neither to recognize nor support the self-declared government in the occupied area. Likewise, the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act establishes the United States policy of supporting a free government in Cyprus, demanding the withdrawal of all Turkish forces from Cyprus, and seeking the reunification of the island’s communities.

“Mr. President, I rise today because I fear the State Department is now embarked on a different course, a course that may irreparably damage the prospects for a peaceful reunification of Cyprus. On Friday, October 28, 2005, the US Secretary of State met with Mr. Mehmet Ali Talat. I have heard the State Department spokesperson try to justify this meeting by saying that the Secretary would only be meeting with Mr. Talat in his capacity as a leader of the Turkish-Cypriot community, and their session would not signal a change in U.S. policy toward Cyprus.

“These explanations are disappointing. In all likelihood, meeting Mr. Talat in the State Department’s Harry S. Truman Building will be used by Turkey and the rump state as evidence that the United States is moving toward independent elevation of this self-declared government and the permanent dismemberment of Cyprus.

“Following the defeat of an UN-sponsored plan in 2004, the Republic of Cyprus has undertaken numerous initiatives designed to bring the two communities together. Since April 2003, when the movement restrictions through the cease-fire line were partially lifted, there have been more than 8 million crossings from both Greek and Turkish Cypriots. During the 4 million visits by Greek-Cypriots to the occupied area, approximately \$100 million were spent to the benefit of Turkish Cypriots. Cyprus is contributing concretely to the economic uplifting of the Turkish Cypriot community – more than \$43 million in social insurance, more than \$9 million in medical care, and more than \$343 million in free electricity during the last couple of years.

“According to Turkish Cypriot reports, one of the main reasons for the Turkish Cypriot economic growth is the opportunity that was provided to more than 10,000 Turkish Cypriots to work in the government controlled areas after the lifting of the restrictions. These skilled workers, who continue to live in the occupied areas, earn approximately \$180 million every year. The Republic of Cyprus has also unilaterally removed land mines in the cease-fire zone. More than 63,000 people in the occupied area have been issued Republic of Cyprus birth certificates, more than 57,000 have been issued Republic of Cyprus identity cards, and more than 32,000 have been issued Republic of Cyprus passports.

“Unfortunately, Turkey and its rump state have been working in the opposite direction. In Turkey’s negotiation for EU accession, Turkey committed to extending its customs union to Cyprus, but then unilaterally backtracked on its commitment, stating that it does not even recognize the Republic of Cyprus. Turkey and the “TRNC” have pressed for the opening for direct airline flights and direct trade into the occupied area, both of which violate the Republic of Cyprus’ sovereign power to designate ports of entry. Last month, the Prime Minister of Turkey said that he would only accept a solution on Cyprus that included a permanent division of the island into two states. “One state in the north, one state in the south and a confederation . . . this is what [Cyprus President] Papadopoulos should accept, otherwise we cannot reach an agreement,” the Prime Minister stated. Most egregiously, Turkey and the “TRNC” have increased the number of Turkish troops on the island – from about 36,000 to more than 40,000 – in the past year. Turkey also intensified the influx of Turkish settlers in the island and at the same time, both Ankara and the Turkish Cypriot leadership continued their policy of immense exploitation of Greek Cypriot properties in northern occupied Cyprus. These are not the actions of parties committed to a peaceful resolution to the division.

“For more than thirty years, the United States has refused to reward Turkey’s illegal invasion with an independent Turkish state on Cyprus. But the decision to extend to Mr. Talat unprecedented access to our government’s most hallowed halls only serves to validate his and the Turkish Prime Minister’s view that the “TRNC” should be treated as an independent entity. Because independent status is exactly what Turkey and the rump state seek, the meeting reduces the incentive for Turkey and Mr. Talat to engage in productive talks to resolve the division of Cyprus. And why should they negotiate if they are promised to be provided direct trade, direct flights, and separate treatment by the Secretary of State?

“I call on the State Department to abandon this ill-conceived meeting with the self-declared president of the “TRNC,” an illegal entity that, I repeat, the United States government does not recognize. The meeting will be viewed, and it will be used, as an elevation of the “TRNC” and a nod toward independent and separate status. The meeting is inconsistent with the United States’ stated policy towards Cyprus, and it serves only to hinder efforts to resolve the division of Cyprus.”