



OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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PUBLIC AFFAIRS

3 August 2009

The Honorable John P. Sarbanes
Representative in Congress
426 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-2003

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Dear Representative Sarbanes:

Thank you for your letter of July 9 identifying a factual error about Turkey's role in World War II as cited in the June 2, 2009, American Forces Press Service (AFPS) article titled "U.S. - Turkish Relationship 'Exceptionally Strong,' Mullen Says."

I have reviewed the record and determined Admiral Mullen's comments were not accurately articulated in the story. It was an error by the reporter and unfortunately was not caught by the editor. I have taken the following actions to correct the record:

1. Removed and corrected the inaccurate sentence "Turkey fought on the allied side with the United States during World War II" from the article in the AFPS online archive.
2. Published a corrected version of the article with the following editor's note at the top in bold type: "The original version contained erroneous information that Turkey fought on the side of the Allies in World War II. In fact, Turkey remained neutral until it declared war on the Axis on Feb. 23, 1945, shortly before the war ended. The declaration facilitated Turkey's participation in the Conference on International Organization, from which the United Nations emerged."
3. Sent the corrected article to our 14,000-plus e-mail subscribers.
4. Sent a correct RSS feed version of the article, complete with the annotated headline and editors note to the 300,000 plus recipients.

We do strive for accuracy and regret that the error made it through our editing process. I appreciate you bringing it to my attention.

A. Mullen

CORRECTED ARTICLE: U.S.-Turkish Relationship 'Exceptionally Strong,' Mullen Says

by Gerry J Gilmore
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, July 29, 2009 – (Editor's note: American Forces Press Service published the following article June 2, 2009. The original version contained an erroneous background-information statement that Turkey fought on the side of the Allies in World War II. In fact, Turkey remained neutral until it declared war on the Axis on Feb. 23, 1945, shortly before the war ended. The declaration facilitated Turkey's participation in the Conference on International Organization, from which the United Nations emerged. We regret the error. Here is a corrected version of the article.)

WASHINGTON, June 2, 2009 -- The United States and the Republic of Turkey remain steadfast allies and friends in a modern-day relationship that stretches back decades, the U S military's top officer said here yesterday

The U S and Turkish governments worked together during the Cold War to surmount "some big, big challenges," Navy Adm Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said during his keynote remarks at the 28th Annual Conference on U S -Turkish Relations dinner held at the Gaylord resort and convention center at National Harbor, Md

The annual conference provides a forum for U S and Turkish government, military, commerce and academia leaders to discuss issues and opportunities in the two nations' mutual interest

Turkey joined the United Nations after World War II. The then-Soviet Union's demands to place military bases in the Turkish Straits prompted U.S. President Harry S Truman to establish the Truman Doctrine in 1947, which spelled out America's intent to preserve Turkey's sovereignty, and that of Greece, which was then experiencing communist-inspired civil strife. Turkey joined NATO in 1952, and its soldiers fought alongside U N troops during the Korean War

The relationship between the United States and Turkey today is "exceptionally strong" and "vitaly important," Mullen said. Turkey has deployed troops to Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom since 2001.

Turkey is a secular Muslim republic of some 70 million citizens. U.S.-Turkish relations soured in March 2003 after Turkey's parliament declined to allow U S forces to pass through southern Turkey into northern Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom

However, Mullen said, the United States in recent years has provided more support to Turkey in its fight against Kurdistan Workers' Party terrorists, known by the acronym PKK. The PKK wants to establish a socialist, Kurdish state, parts of which would include southeastern Turkey and northeastern Iraq; both regions have majority-Kurdish populations.

The increased American support for Turkey in its battle against the PKK, Mullen pointed out, has contributed toward a vast improvement of U S -Turkish relations

Pakistani military is currently engaged in an offensive against Taliban militants that operate in Pakistan's western region near its border with Afghanistan

Basbug, too, hailed U.S.-Turkish relations during remarks he made prior to Mullen's speech.

"Turkish-United States' cooperation in various areas has become a 'must,'" Basbug said, for resolving thorny regional issues. Terrorist-inspired violence, he said, constitutes the key threat that all peace-loving nations must confront together.

Turkey's strategic location amid Europe and the Middle East, Basbug said, means that the United States could benefit from Turkey's "soft power" diplomatic credentials to help settle problems in its "immediate neighborhood "

Wrapping up, Mullen recounted his first experiences with the "open and warm" Turkish people during a military assignment in the early 1970s

"We need your friendship," Mullen told the mostly-Turkish audience "We need your support "

Biographies:

[Navy Adm. Mike Mullen](#)

Related Sites:

[State Department Background Note on Turkey](#)

[American Turkish Council](#)