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The Honorable
Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madame Secretary:

On behalf of the nationwide membership of the American Hellenic Institute (AHI) and in the best interest of the United States, I am writing in regard to a response by Deputy State Department Spokesman Mark C. Toner on January 17, 2012 to a policy question about Turkey that emanated from the Republican Presidential Debate held January 16, 2012 in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

During the *Fox News/Wall Street Journal* Republican Presidential Debate, *Fox News* Anchor Bret Baier posed the following question to Governor Rick Perry on the relevant topic of whether Turkey belongs in NATO.

“Governor Perry, since the Islamist-oriented party took over in Turkey, the murder rate of women has increased 1,400 percent there. Press freedom has declined to the level of Russia. The prime minister of Turkey has embraced Hamas and Turkey has threatened military force against both Israel and Cyprus. Given Turkey’s turn, do you believe Turkey still belongs in NATO?”

Governor Perry’s response aside, Mr. Toner was asked to comment during the January 17, 2012 briefing. He described Turkey as “a stalwart ally” that “plays a very positive role in the region.”

The purpose of my letter is not focused upon Governor Perry’s assessment of Turkey. I respect and agree that the policy of the U.S. Department of State must be to not comment on domestic politics. However, AHI contends that the line of questioning by Mr. Baier is an opportunity to discuss and assess a salient policy topic about Turkey and one that is certainly welcomed and refreshing to see at the presidential debate level. AHI has long called for a critical review of United States policy toward Turkey based on what is the best interests of the United States. AHI consistently maintains that Turkey is an unreliable ally of the

United States. This has been clearly evident in Turkey's actions not just in the present day as touched upon by Mr. Baier's spot-on question, but throughout the twentieth century including the Cold War and into the twenty-first century.

Madame Secretary, during your July visit to Turkey, you stated, "Today, we can say with confidence that our bonds are sound, our friendship is sure, and our alliance is strong. Our partnership is rooted in our long history and very long list of mutual interests, **but most importantly, it is rooted on our common democratic values.**" With all due respect, how so?

For example, NATO member Turkey illegally occupies with over 40,000 Turkish 37 percent of the Republic of Cyprus, a member of the European Union that will assume the EU presidency on July 1, 2012. The illegal occupation is approaching 38 years.

Moreover, NATO member Turkey continues to routinely violate, almost daily, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of fellow NATO neighbor, Greece. I witnessed these violations firsthand during a visit with the newly-appointed Chief of the Hellenic National Defense General Staff in early December 2011. While there, alarms sounded and the chief escorted me to his desk where he showed to me in "real time" radar traces on his screen of a cluster of six Turkish F-16s flying just north of a Greek island violating Greek air space. Simultaneously, he received a call from the chief of the Greek Navy informing him that a Turkish ship had veered off from its pre-approved passage in the northern Aegean Sea. In both cases, the Greek military was forced to dispatch planes and a ship to the areas where these violations occurred.

Also for the record Turkey continues to the present day to violate the religious rights and freedoms of His All Holiness Bartholomew I and the Ecumenical Patriarchate's property and institutions in Turkey.

Turkey, Unreliable Ally, Undermines NATO

On numerous occasions during the Cold War Turkey undermined NATO's efforts by actively aiding the Soviet military to the serious detriment of the United States. Examples include:

1. During the 1973 Middle East War, predating the Turkish invasion of Cyprus by one year, Turkey refused the United States military over flight rights to resupply Israel and granted the U.S.S.R. overland military convoy rights to resupply Syria and Iraq, and military over flight permission to resupply Egypt.
2. Over NATO objections, Turkey allowed three Soviet aircraft carriers, the *Kiev* on July 18, 1976, the *Minsk* on February 25, 1979, and the *Novorosiisk* on May 16, 1983, passage rights through the Bosphorous and Dardanelles Straits into the Mediterranean in violation of the Montreux Convention of 1936. The Soviet ships posed a formidable threat to the U.S. Sixth Fleet.
3. In the 1977-1978 conflict in Ethiopia, Turkey granted the Soviets military overflight rights to supply the pro-Soviet Ethiopian communists under Col. Mengistu, who eventually prevailed. (C. Meyer, *Facing Reality-From World Federalism To The CIA* 276-80 1980).

4. In 1979 Turkey refused to allow the United States to send 69 U.S. marines and six helicopters to American military facilities at Incirlik in Turkey for possible use in evacuating Americans from Iran and protecting the U.S. embassy in Tehran.
5. Again in 1979 Turkey refused the U.S. request to allow U-2 intelligence flights (for Salt II verification) over Turkish airspace “unless Moscow agreed.” (*New York Times*, May 15, 1979, at A1, col. 3.) This position was voiced over a period of months by Turkish officials, the opposition party and the military chief of staff, General Kenan Evren. (See *The Washington Post* and *New York Times*, April—September 1979.)

In 2003, Turkey refused to allow the United States to use bases in Turkey to open a northern front against the Saddam Hussein dictatorship. Turkey’s reasoning was that it wanted \$6 billion more—in addition to \$26 billion irresponsibly offered by the Bush administration through then Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz—for a total of \$32 billion. A former Bush administration official called Turkey’s negotiating tactics “extortion in the name of alliance.” (*New York Times*, Feb. 20, 2003; A1; col. 6.)

Therefore, the United States’ successful prosecution of the war against Iraq without access from Turkey proved Turkey’s limited value as a strategic military resource in the region.

Further evidence of Turkey’s unreliability can be found in the bellicose rhetoric by its leaders and aggressive posture toward Israel, especially following the flotilla incident of 2010. Turkey expelled its Israeli Ambassador, threatened to use its navy against Israeli Defense Forces and strengthened its ties to Hamas. Are these actions we would expect from a NATO ally?

Beginning from September 2011, Turkey has threatened Israel and Cyprus as the two countries exercise their sovereign rights to explore oil and gas resources in the eastern Mediterranean through the U.S. firm Noble Energy, which has also been the target of Turkish threats. When I visited with a Noble representative in Israel recently, he underscored how concerned the firm is over potential future hostilities by Turkey.

Since Mr. Baier raised the level of awareness about Turkey’s questionable actions as a NATO ally, many scholars and analysts have seen fit to comment. Of note, is the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) Resident Scholar Michael Rubin’s blog entry on the issue titled, “*Was Perry wrong on Turkey?*” Rubin points out:

- Prime Minister Erdoğan endorsed an Al Qaeda financier.
- Turkey also helped supply Al Qaeda in Iraq.
- Erdoğan had repeatedly embraced Hamas and acted to supply it.
- Under Erdoğan’s watch, the murder rate of women in Turkey has increased 1,400 percent.
- Under Turkey’s Islamist government, press freedom has plummeted.

In his commentary, Jonathan S. Tobin, senior online editor, *Commentary*, offered that it is not only naïve to place optimism with Turkey as a norm for new Islamist parties coming to power after the Arab Spring to follow but also that one should not “...underestimate the extent to which Erdogan has opposed American interests and values.” He continues by stating that under Erdogan “...Turkish democracy is in a free fall...Abroad, Turkey has not only abandoned its

longstanding alliance with fellow American friend Israel but has become the leading supporter of the Hamas terrorist group on the international stage. Just as bad is Erdogan's refusal to support the West on isolating Iran..."

In conclusion, Turkey's continued hostile actions against allies and friends of the United States in the region while at the same time "collaborating with Islamic terrorists and terrorist regimes whenever they can get away with it," as reported by *The Jerusalem Post* (January 23, 2012) serves to undermine U.S. interests in the region and the overall credibility of NATO—now and in the future.

Therefore, in the best interest of the United States, for the fundamental values and principles of democracy, and respect for the rule of law, I respectfully request that an immediate critical review of United States policy with Turkey be undertaken by the Department of State.

I appreciate the opportunity to bring this matter to your attention. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Nick Larigakis
President

cc: Vice President Joe Biden
Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta
Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia Phil H. Gordon
Department of State Director of Southern European Affairs Kathleen H. Allegrone
Department of State Deputy Director of Southern European Affairs James P. Merz
U.S. Ambassador to Greece Daniel B. Smith
U.S. Ambassador to Turkey Francis J. Ricciardone
Department of State Senior Turkey Desk Officer Meghan Gregonis
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