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COMMITTEE ON
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Congress of the United States
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Washington, DC 20515-2003

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Dear Assistant Secretaries:

I wanted to call your attention to a glaring historical inaccuracy that is being communicated by your bureaus and ask that you take corrective action as soon as possible. These communications wrongly suggest that Turkey fought alongside Allied Forces in World War II, an assertion which is directly contradicted by the historical record.

On June 2, 2009, an article in the American Forces Press Service reporting on Admiral Michael Mullen's keynote address to the 28th Annual Conference on U.S.-Turkish Relations makes the unfounded assertion that "Turkey fought on the allied side with the United States during World War II." In addition, the Department of State's background note on Turkey states in relevant part that "Turkey entered World War II on the allied side until shortly before the war ended [sic]." This statement wrongly implies that Turkey actually fought in WWII on the side of the Allies.

In fact, Turkey did not declare war against the Axis Powers until February 1945 when the war was essentially over. When Turkey did declare war on February 23, 1945, it did so only as a ceremonial gesture in order to participate in the Conference on International Organization, held in San Francisco in April 1945, from which the United Nations emerged.

A review of the Department of State's Country Notes shows that, of the notes addressing those countries that were the last to declare war on the Axis Powers as a ceremonial gesture -- Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela, Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Argentina and Chile -- only the country notes related to Turkey make mention of fighting alongside the Allies.

We are concerned that the Bureau of Eurasian Affairs, which serves as the repository of expertise regarding its country portfolio, would mischaracterize Turkey's historical role as it has. It is inexcusable that the Department of State's website and the American Forces Press Service are presenting such distortion on a point of critical historical importance. We respectfully ask that you investigate this matter and take immediate steps to correct the public record

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John P. Sarbanes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

John P. Sarbanes
Member House of Representatives

enc:

US.-Turkish Relationship 'Exceptionally Strong,' Mullen Says,
By Gerry J. Gilmore, American Forces Press Service (June 2, 2009).
US DOS Background Notes on: Turkey, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay,
Venezuela, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Argentina and Chile.