

U.S.-TURKISH RELATIONS
A Strategic Relationship Under Stress

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Introduction and Executive Summary

This report attempts to illuminate recent events and the possible longer-term historical consequences of U.S.-Turkish relations, placing them in the context of the current strategic environment as well as considering their potential future implications. Differences in perception since the March 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq exacerbated inherent divergences of attitudes in the relationship, culminating in a traumatic year in 2007. For the moment, however, any remaining chill between Washington and Ankara seems to be abating somewhat. Perhaps more importantly than provision of the now famous “real-time intelligence,” the United States has given its tacit approval to the Turkish military to stage quick ground operations and surgical strikes against Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) camps in northern Iraq, apparently in return for Ankara to not attempt an invasion and prolonged occupation. Yet tensions remain. When Turkey entered northern Iraq on February 21,¹ a State Department spokesman cautioned: “Our strong counsel to the Turkish government is to conclude, as quickly as possible, these operations, to limit them strictly and solely to PKK targets and to work directly with the Iraqi government.”

The Turkish General Staff’s rationale behind the incursion is unclear, but possible reasons range from a deep-seated skepticism of the United States’ commitment to intelligence sharing and the quality of the data provided, to a possible calculation that Washington is too distracted by other foreign policy developments—such as Kosovo’s declaration of independence—to mount a serious objection. In any case, Turkey’s bold maneuver pushes the envelope of the *quid pro quo* agreement—to forsake major military incursions into northern Iraq in return for increased intelligence sharing—and once again brings it under new strains.

The issue of the events of 1915 continues to rumble beneath the surface of U.S.-Turkish relations as well. It will not be easy for the Turks to forget the Congressional legislation introduced in January 2007 labeling the World War I events in eastern Anatolia as an act of genocide by the Ottoman Empire. Nor are Prime Minister Erdogan and the ruling AKP party likely to overlook Washington’s obdurate refusal for many years to deal seriously with Ankara’s concerns about PKK terrorist raids into Turkey from bases in northern Iraq. There have been other missteps by both sides: Turkey’s Grand National Assembly (TBMM) voted not to allow U.S. troops to use southeastern Turkey as a staging ground for its invasion of Iraq; six months later, when the TBMM—upon Washington’s invitation—agreed to send peacekeepers to Iraq, the Coalition Provisional Authority head Paul Bremer blocked the move, severely embarrassing Erdogan.

In 2007, Washington and Ankara groped their way toward finding suitable face-saving compromises, as both the AKP and the Bush administration demonstrated their desire for a rapprochement despite the increasingly fractious landscape. A succession of ever more high-profile Turkish delegations visited Washington throughout the spring and summer to

¹ Unverified preliminary reports by news organizations have reported that between several hundred and several thousand Turkish troops are involved in the operation.

express their concern about the genocide resolution and its potentially deleterious effects on relations, eventually leading the Bush administration to lobby for the legislation to be shelved, which eventually occurred. At the same time, in response to a spate of cross-border PKK raids from Iraq into Turkey, Ankara assembled massive ground forces totaling more than 100,000 troops on its eastern frontier, a number equivalent to nearly two-thirds of the U.S. military presence in Iraq. The burgeoning crisis was temporarily defused following a flurry of diplomatic initiatives culminating in a November 5 meeting between Erdogan and President Bush, which resulted in the unprecedented agreement mentioned above.

Both Ankara and the Turkish military for the moment seem satisfied with the level of U.S. cooperation, but the recent Turkish military incursion underlines the fact that the issue remains far from decisively resolved. The genocide resolution, too, threatens to reemerge, especially as both Democratic presidential candidates have pledged that, if elected, they will ensure its passage. Looking forward, it is critical that the administrations in Washington and Ankara actively attempt to nurture their decades-long political and military relationship with thoughtful, dispassionate and equitable decisions. The recommendations below are offered in an effort to achieve that end.

Recommendations

Search for a longer-lasting solution to rebuilding U.S.-Turkish relations rather than focus on short-term initiatives.

While U.S.-Turkish relations have weathered the stresses produced by the Armenian “genocide” and PKK issues, the resultant stability remains fragile. All the compromises reached between Ankara and Washington are temporary and can change in January 2009 with a new U.S. administration. Given the damage that the two topics inflicted on Turkish-U.S. relations last year, it is imperative that policymakers in Washington and Ankara look for deeper resolutions to the misunderstandings than the temporary expedient fixes to these issues developed thus far, such as administrative pressure temporarily tabling the House of Representatives genocide legislation.

Expand the U.S. military commitment to Turkey beyond real-time intelligence.

Washington’s reluctance to move against the PKK in northern Iraq is emblematic of the problems the United States has encountered in Iraq by striving to minimize military confrontation through mollifying ethnic groups. Currently Washington is apparently limiting its support for Ankara to real-time intelligence sharing about the PKK while balking at further escalatory commitments such as actual military cooperation. The United States is walking a tightrope by attempting to placate Turkey without unduly alienating Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Massoud Barzani, but its parallel efforts to keep its options open simultaneously with the PKK’s anti-Iranian offshoot—Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK)—is regarded by Turkey as a hypocritical double standard undercutting Washington’s self-proclaimed global war on terrorism.

Develop a more consistent strategy toward northern Iraq.

Washington's cooperation with the Turks has given the United States something it wants: Turkey has not put 100,000 troops into northern Iraq—with the instability that would inevitably ensue—and Barzani is now in a box, having reluctantly accepted the U.S.-Turkish *quid pro quo* on surgical military operations against the PKK as the price of Turkish restraint. In Ankara's eyes, in the longer term the U.S. must develop a more consistent strategy as regards the Kurds in northern Iraq, moving from transient stability to more steadfastness on the issue. In 2008, additional strains will inevitably further complicate U.S.-Turkish relations as the long-delayed resolution of the question of Kirkuk increasingly moves to center stage, particularly if Washington adopts an equivocal attitude on the issue.

Utilize Turkey's strategic geography as an important crossroads of Eurasia to strengthen European energy security through Nabucco and other pipeline projects offering the United States greater leeway into the energy-rich Caspian.

In regional terms, Turkey's importance to Washington is hardly limited to keeping northern Iraq quiescent. Washington's twin policies on Caspian energy development of multiple pipelines bypassing Russia while isolating Iran makes Turkey's increasing geopolitical importance as an alternative energy hub even greater, as embodied in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and the proposed Nabucco project. Turkey's geo-strategic position is perhaps Washington's single greatest asset in its efforts to avoid being squeezed out of the expansion of the Caspian's energy resources and remain a potential major alternative to Russia's increasing dominance of the Caspian.

Support Turkey's calls for a joint historians' commission to research archival material related to the events of 1915 in an effort to create a more balanced U.S. approach to examining a hotly contested issue.

If the Kurdish issue is war and peace, then the U.S. stance on the Armenian genocide imbroglio represents a deep affront to Turkish national pride. Ankara's perception is that the Armenian genocide issue is in fact a cheap electioneering issue in the United States rather than a dispassionate commitment to uncovering the historical truth about the tragic events in eastern Anatolia eighty years ago.

In spring 2009 the Armenian issue will reemerge in Washington with the inauguration of a new president and Congress; in the interim, Washington can support the Turkish proposal for an independent, dispassionate academic investigation of all relevant archives pertaining to the tragedy. The Turkish and U.S. policy communities have nine months to sponsor Turkey's call for a scholarly investigation of all relevant archives, including not only Istanbul's Ottoman-era repositories but also those in Yerevan, Paris, London, Berlin, Moscow and the United States. The Turkish call for an international investigation of archival material related to the events of 1915 already has the support of several international scholars on the issue, including Norman Stone. For the present, Ankara

believes that the United States is playing cynical electoral politics with special interest minority groups, and this continues to haunt U.S. policy.

This initiative could be perhaps the single most important policy development taken by the United States toward restoring goodwill with Turkey since the Iraq war began in 2003, and would go a long way toward repairing the damage caused by the invasion of Iraq. The incumbent U.S. president could legitimately state he would not prejudge the results of such an investigation, which could at last definitively establish an authentic historical narrative. Furthermore, the academic initiative could defer a vote on Armenian genocide legislation in a new Congress until the investigation was concluded, as it would provide a legitimate historical basis for future Congressional action, which has been lacking up until now.

Establish uniformity for all Kurdish terrorist organizations in U.S. counter-terrorism strategy by placing PJAK on the State Department's Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) list.

Turkey in turn should prepare for the inevitable—a new administration in Washington—by using the next ten months before a new president and Congress are sworn in by deepening its links with the Pentagon and Washington's foreign policy establishment. Doing so would ensure that Turkish perspectives and its critical role in the broader U.S. Middle East policy is preserved and strengthened, as a new administration might not be as amenable to Turkish concerns, especially if a number of its members got to Washington due to support from special interest groups. Turkey should also insist that Washington clarify its intentions not only toward the PKK, but PJAK as well, pointing out that the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (Teyrebazen Azadiya Kurdistan, or TAK) have been placed on the U.S. terrorism list while no such action has been undertaken against PJAK. This type of discrepancy undercuts Washington's credibility in its campaign against terrorism.

For all the divergences of opinion between Washington and Ankara on the Armenian genocide and PKK issues, the United States nonetheless retains a large degree of goodwill in Ankara because of its persistent support for Turkey's entry into the EU.

Harness the military dividends from closer security cooperation in Iraq to utilize Turkish military manpower for bolstering U.S. military and peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan and the Balkans.

Washington's willingness for the moment to sideline the two issues, combined with more decisive U.S. action in northern Iraq, is already paying benefits in the form of more robust Turkish contributions and support in key areas of U.S. concern such as Afghanistan, peacekeeping in the Balkans and, most recently, support for Kosovo's declaration of independence. A collateral benefit to Washington in implementing its broader policy agenda, particularly in troubled areas of the Middle East, is that the vast majority of Turks are Muslim, which undercuts the more strident jihadist ideological claims about infidel crusader influence.

It is imperative that these two issues not overshadow sixty years of U.S.-Turkish relations. Special interest groups, however legitimate their concerns, must not be allowed to dictate U.S. foreign policy, and congressmen must refrain from supporting issues not firmly grounded in objective historical research merely for the sake of gathering votes. When Washington initiates military action it must not—for the sake of expediency and avoiding losses and negative publicity—ignore the impact of its policies on neighboring countries and fail to take their concerns into account, especially if the nation in question is a political and military ally. Similarly, when proclaiming international initiatives such as the war on terror, Washington must refrain from subsequently tailoring its announced agenda to serve narrower foreign policy objectives lest it appear hypocritical and undercut the very international support it seeks.

Recognize and support Turkey's useful role as a mediator in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process.

One of the highest priority foreign policy initiatives of the Bush administration—yet one that increasingly looks as if it will be bequeathed to the new administration coming to power next January—is the search for an equitable and lasting peace between the Palestinians and Israel. Turkey—as an ally of the United States, the only Muslim member of NATO and Israel's sole military ally in the region—is in a unique position to assist in the fractious and seemingly endless peace process. While Washington up to now has largely regarded the negotiations as a triangular affair involving the Palestinians, Israelis and Americans, Turkey's unique potential for helping to resolve the Middle East's most prolonged and bitter political dispute is immense, as it even discreetly talks to various sides involved in the dispute. Turkey's good offices could also become involved in soothing Israel's larger regional concerns such as the Gaza-Egyptian border, Lebanon and Syria. Given the U.S. and Israeli track record up to now, the possibility becomes all the more intriguing, especially as Turkey, Israel and the United States share attitudes about combating terrorism.

The events of 2007 exposed both the strength and potential brittleness of U.S.-Turkish relations; it is to be hoped that during the next ten months before a new U.S. administration assumes power that officials in both Washington and Ankara will ponder recent events and tailor their actions accordingly.

U.S.-Turkish Relations: A Strategic Relationship Under Stress

In hindsight, 2007 will be remembered as the most fractious year between Turkey and the United States since Mustafa Kemal Ataturk established the Republic of Turkey in 1923. In less than five years, relations between Ankara and Washington have sunk to their lowest point since World War II. The deterioration occurred largely because of two major issues—the ongoing U.S. war in Iraq and the reemergence of proposed Congressional legislation formally labeling the chaos, mayhem and conflict between Ottoman forces and Armenians in eastern Anatolia between 1915-1916 as genocide. Turkey believes that at best, President George W. Bush and his administration are dragging their feet in taking action against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan, or PKK; also known as KADEK, Kongra-Gel and KCK) guerrillas in northern Iraq, or even covertly colluding with and arming them. Turkey, the United States and the European Union (EU) all designate the PKK as a terrorist group. If Turkish anger reaches a breaking point over the “perfect storm” generated by these concerns and Ankara decides to downgrade or end its alliance with the United States, the costs could be immense. While both issues have been papered over for the moment, deep and lasting damage has been inflicted which will take years to overcome, and of this writing, neither issue has been completely resolved to Ankara's satisfaction.

In the immediate wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, the Turkish government proclaimed its allegiance to Washington's war on terror and within a month, the Turkish Grand National Assembly (Turkiye Buyuk Millet Meclisi, or TBMM) voted 319-101 to send troops to Afghanistan to participate in “Operation Enduring Freedom,” which swiftly drove the Taliban from power. However, the warm relations between Ankara and Washington soon took a swift turn for the worse.

Iraq's Impact on U.S.-Turkish Relations Since 2003

U.S.-Turkish relations hit their first major snag of the Bush presidency when, on March 1, 2003, the TBMM not only voted against deploying Turkish troops in the upcoming “Operation Iraqi Freedom,” which began on March 20, but also did not grant the United States permission to use its territory to launch an invasion through northern Iraq. In the vote, 264 deputies voted in favor, 251 voted against and 19 abstained. Parliament Speaker Bulent Arinc ruled that the motion failed because, considering the 19 abstentions, the majority did not vote in favor of the U.S. deployment.² Polls showed that 90 percent of the Turkish public was opposed to the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan was severely embarrassed by the decision, as he had assured the United States that the legislation would pass. The U.S. media and a number of Bush administration officials were astounded and outraged; then Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz told CNN-Turk television: “Lets have a Turkey that steps up and says we made a mistake. We should have known how bad things were in Iraq but we know now. Let's figure out how we can be as helpful as possible to the Americans.”³ Wolfowitz also

² Anadolu Agency, March 1-3, 2003.

³ CNN-Turk, May 6, 2003.

obliquely criticized the Turkish military for not attempting to influence the government, saying: "I think for whatever reason they did not play the strong leadership role on that issue that we would have expected," a comment that many Turkish observers took as a thinly veiled call for a coup.

The Genocide Dispute

The genocide question has been rumbling underneath the surface of U.S.-Turkish relations for 25 years, but flared out into an acutely rancorous issue in early 2007. Legislation to designate the events in eastern Anatolia during World War I specifically as genocide was first introduced in 1983 in the 98th Congress, when House of Representatives member Charles Pashayan (R-Calif.) sponsored House Resolution 171, with 142 co-sponsors, including Barbara Boxer (R-Calif.), currently junior senator from California; Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), now senior senator from New York and Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), current chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee.⁴ Similar legislation was also introduced into the Senate in the form of Senate Resolution 124. While both bills were defeated, over the next quarter century, bills on the topic were advanced in every subsequent Congressional session.

The legislation was not universally acclaimed; in 1985, one exasperated Republican House member from West Virginia called it "the most mischief-making piece of legislation in all my experience in Congress."⁵

The Turks, in turn, hired high-powered lobbying firms to defeat the resolutions each time that they came up in Congress. In April 2005, Erdogan invited Armenian President Robert Kocharyan to establish a joint commission of historians and other experts to study records of the events of 1915 in the archives of Turkey, Armenia and all other relevant countries, and to share their findings with the international community; Kocharyan demurred, remarking that the Armenian genocide was an established fact.⁶ While the suggestion remains on the shelf between Yerevan and Ankara, the issue continues to roil academic debates on the issue.⁷

Supporters of the Armenian genocide legislation gained a formidable ally when California Democrat Nancy Pelosi became Speaker of the House in January 2007. Pelosi has lobbied for the Armenian cause since 1999 and at a commemorative rally in April

⁴ H.RES.171, "A resolution to affirm the Armenian Genocide." Sponsor: Rep. Charles Pashayan, Jr. [CA-17] (introduced 4/21/1983).

⁵ *Boston Herald*, August 26, 2007.

⁶ Mezun, January 29, 2007; for an overview of the question, see Emil Danielyan, "Turkey, Armenia Miss Opportunity for Rapprochement," EurasiaNet.org, June 3, 2005, <<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav060305.shtml>>.

⁷ A prominent British academic, Norman Stone, has also weighed in on the issue: *The Independent*, August 3, 2007, <<http://arts.independent.co.uk/books/features/article2829372.ece>>. See also *Chicago Tribune*, October 16, 2007, <<http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/chicagotribune/access/1365846161.html?dids=1365846161:1365846161&FMT=ABS&FMTS=ABS:FT&date=Oct+16%2C+2007&author=Norman+Stone&pub=Chicago+Tribune&edition=&startpage=13&desc=Armenian+story+has+another+side>>.

2005, famously declared: "Turkey's strategic location is not a license to kill."⁸ Pelosi announced before the November 2006 elections that she would back the recognition of the Armenian genocide in the new Congress.

While Armenian genocide legislation had been regularly introduced—though never passed—in Congress, the issue in the interim has increasingly acquired an international dimension. Twenty-two nations have now recognized the issue, along with 40 states in the United States.⁹ Particularly galling to Turkish public opinion and the government is the fact that Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, Italy and Canada—all of whom officially recognize the events as genocide—are NATO members alongside Turkey.

Even before the collapse of the USSR, Congress busied itself with Armenian issues. On May 17, 1989, the Senate passed a resolution condemning a Soviet Interior Ministry armed operation to restore order in Armenian villages in Nagorno-Karabakh. Then, in December 1991, Congress passed Amendment 907 to the Freedom Support Act, which prohibited direct U.S. government aid to Azerbaijan, with whom Armenia was embroiled in a bitter war over the disputed province of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Supporters of the genocide legislation saw their greatest opportunity in 25 years when Congressmen Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), George Radanovich (R-Calif.) and Congressional Armenian Caucus co-chairs Frank Pallone (D-N.J.) and Joe Knollenberg (R-Mich.) introduced House Resolution 106 on January 30, 2007.¹⁰ The 30-item bill concluded by urging President Bush to commemorate, in his annual message, “the Armenian Genocide issued on or about April 24, to accurately characterize the systematic and deliberate annihilation of 1,500,000 Armenians as genocide and to recall the proud history of United States intervention in opposition to the Armenian Genocide.”

Since the issue arose, Ankara has urged the Bush administration to act with common sense and not support the resolution. The dispute threatened to derail the goodwill that Washington had accrued with Ankara since December 2004 when it backed Turkey’s EU bid, following the European Union’s decision to commence accession negotiations and the actual launch of the process in October 2005. Ankara remains deeply frustrated by the glacial pace of its EU accession talks, which began in 1987. Since then, Ankara has seen Austria, Finland, Sweden, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania accepted, swelling the EU from 12 states to 27, while the Turks remain on the sidelines.

Things began to heat up in February, when a stream of high-ranking Turkish officials visited Washington to voice their concerns about the proposed legislation. On February 7, Prime Minister Erdogan told American businessmen: “We do not expect Congress to

⁸ The Institute for Armenian Research, <<http://www.eraren.org/index.php?Page=Makaleler&MakaleNo=646&Lisan=en>>.

⁹ Armenian National Committee of America, <http://www.anca.org/genocide_resource/states_map.php>.

¹⁰ H.RES.106, “Affirmation of the United States Record on the Armenian Genocide Resolution.” Sponsor: Rep. Adam Schiff [CA-29] (introduced 1/30/2007).

make such a decision. But if it surprises us, I am worried this would cast a shadow over our strategic partnership in the future.”¹¹ Then Foreign Minister—now President—Abdullah Gul issued a warning in Washington, after meeting U.S. officials: “I see this as a real threat to our relationship. While we are having cooperation in these difficult fields, while we are fighting shoulder to shoulder in these fields, while we are supporting each other and facing these challenges, this resolution, if it is accepted, I believe that if that happens, it will be a real shock.”¹² More bluntly, Gul asked: “If this resolution is approved, why should we continue to support one another?”¹³

Adding military muscle to Ankara’s diplomatic concerns, on February 15, Turkish Chief of General Staff Gen. Yasar Buyukanit met at the Pentagon with Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Peter Pace and Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Eric Edelman, whom he first met in December 2005.¹⁴ The topic of discussion was Turkey’s concerns about the PKK. Following the meeting Buyukanit told journalists: “It is of course not possible to say anything definite about the struggle against the PKK before we have definite results. However, I have the impression that the U.S. administration will have a better way of fighting the PKK.” Adding a note of caution the general concluded: “We will take the end result as a reference point for our evaluations, though.”¹⁵ Gen. Buyukanit expressed optimism that the United States would intensify its efforts against the PKK in Iraq.

Demonstrating the nexus between the Armenian genocide issue and Turkish concerns about PKK activities, Gen. Buyukanit was to meet on February 16 with Tom Lantos, then chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, though the meeting was canceled due to inclement weather.¹⁶ Rep. Lantos had originally supported Turkey’s stance on the Armenian genocide, but switched his position following the decision taken by the Turkish Parliament in March 2003 not to act as a transit country for 62,000 U.S. troops entering Iraq.

Buyukanit also used his visit as an opportunity to reach out to the Turkish diaspora. While in Washington, Gen. Buyukanit spoke at a February 17 dinner at the Turkish Embassy during which he upbraided the Turkish community for not supporting Ankara’s interests strongly enough:

If the voice of the Turks living in the diaspora would only rise as high as the others in the diaspora, the Armenians’ claims of genocide would not have come out this way, nor would Turks have to face what they do now. Yes, please excuse me, but I have a complaint about you. The Turkish Republic would be that much stronger if people would gather to support the country’s interests, rather than working against them.¹⁷

¹¹ Anadolu Agency, February 18, 2007.

¹² Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, February 7, 2007.

¹³ <<http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,466427,00.html>>.

¹⁴ *Zeit-Fragen*, No. 2, September 2006.

¹⁵ *Today’s Zaman*, February 17, 2007.

¹⁶ *Zaman*, February 17, 2007.

¹⁷ *Hurriyet*, February 18, 2007.

Further indicating that significant elements in the Turkish Armed Forces (Turk Silahlı Kuvvetleri, or TSK) felt that Washington was taking them for granted, the Turkish General Staff posted the full text of Russian President Vladimir Putin's speech from the 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy on February 10 criticizing both the United States and NATO, of which Turkey is a member. The move implied that Turkey had other potential allies, like Russia, that Washington may prefer Ankara avoided.¹⁸

The Armenian issue lay largely dormant during the summer of 2007, but reemerged on the Congressional agenda in the autumn. On October 10, the House Foreign Affairs Committee approved the Armenian genocide resolution, 27 to 21. Supporters of the measure claimed that with 225 sponsors, more than a majority, the legislation would pass in the House. Indicating its displeasure, Ankara recalled its ambassador the next day "for consultations." The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a strong statement condemning the resolution, stating:

It is blatantly obvious that the House Committee on Foreign Affairs does not have a task or function to re-write history by distorting a matter which specifically concerns the common history of Turks and Armenians. The responsibility of parliaments is to further improve relations between peoples and look to the future, not to the past. Turkey has been advocating for years that disputed periods in history should be evaluated by historians, not legislative bodies. Turkey's call to Armenia in 2005, to examine our common history through the study of uncontested archival documents by historians from Turkey, Armenia, and as necessary from third countries, is a clear manifestation of this approach. While our proposal aimed at reconciling the opposing narratives between Turkey and Armenia with regard to the events of 1915 through a sincere and open dialogue is still on the table and has not, as yet, been responded to favorably by Armenia, the passing of such a resolution by the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives of the U.S., our ally, has been most unfortunate.¹⁹

On October 11, U.S. Ambassador to Turkey Ross Wilson was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a meeting with Undersecretary Ertugrul Apakan where the latter expressed Ankara's concerns about the recent developments. Prior to the session, Wilson released a written statement expressing his profound sorrow over the resolution's passage and told Apakan that he would continue his efforts to convince U.S. congressmen to prevent passage of the resolution by the full House.²⁰

Behind the scenes the Bush administration launched a fierce lobbying campaign against the bill, with Secretary of Defense Robert Gates warning of its potential negative impact on U.S. military forces in Iraq. President Bush castigated Congress for considering the measure, saying: "One thing Congress should not be doing is sorting out the historical

¹⁸ Turkish General Staff, <<http://www.tsk.mil.tr/>>.

¹⁹ Turkish General Staff,

<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA/HomePageTopPart/govstatement_11october2007.htm>.

²⁰ Anadolu Agency, October 11, 2007.

record of the Ottoman Empire.”²¹ In the face of administration opposition, support for House Resolution 106 began to waver. Two days before the President spoke, seven House cosponsors of the bill withdrew their support. The day after President Bush’s comments, a total of 14 House members had decided not to support the measure.

Sensing defeat, Rep. Pelosi said it was the responsibility of the bill’s backers to secure the needed votes.²² On October 27 the resolution’s four main Democratic supporters—Adam Schiff, Brad Sherman (D-Calif.), Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.) and Frank Pallone—wrote a letter to Pelosi stating that they would postpone efforts to bring the bill to a vote in the House of Representatives, asking her not to schedule a vote "at this time," as they would continue to work for "consideration sometime later this year, or in 2008."²³

The Media Wars and Turkish Popular Opinion

The Internet has provided a new opportunity for politicizing the issue; a recent Google search for “Armenian genocide” turned up an astounding 1.2 million hits, ranging from sober historical studies to blatant propaganda.²⁴ Among the most egregious examples of the latter, one website displays a painting purportedly chronicling Armenian suffering. The picture, by noted 19th century Russian artist Vasili Vasilevich Vereshchagin, is *The Apotheosis of War*. Painted in 1871, two years after the artist’s travels in Turkmenistan, it bears Vereshchagin’s dedication on its frame "to all conquerors, past, present and to come," and depicts a pile of skulls outside a Central Asian city—the website carefully crops the distant metropolis while offering the image as “proof” of the Armenian genocide.²⁵ Ironically, Russian authorities subsequently suppressed the painting, and the German General Staff in World War I prohibited officers from visiting it prior to an exhibition, lest their martial ardor be undermined.²⁶

The net result of increasing global attention has combined with Congress’s ambivalent policies to produce a dramatic rise in anti-American attitudes in Turkey. A January 2007 poll conducted for the BBC found that 69 percent of the Turkish public said that they have a negative view of U.S. influence in the world, a jump of 20 points from 2005. The poll further determined that 90 percent of Turks criticized the Bush administration’s handling of the war in Iraq as well as the Israel-Hezbollah conflict, and almost as many disapproved of U.S. policies in Guantanamo, while 81 percent opposed Washington’s approach to Iran’s nuclear program. Finally, three quarters of the Turks polled agree that the U.S. military presence in the Middle East is a disruptive force.²⁷ Even more worrying, in a June 2007 Pew Global Attitudes Project survey of “The Ten Most Anti-American

²¹ *Washington Post*, October 17, 2007.

²² *New York Times*, October 26, 2007.

²³ *Sabah*, October 27, 2007.

²⁴ Based on a Google search of “Armenian genocide” on January 28, 2008,

<<http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=%22Armenian+genocide%22&btnG=Google+Search>>.

²⁵ <<http://historyofjihad.org/armenia5.jpg>>. The website states: “This site is dedicated to frank and fearless reporting and commenting to expose the Islamic Jihad.”

²⁶ RIA Novosti, January 31, 2005.

²⁷ The polling information is available at:

<http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/jan07/BBC_USRole_Jan07_bgmideast.pdf>.

Nations,” Turkey topped the list with 83 percent of respondents having “an unfavorable view of the U.S.,” distantly followed by Pakistan at 68 percent.²⁸

The United States’ indifference to Turkish concerns in Iraq furthered the groundswell of anti-Americanism. In 2004 the novel *Metal Firtina (Metal Storm)*, portraying a U.S.-Turkish war, was a runaway bestseller in Turkey, selling hundreds of thousands of copies.²⁹ More recently, the 2006 film *Valley of the Wolves - Iraq (Kurtlar Vadisi - Irak)* contained similar anti-American themes. The \$10 million film, the most expensive ever made in Turkey, recounts the adventures of a Turkish special operations team in Iraq, led by former Turkish intelligence agent Polat Alemdar. The team is avenging the suicide of a Turkish officer involved in a humiliating incident in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq.

The inspiration for the movie occurred on July 4, 2003, when U.S. Special Forces raided a Turkish Special Forces office, capturing and hooding an 11-man Turkish military team,

In an example of Washington’s lack of awareness of Turkish public opinion, the four-star general at the heart of the 2003 Sulaymaniyah incident, David Howell Petraeus, is now commander of Multi-National Force – Iraq...In Turkey, Petraeus is known as cuvalci pasa or cuvalci general (the hood general).

among them three commanders. The Turkish soldiers were taken into custody on allegations that they were planning to assassinate Kirkuk’s Kurdish governor, Abdurrahman Mustafa. The captives were taken to Baghdad, where intensive diplomacy—

including phone calls between Prime Minister Erdogan and Vice President Dick Cheney—led to their release two days later. In an example of Washington’s lack of awareness of Turkish public opinion, the four-star general at the heart of the 2003 Sulaymaniyah incident, David Howell Petraeus, is now commander of Multi-National Force - Iraq (MNF-I). On January 26, 2007, the Senate confirmed Gen. Petraeus in a 81-0 vote. In Turkey, Petraeus is known as *cuvalci pasa* or *cuvalci general* (the hood general).

The media reaction in Turkey was immediate and intensely negative. Gunduz Aktan, a retired diplomat and newspaper columnist, paralleled the incident to the 1979 takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, when U.S. diplomats had their eyes bandaged. Aktan noted that Turkish sentiment was similar, and that the public would not soon forget the incident.³⁰ The Sulaymaniyah incident humiliated and infuriated Turkish military officials, who considered possible retaliatory measures ranging from closing Turkish airspace to U.S. military aircraft, prohibiting American access to Incirlik Air Base and increasing the Turkish military presence—then at several thousand troops—in northern Iraq.³¹ Gen. Buyukanit, at the time deputy TSK chief, said simply: "We cannot

²⁸ June 2007 Pew Global Attitudes Project, <pewglobal.org>.

²⁹ This webpage lists the item: <<http://kitap.antoloji.com/kitap.asp?kitap=37560>>.

³⁰ *Radikal*, July 4, 2003; *Radikal*, July 27, 2003.

³¹ NTV, July 5, 2003.

understand the Americans' aims. This action by our ally of 50 years has deeply saddened and shaken us."³²

At least one U.S. diplomat was aware of the fallout from the Petraeus appointment. On February 20, Ambassador Wilson hosted a Congressional delegation, which included Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio), Norm Dicks (D-Wash.), Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-N.J.), Steve Rothman (D-N.J.), Chris Carney (D-PA) and Patrick Murphy (D-Pa.) at the U.S. Embassy in Ankara. Wilson bluntly told them that the incident would precipitate “a rocky time” in U.S.-Turkish relations, even though despite rising nationalism, Turkey contributed both troops and over \$100 million to the U.S.-led NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Afghanistan operation.³³

Taking the Sulaymaniyah incident as its starting point, *Valley of the Wolves - Iraq* portrays U.S. soldiers as murderous thugs, indiscriminately killing Iraqi civilians. Led by Special Forces officer Colonel Sam William Marshall—played by American actor Billy Zane—the troops slaughter civilians in Arbil, as Marshall colludes with corrupt Kurdish officials against local Arab and Turkmen community leaders. At one point Marshall shoots the Turkmen leader at point-blank range, convinced that he is covertly assisting the Turkish team.

Valley of the Wolves - Iraq grossed \$24.9 million worldwide, with 1.75 million Turks viewing the film during its first six days in Turkey. The U.S. military was aware that the film’s popularity might inflame local attitudes; *Stars and Stripes* ran an article advising soldiers in Europe to avoid movie theaters showing the film.³⁴ The success of the movie epitomized how U.S.-Turkish relations had deteriorated since the March 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Ankara, however, still evinced interest in cooperating with the U.S. mission there. On October 6, 2003, seven months after the commencement of U.S. military operations in Iraq, the TBMM agreed to give Washington one of the things it most wanted, voting to deploy Turkish peacekeepers in Iraq. Despite support from the State Department, Pentagon and the National Security Council, Coalition Provisional Authority head Paul Bremer blocked the move. Washington subsequently withdrew its offer of partnership, which severely embarrassed Prime Minister Erdogan, who lobbied intensively to ensure that his government had the necessary votes for the deployment.³⁵ While Ankara had supported other U.S. and United Nations (UN) peacekeeping initiatives—contributing troops to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan since 2002, as well as assisting UN peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Somalia, Albania, Kosova, East Timor, the UN Observer Mission in Georgia, the OSCE Mission to Georgia on the Georgian-Russian (Chechen) border, and the Temporary International Presence in the City of Hebron (TIPH)—Bremer nevertheless saw fit to decline the Turkish offer.

³² *Hurriyet*, July 5, 2003.

³³ “Trip Report/Notes by Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, March 1, 2007 - Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iraq, Germany, 19-26 February 2007,” <<http://kaptur.house.gov/>>.

³⁴ *Stars and Stripes*, February 7, 2007.

³⁵ *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Spring 2005.

Ironically—and infuriating for many in Ankara—its offers for military assistance had been warmly received in Washington a decade earlier, and between 1988-1991 Turkey contributed military inspectors to the UN Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group, following the Iran-Iraq war. In 1991 Turkish forces also participated in the U.S.-led “Operation Desert Storm” and subsequently contributed personnel to the UN Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission from 1991 to 2003.³⁶

Turkey and the PKK

The PKK was formed in the 1970s, and by 1984 had already launched an armed struggle against the Turkish government. Edmund Ghareeb, professor of Kurdish Studies at American University in Washington, DC, commented:

At that time they were looking for independence, not only independence of Turkish Kurdistan, but of all Kurdish areas in the neighboring states... This was a pan-Kurdish movement. That is what they tried to achieve. Ultimately, they were able to increase and escalate their activities, leading to fierce clashes with Turkish state security forces, and to a great deal of violence.³⁷

During the 1990s, the Turkish military conducted four major military operations in northern Iraq against the PKK. In 1996 the Turkish military—invited in by then-Iraqi Kurdish militia commanders Jalal Talabani and Massoud Barzani to help subdue their internecine fighting with the PKK—established four “forward territory stations” along the Batufa-Begova-Kani Massi line up to 13 miles inside Iraqi Kurdish territory, where they remain.³⁸

Unlike the Armenian genocide dispute—which revolves around national pride, differing historical interpretations and perceived slights from Washington—Turkey’s concerns about PKK activities in Kurdish northern Iraq represent a direct military and national security concern. By last fall, Ankara had grown increasingly exasperated by Washington’s reluctance after more than four years to rein the terrorists in.

Turkey’s estimated 15 million Kurds account for roughly 20 percent of its populace, and the southeastern portion of the country that they historically inhabit covers an estimated 89,000 sq. miles, or nearly a third of Turkey’s land mass. According to Gen. Buyukanit, the TSK’s primary concern in northern Iraq is the possible declaration of an independent Kurdish state, along with the status of Kirkuk and the PKK. He added that the TSK does not believe this conflict is limited to reprisals against the PKK and its recent attacks.³⁹

The Kurds have the largest ethnic army in Iraq, the Peshmerga, who fought against former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein’s regime for many years and also worked

³⁶ The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, PolicyWatch #1199, February 15, 2007, <<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2568>>.

³⁷ KurdishMedia, November 17, 2007, <<http://www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=14266>>.

³⁸ *Sabah*, October 29, 2007.

³⁹ *Milliyet*, October 28, 2007.

alongside U.S. forces during the 2003 war. Washington's hesitancy to resolve the PKK problem was a direct outgrowth of the U.S. military's overextension in the rest of Iraq and the relative stability and peace enjoyed by the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in the north. The Bush administration's attempts to mollify Ankara with bland assurances that it would address the issue undoubtedly stemmed—at least partially—out of a desire to avoid potential clashes between Peshmerga and U.S. forces.

Ironically, the United States and Turkey had cooperated on anti-PKK operations before, most notably when PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan—also known as Apo—was captured in Nairobi, Kenya on February 15, 1999, reportedly with CIA assistance. He was tried and sentenced to death by a Turkish court but his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 2002. That high-water mark, however, was before the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Washington was also concerned that a major Turkish offensive into Kurdish Iraq could have repercussions far beyond its borders. Germany has about 400,000 Kurds, France has 60,000 and Sweden has 10,000. Smaller communities can be found in Belgium, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Italy. Part of Turkey's present frustration with Western reluctance to crack down on the PKK is caused by the hundreds of popular and intellectual pro-PKK organizations in the West operating openly or under assumed names.⁴⁰

Iraqi Kurds are under no illusions about the state of their unequal relationship with Washington, however. The editor of Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan's daily newspaper observed that “[a]ll the Kurdish alliances in the 20th century ended in defeat for Kurdish interests...The Kurdish-U.S. alliance resembles an alliance between a mouse and a lion...[It] is not bound by any declared pledge, agreement or written text, which leads to the absence of a framework for clearly identifying common interests.”⁴¹

Growing Turkish frustration with the PKK in October and November 2004 led Ankara to mobilize 20,000 troops on its border with northern Iraq, although Washington successfully defused the crisis. The PKK declared a unilateral truce in 2006, but Prime Minister Erdogan refused to commit to it, saying: "A ceasefire is done between states. It is not something for a terrorist organization."

Turkish Suspicions about Washington and the PKK

The Turkish government was deeply troubled in January 2007 when PKK leaders Cemil Bayik and Murat Karayilan were treated in a hospital in Arbil. When Turkey reported their presence to U.S. authorities and requested their arrest, the United States declined, citing a lack of the “necessary military force to conduct an operation in said region of Arbil. We believe that landing soldiers by helicopter in this region would be very risky.” Neither the United States nor Iraq would allow Turkey to enter northern Iraq and

⁴⁰ *Sulaymaniyah*, October 28, 2007.

⁴¹ *Al-Sulaymaniyah Kurdistani Nuwe*, January 24, 2008.

apprehend the terrorists itself. Fuelling Turkish concerns about Washington's double standards in the war on terror, two weeks after the incident U.S. commandos landed from helicopters and raided a site near the hospital, detaining five Iranian diplomats suspected of having ties to al-Qaeda.⁴²

Ankara's doubts grew stronger when in July 2007 the TSK published a document listing the origin of weaponry captured from the PKK. Of the 5,713 rifles seized from PKK guerrillas, almost one out of 10 were U.S.-made M-16s, while two of 10 of the 3,490 seized grenades were of U.S. origin.⁴³ Prime Minister Erdogan was quite candid about the Turkish military's investigation of PKK weaponry, saying during an interview: "We can see that many of the confiscated weapons are U.S.-made. It is not clear whether [the United States is] supplying the weapons or they are getting them from somewhere else. But a serious amount of weapons confiscated so far are U.S.-made."⁴⁴ While Turkish Ambassador to the United States Nabi Sensoy subsequently said that Kurdish Iraqis were passing U.S. supplies along to PKK guerrillas, he cautioned:

That does not mean the U.S. is supporting these terrorists. But we know they now have sophisticated explosives, and in some cases other weapons of U.S. origin. The U.S. has leverage with the Kurds. If the U.S. Army is strong enough to go anywhere in the world to fight terrorism, it would be very difficult to turn to the Turkish people and say the United States is doing everything but they are not able to influence the northern Iraqis.⁴⁵

The Bush administration became increasingly defensive on the issue; State Department Deputy Spokesman Tom Casey was asked, during a briefing, about an October 19, 2007 *Los Angeles Times* article titled "Our Fraying Alliance with Turkey," in which former Deputy Director of CIA National Intelligence Council Graham Fuller claimed that the United States supports PKK terrorists as a proxy against Iran. Casey flippantly replied: "[T]he best I can say is I think that's a spy who's been out in the cold too long. The United States does not have contact with and does not support the PKK. It's a terrorist organization. It's treated as such. And the only thing we want to see from it is to have it go out of business."⁴⁶

Fuller's remarks were an oblique reference to a PKK offshoot unsettling another of Iraq's neighbors. In 2005 the PKK split into four factions representing Kurds living in Syria, Iraq, Turkey and Iran. The Party for Free Life in Kurdistan (Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê, or PJAK) operates as the Iranian wing of the PKK. In 2006 more than 100 Iranian police were reportedly killed and scores injured in attacks by Iranian Kurds, notably by PJAK. Ankara believes that evidence points to covert U.S. government involvement with PJAK for its anti-Iranian campaign, a charge Washington strongly denies.

⁴² *Milliyet*, October 28, 2007.

⁴³ *Hurriyet*, July 19, 2007.

⁴⁴ NTV, July 16, 2007.

⁴⁵ *Stars and Stripes*, July 12, 2007.

⁴⁶ State Department Daily Press Briefing, October 19, 2007.

Seemingly confirming Ankara's deepest fears was PJAK leader Rahman Haj-Ahmadi's August 2007 unofficial visit to Washington. PJAK officials tried to set up meetings with the State Department and senior administration officials but reportedly received "no answer" to their requests.⁴⁷ Haj-Ahmadi, who lives in exile in Germany, received a visa because Washington coyly maintains that PJAK is not a terrorist group. One of Haj-Ahmadi's close associates, Biryar Gabar, claimed to have had "direct or indirect discussions" with U.S. officials, while the U.S. military spokesman in Baghdad, Cmdr. Scott Rye, would say only: "The consensus is that U.S. forces are not working with or advising the PJAK."⁴⁸

Washington's however limited involvement with PJAK underscores the fact that its Iraq policy is triple-layered: restrain Turkey, pacify Iraq and yet use PJAK to undercut Iran. As Washington is slowly learning, the three are hardly identical.

Far from moving against Kurdish guerrillas, in May 2007 the U.S. military began to hand over security responsibilities for the northern Iraqi provinces of Dohuk, Arbil and Sulaymaniyah to the KRG.⁴⁹

Ankara was as irritated with Iraq as Washington for its torpor in addressing Turkey's concerns about the PKK. Turkish annoyance with Baghdad over its ongoing foot-dragging was exacerbated by the fact that on August 7 the two states signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in which the "two Prime Ministers, expressed their joint will to fight against terrorist organizations and activities including PKK/KONGRA-GEL and reiterated their common understanding to activate every effort to isolate, pacify and eradicate the presence of all terrorist organizations in Iraq." The MoU was based on the 1926 Ankara Agreement and the Friendship and Good Neighborly Relations Agreement between Turkey and Iraq, signed in 1946 and the Agreement Between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Iraq on Legal and Judicial Matters, signed in 1989.⁵⁰

The issue of Washington's potential assistance against the PKK continued to simmer through the summer of 2007. Retired Gen. Nejat Eslen summed up the Turkish officer corps' frustration, saying: "The U.S. crossed the Atlantic in the name of fighting terror in Iraq and Afghanistan. Turkey is helping the U.S. in Afghanistan. And yet it doesn't allow Turkey, a NATO ally, to cross its own border for the same reasons. What sort of a friendship is this? This is how enemies behave."⁵¹ Ankara was about to change the modus operandi of U.S.-Turkish relations, however. Erdogan took the AKP's sweeping victory in the July 22 general elections as a mandate supporting his government's policy, and decided to stiffen his Washington negotiating team, asking Gen. Buyukanit to suggest a military representative to attend political talks in the United States about possible joint

⁴⁷ *Washington Times*, August 4, 2007.

⁴⁸ *New York Times*, October 23, 2007.

⁴⁹ *Stars and Stripes*, May 30, 2007.

⁵⁰ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/NR/rdonlyres/1D86BB2A-4808-40E0-9768-650CB1FC665F/0/MEMORANDUM_OF_UNDERSTANDING_IRAQ.pdf>.

⁵¹ *The Daily Telegraph*, July 29, 2007.

U.S.-Turkish action against the PKK. Buyukanit suggested his second-in-command, Gen. Ergin Saygun—the decision represented a fundamental change in the conduct of Turkish-U.S. relations, as previously civilian and military meetings were held separately.

Prime Minister Erdogan also lined up political support at home. On October 17 his government asked the TBMM to approve military operations into Iraq against the PKK, and the measure passed, 507 to 19.⁵² Four days after the vote however, on October 21, the PKK scored a major public relations coup in Hakkari. PKK guerrillas, crossing from Iraq, mounted a nighttime attack on Turkey's Daglica battalion, blowing up a bridge located just three miles from the border while a 12-vehicle Turkish military convoy was crossing it. During the incident, a dozen soldiers were killed and eight captured. The Turkish military swiftly responded, rushing reinforcements and helicopters to the area, firing artillery and launching attacks that killed 32 guerrillas.⁵³ The soldiers were released on November 8; Turkish prosecutors subsequently charged them with covertly assisting the PKK, with Kurdish-speaking private Ramazan Yuce allegedly telling his battalion the "wrong" date on which the PKK was going to attack, a charge he rejects, claiming that he has been made a scapegoat.⁵⁴ On February 2, a military court in Van released the soldiers and adjourned the trial until April 25.⁵⁵

Turkey Considers a Blockade

Despite increasingly fierce saber rattling throughout the fall, Turkey continued to seek a diplomatic solution, even as it increased pressure on the KRG by warning of possible limited economic sanctions. On October 24, Turkey's National Security Council (Milli Guvenlik Kurulu, or MGK), which includes Cabinet members and high-ranking Turkish

A [Turkish] blockade could have had an immediate and devastating effect on northern Iraq, as the area depends on Turkey for 90 percent of its imports. Nearly \$3 billion in trade now passes annually through the Habur crossing, including a significant amount of U.S. military supplies; last year 825,000 trucks crossed the bridge in both directions.

military officials, agreed during a meeting chaired by President Gul to recommend that the government "first take necessary economic measures against those groups directly or indirectly supporting the separatist terrorist organization in the region." The MGK appointed Deputy Prime

Minister Nazim Erken to oversee planning of the sanctions. The MGK decided to exempt medication and health supplies from the proposed sanctions, as 75 percent of the KRG's medical products and medication are transported through the Habur bridge border crossing, preferring at that moment to recommend that the embargo on Iraq be limited to energy and food.⁵⁶

⁵² *Sabah*, October 18, 2007.

⁵³ Anadolu Agency, October 22, 2007.

⁵⁴ NTV, January 16, 2008.

⁵⁵ *Today's Zaman*, February 4, 2008.

⁵⁶ *Today's Zaman*, October 26, 2007.

A blockade could have had an immediate and devastating effect on northern Iraq, as the area depends on Turkey for 90 percent of its imports. Nearly \$3 billion in trade now passes annually through the Habur crossing, including a significant amount of U.S. military supplies; last year 825,000 trucks crossed the bridge in both directions. In the event of a blockade, Ankara has explored the possibility of diverting Turkish trade with Iraq through a number of Syrian border crossings, which would completely bypass Kurdish Iraq altogether.

Such a closure would, however, have a significant negative impact on the economy of southeastern Turkey as well; there are more than 1,000 companies and 15,000 Turkish workers—mostly Turkish Kurds—currently working on projects in northern Iraq.

As a means to pressure Washington prior to the threatened ground invasion into northern Iraq, officials of the Foreign and Transportation Ministries and the General Staff also drew up plans on various options to limit or completely ban flights over Turkey to northern Iraq; details of the proposed air embargo and other sanctions were supplied to the Council of Ministers for consideration during its meeting on October 30.⁵⁷ Four days previously, Turkish and Iraqi ministers met in Ankara to discuss the current situation along the Turkish-Iraqi frontier in an attempt to forestall military action, but the discussions were halted after an hour and a half with no plans announced for future meetings.⁵⁸

The Iraqi and Kurdish Provisional Governments React

In the wake of the diplomatic impasse between Washington and Ankara, the possibility of military intervention grew, leading Iraqi government officials increasingly to warn Turkey of the potential economic consequences of a military operation. Iraqi Parliament Speaker Mahmoud al-Mashhadani told journalists in Damascus: "Northern Iraq cannot be pressured. Iraq is a rich country, and if there are economic pressures, we will cut off the [Kirkuk-]Ceyhan pipeline."⁵⁹ This is hardly an idle threat; while Turkey currently imports about 90 percent of its energy needs, about 70 percent of the world's proven energy resources are in countries around Turkey. The PKK upped the ante, threatening in the event of a Turkish military operation not only to attack the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline, but even to strike oil tankers heading for Turkey, proving their acute awareness of the vulnerabilities of Turkey's energy imports.⁶⁰

As Washington, Baghdad and Ankara continued their diplomatic efforts to find a solution forestalling a Turkish ground invasion, Turkey deployed more military forces near the border. The British press reported on October 27 that advanced Turkish military units had penetrated 12 miles into northern Iraq, with the troops being bolstered by tanks and artillery fire.⁶¹

⁵⁷ *Hurriyet*, October 28, 2007.

⁵⁸ Agence France Presse, October 27, 2007.

⁵⁹ *Jerusalem Post*, October 25, 2007.

⁶⁰ *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, October 21, 2007.

⁶¹ *Daily Telegraph*, October 27, 2007.

In fact, for more than a decade Turkish troops have maintained four substantial hilltop bases on positions inside northern Iraq, a luxury they have enjoyed since they were invited by Kurdish militia leaders to help quell fighting between various groups. The increased tempo of Turkish shelling of suspected PKK positions along the border caused the majority of residents of Desht Takh village—more than 200 inhabitants—to flee to Zakho to escape the bombardment, according to eyewitness reports. Residents of the Zakho and Kanimasi areas in Dohuk province, 285 miles north of Baghdad, asserted that Turkish artillery units based along the border maintained regular artillery and mortar bombardment fire;⁶² in response, Peshmerga Defense Forces began mine-laying activities in Dohuk.⁶³ On the Turkish side of the border, Turkish Air Force jets began flying along the frontier parallel to Iraq's Haftanin, Sinaht, Kani Massi, Barwari and Serzere regions as Cobra attack helicopters and combat aircraft supported ground operations, while Turkish troops conducted mine-clearing and field search-and-destroy exercises.⁶⁴

Besides unsettling Baghdad, the raids and the specter of an imminent Turkish military operation widened disputes in the northern Iraqi Kurdish community. On October 24 the Kurdistan National Council held a session in Arbil to attempt to formulate a united front in response to Turkish threats. Council head Adnan al-Mufti maintained that the Iraqi Kurds have the right to defend themselves, but Kurdish Democratic Party leader Shirwan al-Haidari said that the Council had voted unanimously for a joint project submitted by all the parliamentary blocs condemning the TBMM vote authorizing a cross-border operation by the TSK to attack the PKK. Al-Haidari also refuted press reports stating that the Kurdistan National Council had dispatched Peshmerga Defense Forces to the frontier, as such responsibility lay with the general commander of the region's armed forces, KRG President Massoud Barzani.⁶⁵

For their part, expatriate Kurds sought to expand their homeland's influence beyond its current bilateral strife with Turkey to include neighboring countries. During a October 25 press conference in Moscow, Farhat Mardini, member of the Association of Kurdish Communities in Russia and the CIS, told journalists: "We take the global situation realistically and comprehend that a united Kurdistan is an unattainable goal today, but we will seek confederation, that is at least that Kurds in Turkey, Iran and Syria obtain the same autonomous status like in Iraq, which will provide our people with an opportunity for comprehensive independent development." Chair of the International Union of Kurdish NGOs and First Vice President of the Union of Diasporas in the Russian Federation Merab Shamoyev stated that "Kurds intend to obtain from [the] world community the status of confederation member in all the four countries of compact settlement of Kurds—in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria."⁶⁶

While the Turkish military had been advocating a military incursion into Iraq to deal a decisive blow against PKK guerrillas there since the beginning of 2007, on October 26

⁶² Voices of Iraq, October 27, 2007.

⁶³ Ihlas, October 27, 2007.

⁶⁴ *Milliyet*, October 27, 2007.

⁶⁵ Alsumaria Iraqi Satellite Network, October 26, 2007.

⁶⁶ Regnum, October 26, 2007.

Gen. Buyukanit stated that the TSK would await government authorization. Buyukanit, referencing the upcoming November 5 Bush-Erdogan meeting, said: "The armed forces will carry out a cross-border offensive when assigned. Prime Minister Erdogan's visit to the United States is very important; we will wait for his return."⁶⁷

As the threat of an invasion loomed, KRG President Massoud Barzani increasingly attempted to distance Iraq's Kurdish population from PKK activities, saying during an interview: "There is some progress toward pacification. Turks have failed to militarily solve this crisis for 23 years. They have to be aware that a political solution is the logical step now. Iraqi Kurds are not part of the current struggle between the Turkish government and the PKK, which is unwelcome by the Kurdistan region." Barzani added that the recent intensification of Turkish military efforts along the border was indicative of Ankara's failure to find a political solution to the Kurdish question. The KRG president was careful to point out that he did not approve of the PKK, but also that it was up to Turkey to resolve the crisis, doubting the effectiveness of any Baghdad-directed initiatives against the group. Throughout October, Barzani's tactics varied from defiance to appeasement, stating "there will be war" if Turkey invaded, while maintaining that Turkey is not an enemy.⁶⁸ Others in the KRG, such as Deputy Speaker Kamal Kirkuki, echoed Barzani's more brazen promises to fight if provoked.⁶⁹

U.S. Military Ambivalence in Iraq

Despite its massive military presence in Iraq and the rising tension over a possible clash between the Turkish armed forces and PKK guerrillas, the U.S. military received no directives from Washington about confronting PKK guerrillas in the north of the country. A telling example occurred when Maj. Gen. Benjamin Mixon spoke to Pentagon reporters via satellite from U.S. Contingency Operating Base Speicher near Tikrit in northern Iraq, saying he was planning on doing "absolutely nothing" to counter PKK movements and activities in northern Iraq. Mixon elaborated in response to another question: "[L]et me put it to you very clearly. The three Northern provinces are under KRG, provincial Iraqi control...It's [the Peshmerga's] responsibility to ensure the integrity of their particular provinces," later adding that while no one has specifically told him to ignore the PKK, he "hadn't been given instructions to do anything about it, either."⁷⁰ On October 28, Mixon handed over regional command to Maj. Gen. Mark Hertling. Gen. Petraeus was vague about the role of the U.S. military in trying to defuse the crisis, refusing to detail the nature of U.S. involvement, while acknowledging that there was a certain degree of collaboration.

By late October, the Turkish threats proved a spur to U.S. diplomatic efforts behind the scenes. The situation subsequently became more fluid, with Washington allegedly considering possible joint U.S.-Turkish military operations. While flying to Britain for meetings with Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Erdogan conversed with journalists about

⁶⁷ NTV, October 26, 2007.

⁶⁸ Agence France Presse, October 28, 2007; *The Independent*, October 29, 2007.

⁶⁹ Indo-Asian news service, October 29, 2007.

⁷⁰ Pentagon press briefing, October 26, 2007, <defenselink.mil>.

Washington requesting a delay in any Turkish offensive into northern Iraq. Erdogan remarked that there was a possibility that Turkey could “launch a joint military operation with the United States against the PKK in northern Iraq...We are expecting that a joint action similar to those taken in Afghanistan will be taken about this matter.”⁷¹ The hardening Turkish determination to proceed as Washington prevaricated further resulted in a hastily arranged meeting between Bush and Erdogan, scheduled for November 5 in Washington.

The Diplomatic Minuette Continues

Prior to the November visit, Prime Minister Erdogan stated that he intended to press President Bush for a definitive answer on the PKK issue. He spoke bluntly about his Washington agenda during a visit to Hungary, telling reporters: “We will make the decision about a cross-border operation. What business does the United States have in Iraq? The United States should work with us because it is our strategic partner. We are working with them in Afghanistan.”⁷² Erdogan also expressed his government’s exasperation with Baghdad’s persistently hollow promises to reign in the PKK in one of his most illuminating remarks to date:

We no longer want to waste time as a result of procrastinations. We are fed up with such delaying tactics. Unfortunately, the coalition forces, particularly the United States and the [Iraqi] central government, could not achieve the results that we were expecting to see. The terrorist organization was not subjected to even a minor sanction and we have nothing else to give if they are still expecting Turkey to make concessions...We are expecting the United States to take action rather than expecting that everything will be done by Iraq. We want the coalition forces, especially the United States, to take steps there. The central government should also take steps and we need to achieve some concrete results about the presence of the terrorist organization in northern Iraq.⁷³

Turkey Garners International Support as Washington and Baghdad Hesitate

As the Bush administration waffled, Turkey’s diplomatic efforts with its neighbors proved as adroit as Washington’s were inept. Besides the Kurds inside Turkey, the wider region’s Kurdish population—estimated at anywhere from 20 to 40 million—constitutes a significant minority population in Iran, Syria, Armenia and Azerbaijan. None of these governments want to see the emergence of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq that could threaten their territorial integrity. The Kurdish diaspora also includes minorities in Western Europe, where approximately 1.3 million Kurds live. Following the capture of Abdullah Ocalan in 1999, protests erupted in a number of European cities.

⁷¹ *Hurriyet*, October 25, 2007.

⁷² *Milliyet*, October 27, 2007.

⁷³ Kanal 24, October 24, 2007.

Ankara sought and received diplomatic support from Syria—which now recognizes the PKK as a terrorist organization—for its possible incursion into northern Iraq, a development that annoyed Washington as much as it infuriated Talabani; the Iraqi president strongly denounced Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's pledges of solidarity, declaring that al-Assad "went beyond all acceptable boundaries."⁷⁴ Talbani asserted that the KRG has persistently urged the PKK to pursue political means to achieve their goals. President Talabani's options in influencing Washington were limited, however, of which he was well aware. The change was reflected in his rhetoric, which increasingly deferred to Washington's more and more frantic efforts to stave off a Turkish invasion that had the potential to plunge northern Iraq into chaos, fatally undermining Baghdad's tenuous authority there.

Even more unacceptable to Washington, Turkey also pursued diplomatic efforts with "axis of evil" charter member Iran. On October 27, Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan arrived in Tehran for meetings with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, parliament speaker Gholam Ali Haddad Adel, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki and Supreme National Security Council Secretary Saeed Jalili.⁷⁵ In a development that caused consternation in Washington, Ahmadinejad told Babacan that Iran stood ready to cooperate with Turkey in its fight against terrorism.⁷⁶ A warming between Tehran and Ankara is hardly without consequences. In the absence of any forthright action by Washington to rein in the PKK, Turkey could assist Iran in breaking out of its diplomatic isolation, a move that the Bush administration would hardly favor. In a classic case of diplomatic "blowback," relations between Turkey, Syria and Iran have greatly improved since the U.S. invasion of Iraq, in large part as a consequence of Turkey's refusal to provide its territory for the campaign.

In a classic case of diplomatic "blowback," relations between Turkey, Syria and Iran have greatly improved since the U.S. invasion of Iraq, in large part as a consequence of Turkey's refusal to provide its territory for the campaign.

Ankara repeatedly stressed that any military incursion would be limited in its objectives and duration. On October 30, Turkish Ambassador to Russia Kurtulus Taskent remarked in a RIA Novosti news conference: "Once the goal has been achieved, Turkish troops will return to Turkey. There is no intention to occupy or seize Iraqi territory."⁷⁷ Further alarming Washington, on November 1, Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki paid a surprise visit to Ankara, ostensibly to attend the next day's Iraq summit in Istanbul. While in Ankara, Mottaki met with Foreign Minister Babacan, President Gul and Prime Minister Erdogan.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, October 21, 2007.

⁷⁵ Fars News Agency, October 27, 2007.

⁷⁶ Anadolu Agency, October 28, 2007.

⁷⁷ RIA-Novosti, October 30, 2007.

⁷⁸ *Turkiye*, November 2, 2007.

Maintaining the pressure on Washington that other, “evil,” regional diplomatic players might support Ankara’s actions if the Bush administration continued to prevaricate, on October 28 Gul spoke by telephone with Ahmadinejad about the latest developments on the Turkish-Iraqi border.⁷⁹ Two days later in Tehran, both Mottaki and his Syrian counterpart Walid Mouallem condemned PKK “terrorist” operations mounted against Turkey from northern Iraq.⁸⁰ The Turkish-Iranian entente on the PKK is not solely based on military concerns; Iran has increasingly come to figure in Turkish energy imports, as the country currently purchases 90 percent of its needs abroad. Turkey and Iran have just completed an oil pipeline that will pump 500,000 barrels of Iranian oil a day, while the Turkish Petroleum Corp. has announced plans to invest \$3.5 billion in Iran’s South Pars natural gas field.

Completing Ankara’s efforts to garner regional support for military action, Turkish Ambassador to Azerbaijan Huseyin Avni Karslioglu remarked that Erdogan was to discuss Turkey’s problems with the PKK with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev while attending November’s 11th Friendship, Brotherhood, and Cooperation Congress of the Turkic States and Communities in Baku. Earlier in the month, “an informed source” was quoted in the Azerbaijani press saying that Baku and Ankara were considering the participation of a special mountain-infantry regiment based in Naxcivan in anti-PKK military operations.⁸¹

More binds Baku and Ankara than simply linguistic, cultural and religious ties. According to unverified reports in the Azerbaijani press—which, it should be noted, is sometimes partisan in its coverage of Armenia—the PKK has spread its guerrilla training facilities beyond northern Iraq into Armenia. On January 25, the Azerbaijani newspaper *Zerkalo* reported on remarks made by Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Arman Kirakosyan, who said that “the settlements described as camps are actually Kurdish and Yezidi villages in the region.” The journal reported that since “there could be no settlements of Muslim Kurds in the wake of the occupation of the Azerbaijani territories around Nagorno-Karabakh,” Kirakosyan was in fact referring to Kurds who emigrated to Nagorno-Karabakh after it had been occupied by the Armenian military. *Zerkalo* concluded: “Since these are uncontrolled territories, they are a paradise for terrorists. Hence, the emergence of the PKK bases in the occupied Azerbaijani territories is quite real and explainable, which is effectively what Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Arman Kirakosyan has admitted.” The newspaper noted that before Armenia declared independence in 1990, 80,000 Kurds lived in Azerbaijan, a number which subsequently shrank to 40,000.⁸² The same day that the report appeared, Armenian Foreign Ministry Press Secretary Vladimir Karapetyan immediately denounced the *Zerkalo* article, saying: “Azerbaijani media are deliberately distorting the truth, and do so with the help of indecent propaganda tricks.”⁸³

⁷⁹ IRNA, October 28, 2007.

⁸⁰ *Tehran Times*, October 30, 2007.

⁸¹ *Gun* [Baku], October 17, 2007.

⁸² *Zerkalo*, January 25, 2008.

⁸³ Arminfo, January 25, 2008; for an overview of this issue, see Anar Valiyev, “Reviving a Forgotten Threat: The PKK in Nagorno-Karabakh,” *Terrorism Monitor*, December 20, 2007, <<http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373866>>.

Even Afghanistan supported Turkey's position, with Gen. Rashid Dostum, deputy commander in chief of the Afghan Military Forces stating in a letter: "We support the Turkish Republic's and Parliament's struggle against terrorism and...we ask God's forbearance and fortitude for the families of the fallen soldiers. I declare that Afghanistan is on Turkey's side and ready to help in its struggle against terrorism."⁸⁴

Was Turkey Bluffing?

In fall 2007, the seriousness of Turkey's intention to neutralize the PKK was underscored by the fact that it was willing to strain its relationship with the European Union over the issue, and therefore potentially threaten its long-held hopes of membership. During an interview with an Anadolu Agency correspondent in Rome, Turkish State Minister Kursad Tuzmen said:

Europe should extend full support to Turkey in countering terrorism. It is obvious that terrorism is linked with the north of Iraq. EU member states have also seen it. In this case, criticizing or objecting to Turkey's decision about a cross-border operation means backing terrorists...unfortunately EU member states are not extending full support to Turkey in its fight against terrorism. Even some of our friends and allies are backing the terrorist organization. Members of the terrorist organization can easily operate in EU member states...Even though the EU has declared the PKK as a terrorist organization, some European politicians are making remarks that may be sympathetic for the terrorist organization. This is a very negative behavior. Terrorism is the enemy of all countries and humanity, therefore we hope the EU will extend full support to Turkey's efforts to eradicate terrorism.⁸⁵

Even more unsettling to Ankara was a report in *The Times* that the Iraqi PKK guerrillas holed up in the Qandil mountain range, 60 miles south of the border, included "at least" three Britons along with Russians, Germans, Greeks, Iranians and Arabs.⁸⁶

Opposition to Turkey joining the EU has been growing. Resistance to Turkey's efforts has largely crystallized around French President Nicholas Sarkozy and, to a lesser extent, German Chancellor Angela Merkel. On January 16, Erdogan attended the first UN Alliance of Civilizations Forum in Madrid and criticized Chancellor Merkel and President Sarkozy's attempts to foist alternatives to full EU membership on Turkey.⁸⁷ The Turkish public is baffled as to why Sarkozy can openly challenge the eligibility of the country for EU membership, after France's previous head of state and government gave its assent. Much of the Turkish populace has earlier believed that the EU was bound by its political commitments, and as a result, it is now distressed and angered that Sarkozy's polarizing rhetoric is not arousing more response from generally supportive Europeans.

⁸⁴ *Cumhuriyet*, October 30, 2007.

⁸⁵ Anadolu Agency, October 28, 2007.

⁸⁶ *The Sunday Times*, October 28, 2007.

⁸⁷ *Milliyet*, January 17, 2008.

Still, Ankara found support for its EU aspirations among other EU members. Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero told reporters at the forum that Spain supported Turkey's efforts to join the European Union "without hesitation."⁸⁸ Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Jansa, whose country currently holds the EU's rotating presidency, has expressed his support for EU membership talks with Turkey and Croatia.⁸⁹ Significantly, Italy—one of the six founding members of the EU—also desires Turkish accession.⁹⁰ Other EU member countries that have recently reaffirmed their support for Ankara in the EU process are Sweden, Bulgaria and Slovakia.⁹¹

President Sarkozy—who assumes the EU's rotating presidency in the second half of 2008—has stated that the EU cannot absorb Turkey, a relatively poor, Muslim country with 75 million people, arguing instead that Brussels should instead negotiate a "privileged partnership." There are intriguing signs, however, that Paris's position on Turkish EU membership may be shifting. On January 19, French Ambassador to Turkey Bernard Emie said that France would support the EU's beginning negotiations with Turkey on new chapters as long as Turkey meets required criteria, telling journalists at the French Cultural Center in Izmir: "French public opinion has a negative perspective toward Turkish EU membership because it is unfamiliar with the country."⁹²

Iraq and the PKK Remain Defiant

Aside from military operations, an intractable negotiating point between Ankara and Baghdad has been Turkey's insistence on extradition of PKK members. Talabani demurred: "We will not hand any Kurd over to Turkey, not even a Kurdish cat."⁹³ Barzani voiced similar sentiments, stating: "I will not hand over any person to any regional state no matter the cost, however, in truth, I will not allow any PKK official to use the Kurdistan region as a base or to be present here and threaten the security of Turkey." Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Cicek remained adamant about the extradition demands, noting that all PKK members were criminals because of membership in a proscribed terrorist organization, if nothing else.⁹⁴ In a further sign of deteriorating relations between Baghdad and Ankara, on October 29 Turkey suspended ratification of a bilateral anti-terrorism cooperation agreement drawn up with Iraq the previous month. This came after rejecting Iraqi proposals on resolving the Kurdish crisis situation, calling them "far from expected" and demanding that Iraq shutter all PKK camps, including their training facilities, end assistance to PKK separatists as well as extradite PKK leaders.⁹⁵

⁸⁸ *El Financiero*, January 16, 2008; *El Pais*, January 16, 2008.

⁸⁹ *Today's Zaman*, January 17, 2008.

⁹⁰ Anadolu Agency, February 4, 2008.

⁹¹ *Today's Zaman*, November 20, 2007; BTA, November 13, 2007; Anadolu Agency, February 11, 2008.

⁹² Anadolu Agency, January 20, 2008.

⁹³ *The Guardian*, October 23, 2007.

⁹⁴ *Sabah*, October 27, 2007.

⁹⁵ *Cumhuriyet*, October 28, 2007.

While little of substance was released about Prime Minister Erdogan's agenda ahead of his November 5 meeting with President Bush, a number of Turkish commentators suggested that in the event of a lack of significant effort by Washington or Baghdad to restrain the PKK, Turkey would push for a 10-15 mile-deep "cordon sanitaire" along its 205 mile-long border with Iraq. The Turkish military would occupy the border zone and therefore would be able to curtail PKK cross-border attacks. The thinking was that Washington could hardly refuse such a request. After all, it had approved Israel's barrier along its border with the Palestinian West Bank, while in July 2006—following the capture of two Israeli soldiers in Lebanon by Hezbollah guerillas—the Bush administration approved Israel's aerial operations and invasion of Lebanon, which killed more than 1,100 and caused more than \$4 billion in material damage. Ironically, during Israel's Lebanon operation, the U.S. Air Force's facilities in Incirlik were used to evacuate Westerners from the war zone. A subtle indication that Turkey might forestall a full-blown invasion if Washington were to cooperate was evidenced by the fact that a number of former senior TSK officers were discreetly commenting that a full-scale assault into Iraq might not be the most effective way to deal with the PKK. In late October former Chief of Staff Gen. Hilmi Ozkok remarked: "The PKK issue can't be ended through cross-border operations," which both acted as a brake on precipitous action and allowed greater flexibility to the TSK to consider alternatives.⁹⁶

Turkish Kurds React

For all its bravado toward Washington and Baghdad, Ankara remained acutely aware of the potential for significant blowback from an incursion into Iraq, as Turkey's own restive Kurdish population could be radicalized by such an operation.

The proposed military operation evidently caused significant rifts in Turkey's Kurdish community; in late October, 91 NGOs in the southeastern Turkish provinces of Diyarbakir, Sirnak, Hakkari, Sanliurfa, Adiyaman, Batman, Mardin, Siirt, Elazig, Van, Gaziantep, Mus, Agri, Bitlis, Bingol, Tunceli and Kars, many of them consisting of healthcare and legal professionals, issued a joint statement calling on the PKK to disarm, eschew violence and release the captured soldiers, stating that:

"Kurdish citizens do not want violence... The atmosphere of hatred and vengeance is spreading. Our concerns are growing... we believe that a chance for social peace can still be given. In order to achieve this, the PKK must announce as soon as possible that it will renounce violence and is ready to disarm."⁹⁷

Among the NGOs endorsing the statement were the Diyarbakir Chamber of Trade and Industry; the Diyarbakir Trading Exchange; the Sanliurfa Trading Exchange; the Adiyaman Chamber of Trade and Industry; the Diyarbakir Bar Association; the Mardin, Sirnak, Van, Mus and Bitlis Chambers of Physicians; the Diyarbakir, Bitlis and Mus Chambers of Dentists; the Diyarbakir, Van and Mus Chambers of Pharmacists; the

⁹⁶ *Milliyet*, November 7, 2007.

⁹⁷ *Sabah*, October 28, 2007.

Diyarbakir Chamber of Agriculture; KA-MER; Mazlum-Der and the Southeast Anatolian Journalists Society.

After reaching an apparent dead-end in its negotiations with Washington in late October, besides preparing for a possible invasion, Turkey also intensified its military operations against PKK elements in eastern Turkey. On October 28, security forces closed Tunceli-Erzincan highway to traffic as troops undertook an operation with aerial support against PKK elements in Pulumur in Tunceli province.⁹⁸ The following day, 8,000 Turkish

The much-vaunted Bush-Erdogan summit occurred on November 5...Erdogan's real coup was not praise...but a commitment from President Bush to provide Ankara with real-time actionable imagery of PKK positions in northern Iraq.

troops—backed by helicopter gunships—assaulted 100 Kurdish rebels dug in positions in the Yuksekova region of southeastern Turkey.⁹⁹ The TSK presence in its four "forward territory stations" in northern Iraq was also beefed up to 2,000 soldiers and 200 armored vehicles patrolling the Metina and Gore mountains. At the

same time, a pincer movement was launched against PKK guerrillas in the Sirnak-Siirt-Hakkari triangle, with 20,000 soldiers and Village Guards scouring the terrain in the Cudi, Cilo, Gabar, Incebel, Kato and Namaz mountains.¹⁰⁰

In the battle for "hearts and minds," the Turkish government took a page from the Western media; on October 29, Prime Minister Erdogan visited soldiers being treated at Ankara's Gulhane Military Medical Hospital, a number of whom were injured in a recent terrorist PKK attack in Hakkari. Erdogan's entourage included Foreign Minister Babacan, Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul, Interior Minister Besir Atalay and Health Minister Recep Akdag.¹⁰¹

The U.S. Diplomatic Charm Offensive Begins

By the end of October, the more than 100,000 troops Turkey had amassed along its southeastern frontier finally aroused Washington from its torpor. A flurry of diplomatic activity began with Secretary Rice arriving in Ankara on November 2—two days ahead of the previously announced date of her travels—for discussions with Turkish officials.¹⁰² The discussions were apparently frank and candid, to use diplomatic terminology, as neither side released any substantial information of import. The closed-doors meeting lasted about 80 minutes.¹⁰³ Rice was received by President Gul and Prime Minister Erdogan. Secretary Rice also conferred with Foreign Minister Babacan, AKP Deputy Chairman Egemen Bagis, Erdogan's military adviser Gen. Nusret Tasdeler and

⁹⁸ Anadolu Agency, October 28, 2007.

⁹⁹ Anadolu Agency, October 29, 2007.

¹⁰⁰ *Sabah*, October 29, 2007.

¹⁰¹ *Cumhuriyet*, October 30, 2007.

¹⁰² *Hurriyet*, November 1, 2007.

¹⁰³ Anadolu Agency, November 2, 2007.

Ambassador Wilson. The next day Rice headed to Istanbul to participate in an international conference on Iraq.

The much-vaunted Bush-Erdogan summit occurred on November 5. Babacan, Gonul, TSK second-in-command Gen. Saygun and Maj. Gen. Kenan Kocak accompanied Prime Minister Erdogan.¹⁰⁴ The Turkish media also focused on the fact that President Bush not only called the PKK a terrorist group, but also an “enemy.”¹⁰⁵ Erdogan’s real coup was not praise however, but a commitment from President Bush to provide Ankara with real-time actionable imagery of PKK positions in northern Iraq.

Speaking to Turkish journalists on November 6, Erdogan stated that his meeting with Bush was “positive and effective,” adding that he and President Bush had agreed to set up a coordination system to provide better communication for operations against the PKK.¹⁰⁶ Erdogan caused a flurry of speculation in a cryptic remark made to NTV when he said: “Praise be to God. We got what we came for.” Many Turkish commentators interpreted this to mean that Washington had sanctioned a Turkish cross-border operation.¹⁰⁷ Behind the scenes it appeared that—in order to forestall Turkey’s offensive—Washington agreed to share “real-time” intelligence on the PKK with the TSK. The results would not be long in coming.

In fact, at least a partial sharing of actionable U.S. intelligence on the PKK was already underway prior to Erdogan’s visit. On October 31, Pentagon Spokesman Geoff Morrell said that the Defense Department shared intelligence on PKK terrorists in northern Iraq with Turkish officials, adding that such activities had recently increased. The Turkish media carried unconfirmed reports that the United States also sent a number of U-2 spy planes to the Turkish-Iraqi border for reconnaissance missions over PKK areas.¹⁰⁸

The day after the Erdogan-Bush summit, Ambassador Wilson gave *Aksam* a clear description of the Bush administration’s thinking:

As Iraq hasn’t reached the required stability, we don’t want any developments causing a new crisis. The U.S. administration wants to find a common solution to the problems of its strategic partner Turkey caused by the terrorist PKK. Adding new troubles to the problems of the Middle East would run counter to the interests of the U.S., Iraq and Turkey. We can share intelligence to defeat the terrorist PKK. Using the tripartite mechanism would benefit everyone.¹⁰⁹

The Turkish military was more skeptical of Washington’s commitment, and sources close to the armed forces said that the summit did not “fully satisfy” them. Turkish military leaders reportedly considered the U.S. providing “real time” intelligence—something that

¹⁰⁴ *Sabah*, November 1, 2007.

¹⁰⁵ *Milliyet*, November 7, 2007.

¹⁰⁶ *Turkiye*, October 7, 2007.

¹⁰⁷ *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, November 6, 2007.

¹⁰⁸ *Sabah*, November 1, 2007.

¹⁰⁹ *Aksam*, November 6, 2007.

up to then Washington had only shared with Israel and signatories to the UKUSA agreement—as the first litmus test of promised cooperation. In reality the agreement to share intelligence in return for Turkey forestalling a major ground operation was an extraordinary concession by the Bush administration and a measure of how seriously it finally came to view Turkish threats to invade, as the precision targeting data would allow surgical strikes instead of the bludgeoning force that a massive incursion would unleash. The U.S. intelligence community zealously protects its secrets, and regularly refuses to share its material with Congress, but nevertheless Turkey had managed to gain access.

Leaving no stone unturned for potential military support, on November 14, at a regular year-end military committee meeting, Gen. Buyukanit briefed the chiefs of staff of 26 NATO member countries about PKK attacks on Turkey and the steps that Ankara was taking to combat them, with the representatives reportedly pledging their support to Ankara.¹¹⁰ Buyukanit well understood the NATO mindset, having previously been chief of the Intelligence Division Basic Intelligence Branch Forces and Systems Section at NATO's Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium.

Turkey's efforts to shore up international support received a strong boost when on November 25, Turkey-EU Joint Parliamentary Commission Co-Chair Joost Lagendijk stated that the EU would not condemn a Turkish military cross-border operation into northern Iraq if its goals were well-defined. Lagendijk noted that there had been a major change in European attitudes toward terrorism since 9/11, the March 11, 2004 Madrid train bombings and the July 7, 2005 attacks in London, and remarked that “[e]ven ordinary people have come to understand that terrorism constitutes a threat to everyone.” Lagendijk then commented on Turkish politics, observing of the country's pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) that he was baffled by the wave of terrorist attacks in Turkey in the wake of a host of major reforms and the DTP winning seats in the Grand National Assembly.¹¹¹

Iran continued to see the ongoing friction between Washington and Ankara as an auspicious opportunity to drive a wedge between the two NATO allies by playing on Turkish fears of U.S. collusion with the PKK. On November 18, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Mohammad Ali Huseyni told reporters at a weekly press conference that U.S. military forces were responsible for the security problems in northern Iraq affecting Turkey and Iran, adding that Iran possessed intelligence that U.S. forces in Iraq supported the PKK with weapons and training.¹¹²

A week after Gen. Buyukanit briefed his NATO colleagues, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Vice Chairman Gen. James Cartwright and Gen. Petraeus visited Ankara to discuss anti-terrorist operations with Gen. Saygun. In joint press statements issued after the meeting, the PKK was described as the “common enemy” of Turkey and the United States. In Washington, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Adm. Mike Mullen said that Turkish-U.S.

¹¹⁰ *Cumhuriyet*, November 15, 2007.

¹¹¹ Kanal 7 TV, November 25, 2007.

¹¹² *Star*, November 19, 2007.

relations were of “vital” importance and noted that the two countries’ militaries had traditionally enjoyed strong relations. Perhaps to refute Huseyni’s explosive allegations, Mullen also stressed that Washington regarded the PKK as a terrorist group and denied that the United States had in any way supported the PKK or its actions.¹¹³

Armed with their new data, the TSK drew up plans for attacks on PKK camps in Shivi, Mezi, Karyederi and Hakkurk, but waited over a week to see if the Bush administration would deliver on its other concerns—including the extradition of four to five PKK terrorist leaders, a severing of logistical links of the PKK, the interdiction of PKK narcotics smuggling, and the closing of all PKK-affiliated NGOs in northern Iraq.¹¹⁴ President Bush initially only offered concrete assistance on intelligence sharing, and when asked how he would respond to a Turkish military operation into Kurdish Iraq, dismissed the question as hypothetical.¹¹⁵

The Raids Begin

Armed with U.S. intelligence, Ankara kept its mobilized forces on alert as it started to mobilize its air assets and quickly began attacking isolated PKK sites in aerial “surgical strikes.” On December 15, more than 50 Turkish military aircraft attacked PKK positions in northern Iraq.¹¹⁶ The attack was carried out with direct Pentagon support, as U.S. reconnaissance aircraft surveyed the area a month before the attack commenced. Following the raid, Gen. Buyukanit said that it was a happy day and that he would sleep very comfortably. Two days later, Washington turned a blind eye to a small army incursion into Iraq, while on December 22 another aerial assault took place on Khakurg and Nirikan in al-Amadiyah, 280 miles north of Baghdad. The first two air raids killed more than 150 PKK guerrillas, according to the TSK.¹¹⁷

The Turkish media portrayed the Turkish aerial operations in northern Iraq against the PKK as extremely successful, with 260 sites attacked, blunting the PKK’s ability to mount cross-border operations. The TSK announced that during operations between December 16-22 alone, “more than 200 targets, in 33 groups of targets, including 22 in the Metina, Zap, Avashin, and Hakurk regions and 11 in the Qandil Mountain region, have been destroyed.”¹¹⁸ According to the TSK, following further aerial operations against PKK sites on January 15 “in the Zapa-Shivi, Avashin-Basyan, and Hakurk region, five command sites, two communications sites, 15 training and 12 logistical sites, 18 assorted shelters and places of refuge, two anti-aircraft positions and four weapons and ammunition storage areas, a portion of which had been targeted on 16 December, were destroyed.”¹¹⁹

¹¹³ *Cumhuriyet*, January 21, 2008; *Milliyet*, January 21, 2008.

¹¹⁴ *The New Anatolian*, November 9, 2007.

¹¹⁵ *Washington Post*, November 5, 2007.

¹¹⁶ *Yeni Ozgur Politika*, December 25, 2007.

¹¹⁷ NTV, January 16, 2008.

¹¹⁸ *Turkiye*, December 24, 2007; *Cumhuriyet*, December 26, 2007.

¹¹⁹ *Cumhuriyet*, January 20, 2008.

An artillery barrage along a 10-mile border strip over three miles inside Iraq preceded the air strikes on Khakurg and Nirikan. The aerial attacks ranged up to 60 miles inside Iraq and lasted for three hours and were the most intense cross-border attack launched by the Turks since the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Turkey informed Washington in advance of the incursion. Iraqi Kurds also reported two previous air operations in December that Ankara did not confirm.

The raids convinced at least one top Turkish military official that Washington's attitudes toward assisting Turkish military operations against the PKK had in fact changed. The day after the raids, Buyukanit said that the U.S. gave intelligence that assisted the operation. "But what is more important is that the United States last night opened northern Iraqi airspace to us. By doing that, the United States approved the operation."¹²⁰ Washington quickly backpedaled on Buyukanit's assertions, however, with a U.S. official in Turkey stating commanders had not approved the attacks, but had been informed before they took place.¹²¹ While Washington agreed to intelligence sharing, it nevertheless downplayed the information's role in assisting TSK operational planning. When asked if the U.S. data made a Turkish cross-border operation into northern Iraq less likely, Gen. Richard Sherlock, director of operational planning at the Pentagon, said:

This decision will be made by Turkey. We provide intelligence about the terrorist PKK to Turkey. We help them to define their long-term purposes about the PKK. We're not trying to support a military operation or to stop it. We want Turkey to realize this: As the prime minister [Erdogan] said, this isn't only a military issue, a more expansive solution has to be found, we are trying to show Turkey how they can implement other components, including economic, diplomatic and information, to find a lasting solution.¹²²

By this point, Baghdad and Arbil had seemingly bowed to the inevitability of the Turkish aerial strikes; on December 24, Talabani and Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi met with Barzani to discuss the events. Afterward, addressing a joint press conference in Sulaymaniyah, President Talabani said that they understood Turkey defending itself against terrorist groups, telling reporters: "We are aware of Turkey's sensitivities... We are not remaining silent, but we are not going to declare war, either." Despite this somewhat conciliatory response, Talabani labeled Turkey's military operations "unacceptable."¹²³ The same day, Erdogan telephoned Bush to brief him on the Turkish operations in northern Iraq. President Bush reiterated that the PKK is not only an enemy of Turkey but also a foe of the United States and Iraq.¹²⁴

Turkey also pressed forward on the diplomatic front. In an end of year address to the Turkish people, Prime Minister Erdogan told his audience that it had been a high priority of his administration to garner support for action against the PKK. He proudly

¹²⁰ BBC, December 16, 2007.

¹²¹ BBC, December 17, 2007.

¹²² *Hurriyet*, December 17, 2007.

¹²³ *Cumhuriyet*, December 25, 2007.

¹²⁴ *Aksam*, December 25, 2007.

underscored the international support Ankara had worked so hard to secure, while reiterating the need to employ political and economic tools to address the ongoing difficulties with Turkey's Kurdish population in the southeast.¹²⁵

Further cementing the improved relationship with Washington, on January 8 President Gul visited Bush at the White House. After reiterating that the PKK was an enemy to Washington as well as Baghdad, Bush pledged to continue sharing the intelligence even as he urged Ankara to improve the Kurds' living conditions in Turkey through economic, political and social means while seeking dialogue with Iraqi Kurds. As a senior U.S. administration official speaking on condition of anonymity told journalists after the Bush-Gul discussions:

When we deal with terrorists in different parts of the world, you have to provide an alternative so that the terrorists are not as attractive to various groups of people. Working politically and improving the lives of the Kurds within Turkey to make sure that there isn't a disaffected minority that would be a recruiting pool for the PKK is also part of a long-term solution to that issue...There's a military piece, there's a political and economic piece.¹²⁶

A Turkish concession on the sidelines of the meeting was an agreement by Ankara to assist the United States in developing and transporting Iraqi oil and natural gas, announced by Turkish Energy Minister Hilmi Guler.¹²⁷

More convinced of Washington's sincerity, the Turkish military now began to make sustained efforts to coordinate its policies with U.S. and Iraqi military commanders; on January 15, Gen. Saygun paid a surprise visit to Baghdad at the invitation of Iraqi Gen. Naseer al-Abadi for discussions on terrorism and long-term Turkish-Iraqi military cooperation. Saygun also met with Gen. Petraeus to discuss anti-terror efforts.¹²⁸

Underscoring growing U.S.-Turkish military cooperation in northern Iraq, on the morning of Saygun's visit, Turkish warplanes "effectively struck" PKK targets in the Zap-Sivi, Avashin-Bashyan and Hakurk regions in the fourth confirmed aerial strike in Turkey's campaign against the PKK since December 16. The January 15 raid was the first confirmed attack on northern Iraq since January 3, when a car bomb attack—attributed to the PKK—killed six people and injured dozens in Diyarbakir.¹²⁹ The statement provided by the Turkish General Staff regarding the latest attack on the PKK reported that Turkish forces destroyed five command centers, two communication

¹²⁵ *Star*, December 31, 2007.

¹²⁶ AINA, January 13, 2008.

¹²⁷ CNN Turk, January 11, 2008.

¹²⁸ Turkish General Staff, January 15, 2008,

<http://www.tsk.mil.tr/10_ARSIV/10_1_Basin_Yayin_Faaliyetleri/10_1_Basin_Aciklamalari/2008/BA_06.html>.

¹²⁹ Turkish General Staff, January 15, 2008,

<http://www.tsk.mil.tr/10_ARSIV/10_1_Basin_Yayin_Faaliyetleri/10_1_Basin_Aciklamalari/2008/BA_05.html>.

centers, 15 training centers, 18 shelters, two anti-aircraft batteries and four ammunition depots. Three previous aerial raids in December killed over 175 PKK guerrillas.¹³⁰

The Turkish military's January 15 cross-border operation against the PKK used targeting data from the United States and from Heron (Machatz-1) UAVs built by Israel Aircraft Industries' Malat Division and leased by the Turkish military.¹³¹ In 2005 Turkey signed a \$200 million contract for 10 Heron UAVS and attendant ground stations with Israel's IAI and Elbit systems, winning the contract over the U.S. firm General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc., who manufacture the Predator UAV system.¹³² Because IAI and Elbit Systems missed their October 2007 delivery deadline, the Turkish military has been forced to rent the UAVs until delivery begins of the contracted craft later this year. The Israeli-leased UAVs are operating out of Batman air force base near the Iraqi border.

In an extraordinary gesture—done in part to dispel Kurdish assertions of indiscriminate bombing—the Turkish General Staff posted reconnaissance photos showing the before and after effects of its aerial assaults on PKK positions in northern Iraq.¹³³ As Turkey's first military Gokturk reconnaissance and surveillance satellite is still in the planning stage, it means that the imagery is in fact provided either by the Pentagon, Israel's Ofek-7—launched last September, which transits over Iraq—NATO assets or commercial imagery services such as IKONOS. The Turkish General Staff has not identified the source of its imagery. During a January 3 meeting, the Defense Industry Implementation Committee (SSIK) determined that discussions would continue for building Gokturk with Italy's Telepazio, Germany's OHB and Britain's EADS Astrium, but dropped Israel's IAI from the bidding.¹³⁴ While *Today's Zaman* identified the January 15 reconnaissance photos as “satellite” imagery, it seems more likely that the photos were in fact from Heron UAVs or possibly U.S. U-2 surveillance aircraft.

In response to the earlier attacks, senior PKK official Adam Uzan defiantly said that PKK guerrillas were not affected by the Turkish aerial assault, adding that the PKK deplored the attacks.¹³⁵ In February, the TSK staged a cross-border land operation supported by the Turkish Air Force, in an unexpected move considering the difficulty of dealing with the region's terrain in the dead of winter.¹³⁶

¹³⁰ Turkish General Staff, January 18, 2008, <http://www.tsk.mil.tr/10_ARSIV/10_1_Basin_Yayin_Faaliyetleri/10_1_Basin_Aciklamalari/2008/BA_09.html>.

¹³¹ *Sabah*, January 17, 2008.

¹³² <<http://www.israeli-weapons.com/weapons/aircraft/uav/heron/Heron.html>>; Shephard Press, <<http://www.shephard.co.uk/UVOnline/Default.aspx?Action=-187126550&ID=85e41890-6641-47db-9fe8-73bcd28a249cA>>.

¹³³ Anadolu Agency, January 15, 2008, <<http://aafoto.anadoluAgency.com.tr/>>.

¹³⁴ *Milliyet*, January 3, 2008.

¹³⁵ *Hawlati*, January 16, 2008.

¹³⁶ *The New Anatolian*, February 22, 2008.

The Struggle against Indigenous Terrorism Continues

Besides struggling against the PKK, Turkish security forces have also intensified their efforts against al-Qaeda operatives, increasingly working more closely with Washington. During Operation Ufuk (“Horizon”), the Turkish Intelligence Department Directorate (IDB) reported that in simultaneous operations against 18 cells—several in Gaziantep and Kahramanmaraş—Turkish al-Qaeda leader Mehmet Polat was killed. In a sign of Turkish intelligence sharing, prior to the operation, the IDB contacted U.S. and Israeli security units as the Americans and Israelis were targeted by the terrorists.¹³⁷ Other than Polat, his son Zeki, Servet Sarioglu, and Cebraail Kirazoglu also died in the operation. Polat had reorganized the group after U.S. forces killed Mehmet Yilmaz—alias “Khalid el Turki”—on June 23, 2006 during a firefight in Iraq near Hawija, 150 miles north of Baghdad.¹³⁸ In a measure of Washington broadening its contacts with Turkish intelligence, CIA liaison elements from Ankara sought information from the suspects’ initial statements in front of the cameras.¹³⁹

Other Potential U.S. Economic Losses

Turkey is one of the few countries with which the U.S. maintains a significant trade surplus—in 2005, Turkish exports to the United States totaled \$4.9 billion while U.S. exports to Turkey aggregated \$5.3 billion.¹⁴⁰ U.S. investments in Turkey in 2006 stood at \$5 billion, while total bilateral trade the same year reached \$11 billion the same year.¹⁴¹ Turkey is also one of the United States’ most lucrative arms export markets, accounting for more than \$3.36 billion in proposed and actual sales in 2006 alone.¹⁴² As a rough yardstick, in 2005, the United States concluded a total of \$6.2 billion worth of agreements.¹⁴³ Additionally, the Turkish economy is booming; in 2006 foreign direct investment in Turkey surged to almost \$20 billion, double the amount in 2005 and 20 times the annual average in the decade before Prime Minister Erdogan came to power. These figures underscore the sometimes overlooked significant economic stakes of the U.S.-Turkish partnership.

Potential Military Consequences of a Break in Turkish-U.S. Relations

An even greater potential loss for Washington than the economic ties are the deep military relations with Turkey. For more than fifty years, Turkey has allowed its U.S. and NATO allies to use an airbase at Incirlik, about six miles from Adana in the country’s

¹³⁷ *Milliyet*, January 25, 2008.

¹³⁸ *Sabah*, January 25, 2008.

¹³⁹ *Hurriyet*, January 25, 2008.

¹⁴⁰ U.S. Department of State Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, <http://commercecan.ic.gc.ca/scdt/bizmap/interface2.nsf/vDownload/BNOTES_0271/>.

¹⁴¹ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA/Ministry/TheMinister/SpeechesofMinister/SM_01October2007.htm>.

¹⁴² Federation of American Scientists, <http://www.fas.org/asmp/profiles/notif_db.php?regionin=percent&ctryin=tur&descin=&date1in=2005&date2in=2006&typein=percent>.

¹⁴³ Congressional Research Service, *Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations, 1998-2005*.

southeast. U.S. use of the facility's 10,000-foot main runway and 9,000-foot alternate runway dates from the mid-1950s. In 1991 Incirlik was the U.S. Air Force's sole strike base for Operation Desert Storm. Beginning in 1993, the United States mounted control over northern Iraq's "no fly" zone up to the March 2003 invasion. Currently, about 5,000 U.S. airmen of the 39th Air Base Wing are stationed there along with several hundred Turkish and British personnel. Over the last decade the facility has repeatedly proved its worth, being used in 1996 during the State Department's "Operation Quick Transit" to evacuate thousands of Kurds from northern Iraq. After September 11, Incirlik was an essential component of "Operation Enduring Freedom" in Afghanistan, with humanitarian and refueling flights increasing by 600 percent. C-17 Globemaster aircraft temporarily based there ferry in tons of cargo each day, while 385th Air Expeditionary Group KC-135 Stratotankers refuel other planes operating in the region that do not land at Incirlik.¹⁴⁴ Officials with Incirlik's 385th Air Expeditionary Group said about half the cargo flown by air into Iraq and Afghanistan comes through the base, while 70 percent of U.S. Iraq-bound air cargo and a third of its fuel passes through Turkey.¹⁴⁵

The loss of Incirlik would severely hamper U.S. aerial operations in the eastern Mediterranean, forcing the Pentagon to rely upon increased access to Italian and Israeli

The loss of Incirlik would severely hamper U.S. aerial operations in the eastern Mediterranean, forcing the Pentagon to rely upon increased access to Italian and Israeli bases—both potentially unpopular options with the local populations, while an increased U.S. military use of Israeli facilities would hardly improve the United States' image in the Muslim world.

bases—both potentially unpopular options with the local populations, while an increased U.S. military use of Israeli facilities would hardly improve the United States' image in the Muslim world. Besides Incirlik, U.S. military forces in Iraq are also supplied by road from Turkey, with the First Theater Sustainment Command sending 200 trucks

per day into Iraq from forward Turkish areas along with 400 trucks from Kuwait and 150 from Jordan.¹⁴⁶

Nor is Incirlik the sole Turkish aerial facility to which Ankara has granted access. Beginning in 1970, the Turkish Air Force has allowed the U.S. Air Force to upgrade facilities at its air-to-ground range at Konya, 150 miles northwest of Incirlik. Since 2001, U.S., Turkish, Israeli and NATO aircraft have held "Anatolian Eagle" training exercises at Konya, an invaluable training ground for the U.S. Air Force, as the terrain resembles Iraq. Another potential airbase at risk from Turkish anger over U.S. policies could be NATO's Allied Air Component Command Izmir, which currently serves as NATO's Response Force.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ <<http://www.incirlik.af.mil/>>.

¹⁴⁵ *Stars and Stripes*, October 21, 2007.

¹⁴⁶ *Stars and Stripes*, October 10, 2007.

¹⁴⁷ *Stars and Stripes*, August 29, 2007.

A taste of what might have been in store for Washington if it had failed to support Turkish action in northern Iraq can be gleaned from Washington's response to Turkey's invasion of northern Cyprus on July 20, 1974. "Operation Atilla," a combined land, air and sea operation, was performed by the TSK ostensibly to restore constitutional order on the island five days after a coup orchestrated by the ruling junta in Athens. The Cypriot National Guard had overthrown Cypriot President Makarios III after Makarios demanded the withdrawal of Greek army officers assigned to the National Guard on the well-founded charge that they were using their position to subvert his government.

While the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council passed resolutions calling for a halt to military action and the withdrawal of the TSK, a second Turkish military incursion followed on August 14, when the Turkish Armed Forces occupied the northern third of the island. The overriding concern in Washington—according to purported telephone transcripts of conversations between Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and CIA Director William Colby—was to convince Athens not to intervene.¹⁴⁸

But if adroit U.S. diplomacy averted a general Greek-Turkish armed conflict over the divided island, in February 1975 Congress passed an arms embargo, arguing that U.S.-supplied military equipment had been used illegally in the invasion despite the pleadings of President Gerald Ford, who argued that the embargo could severely damage U.S.-Turkish relations. Four months later Ankara stated that 20 military U.S. installations in Turkey would be subject to a "new situation" unless negotiations were opened on their future status. The following month Turkey suspended the 1969 Turkish-American Defense Cooperation Agreement and halted U.S. military operations at the installations except for those clearly connected with NATO missions, crippling the Pentagon's ability to monitor the USSR with either signals intelligence, communications intelligence or electronic intelligence.

The shuttered bases included Karamursel on the Sea of Marmara southeast of Istanbul, Pirinlik near Diyarbakir, Trabzon, Diogenes Station at Sinop, Samsun, Belbasi near Ankara and Karatas near Incirlik.¹⁴⁹

Keeping its options for negotiation open, however, Ankara did not order the only United States combat unit in Turkey—the aircraft squadron based in Incirlik under NATO command—to cease operations.¹⁵⁰ The embargo was strongly opposed by many in the Pentagon, including NATO Supreme Commander Gen. Alexander Haig.¹⁵¹ In 1978 the embargo was lifted and Turkey subsequently allowed the U.S. installations to reopen under Turkish supervision. Two years later a new U.S.-Turkish Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement was signed, but it came at a cost; Karamursel, the site best suited for monitoring communications in the southern USSR, never reopened.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ *Eleftherotypia*, July 20, 2004.

¹⁴⁹ Michael M. Gunter, "The U.S.-Turkish alliance in disarray," *World Affairs*, Winter 2005.

¹⁵⁰ *MILNET: Country Studies – Turkey - Country Profile*.

¹⁵¹ "Diplomacy, the foreign service, and the Department of State," Ronald I. Spiers address before Boston Committee on Foreign Relations, February 26, 1986.

¹⁵² *Turkey-conflict and diplomacy: Cyprus and beyond*, Library of Congress country studies.

Another possible casualty of Washington's prevarication could be the Turkish military assistance to the U.S. in its global war on terror. While many U.S. politicians remember only that in early 2003 Turkey voted against allowing the country to be used as a staging point for an invasion of northern Iraq, they tend to overlook the fact that since November 2001, Turkey has been involved in the United States' efforts to pacify Afghanistan, initially sending about 100 troops for ISAF operations. When in June 2002 Maj. Gen. Hilmi Akin Zorlu took over ISAF command, Turkey increased its military presence there to 1,300, which was later scaled back to around 825 soldiers. In April 2007 Turkey assumed leadership of the ISAF Regional Command in Kabul, reinforcing its troop strength there by approximately 400 personnel to a total of approximately 1,200 troops. Other Turkish contributions in Afghanistan include the construction of 27 schools, while 750,000 Afghan patients have received free treatment in the Turkish-built and -equipped healthcare centers.¹⁵³

Last year concern about possible retaliatory restrictions on U.S. military access to Turkish facilities was on the mind of State Department officials well before the deepening cracks appeared in U.S.-Turkish relations. In March, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Daniel Fried, in testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Europe, enumerated the benefits of Ankara's military cooperation with Washington:

Turkey provides extensive logistical support to our troops in Iraq. This critical lifeline includes: the cargo hub at Incirlik Air Base, through which we ship 74 percent of all air cargo to Iraq, with six U.S. military C-17 aircraft transporting the amount of cargo it took 9-10 aircraft to move from Germany, saving \$160 million annually. The land border crossing at Habur Gate accounts for delivery to Iraq of approximately 25 percent of the fuel used by Coalition forces. Turkey's grant of blanket over-flight clearances to U.S. military aircraft is of critical importance to our military operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Additionally, KC-135 tankers operating out of Incirlik have flown 3,400 sorties and delivered 35 million gallons of fuel to U.S. fighter and transport aircraft on missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁵⁴

At the same hearing, Dan Fata, deputy assistant secretary of defense for Europe and NATO, criticized Turkish defense acquisition policies, observing that the Turkish procurement agency's current approach "is hindering Turkey's military modernization, interoperability with NATO allies and U.S.-Turkey defense industry cooperation."

For all of Fata and the military-industrial complex's frustration about Turkish acquisition policy, however, the fact remains that the United States has been Turkey's closest Western partner and largest weapons supplier for years and U.S. military sales to Turkey currently include a number of lucrative contracts, with Turkey set to buy nearly \$15

¹⁵³ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA/Ministry/TheMinister/SpeechesofMinister/SM_Islamic_2October2007.htm>.

¹⁵⁴ Testimony of Daniel Fried, "U.S.-Turkish Relations and the Challenges Ahead," March 15, 2007, <<http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/fri031507.htm>>.

billion of new U.S. aircraft and related expenses over the next 10 to 15 years. U.S. firm Lockheed Martin, the prime contractor, is in line to sell Turkey 100 F-35 Joint Strike Fighter jets worth \$10.7 billion, 30 F-16 Block 50 fighters worth \$1.85 billion and continue a \$1.1 billion ongoing modernization program for older Turkish F-16s.¹⁵⁵ Washington's lack of attention to Turkish concerns over the genocide issue and the PKK put the contracts all at potential risk, especially with Russia, now the world's second-largest arms exporter, waiting in the wings.

Turkish-Israeli Relations under Duress

The ripple effects of a breach in U.S.-Turkish relations could strain relations with Washington's other close Middle Eastern ally, Israel, with whom Turkey has had a bilateral military alliance since 1996.

Before the issues of Armenian genocide and the PKK threatened relations between Washington and Ankara, Turkey assisted U.S. efforts to revive the Middle East peace process, volunteering to defuse the potentially explosive al-Aqsa excavation issue. During last year's visit to Israel, Prime Minister Erdogan stated that a delegation of Turkish experts would travel to Jerusalem to inspect the archeological work near the al-Aqsa mosque.¹⁵⁶ Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert welcomed the offer, saying: "We have nothing to hide. The work being conducted is being done outside the Temple Mount area. We are very happy to host the prime minister's team, and therefore the right, correct and exact story will come out." Olmert praised Turkey as a "proud Muslim country," adding that Israel would welcome the Turkish government's peace initiatives, as Israel considered Turkey a "bridge between Israel and the Muslim countries in the region."

Washington's hesitation to address Turkish concerns over the PKK could lead Ankara to downgrade its relationship with Israel. The Bush administration considers good relations between Ankara and Jerusalem as an integral component of its larger peace initiative to settle the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Yet, Turkey's relationship with Israel over the last several years has come under increasing strain. In February 2006 a delegation representing the newly elected Hamas government from Gaza visited Ankara, a move that greatly angered Israel. The PKK issues also had a direct impact on the Turkish-Israeli relations, when in September 2006 BBC reported that Israeli operatives were training Kurdish cadres in northern Iraq.¹⁵⁷ While both Kurdish- Iraqi and Israeli authorities denied the *Newsnight* report, suspicions in Ankara lingered.

Relations between Israel and Turkey were further stressed by Israel's September 6, 2007 aerial strike on a suspected Syrian nuclear site. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert subsequently told Prime Minister Erdogan that, "if, in fact, Israeli planes penetrated Turkish air space there was no premeditated intention... to harm or call into question Turkey's sovereignty, which we respect,"¹⁵⁸ A month later, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad paid an official

¹⁵⁵ *Turkish Daily News*, July 7, 2007.

¹⁵⁶ *Zaman*, February 16, 2007.

¹⁵⁷ BBC, September 20, 2006.

¹⁵⁸ *Jerusalem Post*, October 28, 2007.

visit to Turkey - his first since 2004 - to discuss "regional issues of common interest."¹⁵⁹ During the visit, the Turkish deputy Chief of Staff Gen. Ergin Saygun reportedly assured Syria that Ankara would not let Israel Air Force planes over fly Turkey to return to Syrian airspace.¹⁶⁰ Subsequently, Ankara announced discovery of aerial refueling tanks on its border with Syria that were allegedly dropped by Israeli Air Force jets during the attack on Syria. Turkish Foreign Minister Babacan, who had earlier in the month visited Jerusalem, termed these developments as "unacceptable" and demanded explanations.¹⁶¹

Even at the height of U.S.-Turkish disagreements over Iraq, Ankara offered its assistance in Washington's efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. In early November both Israeli President Shimon Peres and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas visited Turkey as President Gul's official guests. On November 13 both separately addressed the Turkish Grand National Assembly, leading Prime Minister Olmert to label Turkey a "friendly country" which could play a "great role" in Israel's rapprochement with Arab countries.¹⁶²

As a measure of recognition of Turkey's pivotal role in the Middle East peace process and its influence as a U.S.-allied "honest broker" between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, Washington invited the Turkish government officials to the Annapolis Conference in late November. Addressing the representatives of more than 40 countries, Foreign Minister Babacan reiterated Turkey's readiness to continue its active contribution to the peace process and to host future meetings. Babacan also laid out Ankara's four principles for the Middle East policies:

First, using political dialogue to resolve issues. Second, providing security for all. Third, developing economic cooperation and hence creating economic interdependence between countries and between communities, and fourth, preserving multi-cultural, multi-ethnic nature of the region with an emphasis on co-existence, on the principle of living and working together.¹⁶³

2008: Diplomacy and Raids Continue

In mid-January, the Turkish military launched an operation against the PKK targeting the group's positions on Sirnak's Cudi Mountain, with commando units dispatched to the Bestler Derele region and Kato Mountain.¹⁶⁴ The next day, Turkey carried out its sixth cross-border operation in a month, with sixteen military planes attacking four PKK camps in Iraq. The aerial operation, which used laser-guided munitions, relied on intelligence supplied by Heron UAVs and the United States. The United States, which controls the sky over northern Iraq, opened the airspace to Turkish military aircraft after

¹⁵⁹ Sana, October 16, 2007.

¹⁶⁰ *Al-Khaleej*, October 24, 2007.

¹⁶¹ *Jerusalem Post*, October 28, 2007.

¹⁶² *Cumhuriyet*, November 7, 2007.

¹⁶³ Speech by Ali Babacan, November 27, 2007,

<http://www.turkishembassy.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=673&Itemid=468>.

¹⁶⁴ *Hurriyet*, January 18, 2008.

being briefed on the mission. Aircraft operating from their bases in Diyarbakir and Malatya attacked PKK camps in Zap's Shivi, Avashin's Basyan, Hakurk's Malamala and Resur.¹⁶⁵

Despite the use of Turkish air power against selected PKK targets, the Kurdish media continue to portray the operations as insignificant. Kurdish columnist Gunay Aslan commented on the January aerial operations:

Turkey achieving a result through air attacks seems impossible. This is an operation in which psychological objectives are more important. The air operation is not expected to seriously affect the PKK and weaken its capability to carry out activities. It has created problems for the deployment and training of the guerrillas in winter. However, it will not affect the organization's general situation.¹⁶⁶

In the course of ongoing Turkish aerial operations, KRG President Barzani alleged that his residence was being buzzed, a charge strongly denied by Turkish Air Force Commander Aydogan Babaoglu, who stressed that operations solely targeted the PKK, with precise intelligence that allowed civilian casualties to be kept to a minimum.¹⁶⁷

Ankara has apparently foresworn massive ground operations in favor of precision strikes for the time being, although it is keeping its options open, moving tanks to Semdinli district on the border and to forward positions in Yesilova, Ortaklar and Derecik.¹⁶⁸ A number of tanks equipped with thermal cameras, able to fire precision rounds in the dark, have been deployed at strategic points where PKK guerrillas used to infiltrate into Turkey. In addition, Turkish elite troops continued operations on the Kupeli and Cudi heights in Sirnak province's border region.¹⁶⁹

Turkey also ramped up its surveillance capabilities along the 174-mile-long border with Iraq, installing hundreds of infrared thermal imaging cameras linked to a central command-and-control headquarters for rapid response. The infrared cameras—installed around strategic facilities as well—are utilized primarily at night for clandestine monitoring of the border.¹⁷⁰

Military operations along the Turkish-Iraqi border continue, with all vehicles being thoroughly searched at the checkpoints that dot the border frontier, which is now closed to civilians. Even Turkish military vehicles returning to their units are thoroughly inspected. Armor continues to be deployed; on January 19, Cizre's tank battalion carried out an exercise involving 50 tanks on the Cizre-Idil road.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁵ *Sabah*, January 16, 2008.

¹⁶⁶ *Yeni Ozgur Politika*, January 24, 2008.

¹⁶⁷ *Milliyet*, January 18, 2008.

¹⁶⁸ *Milliyet*, January 16, 2008.

¹⁶⁹ *Milliyet*, January 13, 2008.

¹⁷⁰ *World Tribune*, January 25, 2008.

¹⁷¹ *Milliyet*, January 20, 2008.

On the military front, Ankara does not have the same political concerns as the United States, where the cost of the Afghan and Iraqi campaigns is increasingly entering public debate. Ankara maintains that its current operations against the PKK pose no severe budgetary strains. On January 19, Turkish State Minister Mehmet Simsek told members of Aegean Industrialists' and Businessmens' Association in Izmir: "Even though they [military operations] are a burden on the budget, there cannot be development without security."¹⁷²

Current relations between Ankara and Washington have obviously improved, but the Turkish government does not miss an opportunity to remind the United States of the past error of its ways. When asked about countries trafficking weapons to the PKK, Foreign Minister Babacan stated that he had ordered an investigation into the impact of the thousands of weapons missing in Iraq. The weapons were brought in by coalition forces for the use by Iraqi security personnel. According to Babacan, Turkey expects "swift" cooperation from countries implicated in the trade.¹⁷³

Foreign Minister Babacan said: "If any activity is determined to provide weapons to the terrorist group, action must be swiftly taken by the countries in question. Within this context, we are reminding the officials of countries including the U.S. and Italy of their international obligations in the fight against terrorism."¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, President Gul stated that Turkey had not promised anything to Washington in exchange for its support for Turkish cross-border operations, saying in an interview: "The fight against terrorism is also a responsibility of the United States...We told them to cooperate with us. And they said 'yes' to this."

Turkey is keeping its international options beyond the bilateral Ankara-Washington axis open. On January 21, Gen. Yasar Buyukanit held three hours of talks with British Defense Staff Chief Sir Jock Stirrup in London and scheduled meetings with Defense Secretary Des Browne and Foreign Secretary David Miliband.¹⁷⁵ Besides discussing Turkey's ongoing campaign against the PKK, Gen. Buyukanit told Stirrup that an outbreak of hostilities over Kirkuk—a "small Middle East"—could eventually engulf the entire region.¹⁷⁶ Gen. Buyukanit emphasized that only PKK targets were identified for the cross-border operations, on the basis of careful review of real-time intelligence. Following the visit, Ankara indicated that it plans to monitor carefully Britain's influence on the Iraqi Kurdish leadership.¹⁷⁷

Kirkuk remains a volatile issue in the larger framework of Turkish-Iraqi relations. Barzani infuriated Ankara last April after stating that if Turkey has the right to involve itself in Kirkuk, then Iraqi Kurds had the right to interfere in events in Diyarbakir.¹⁷⁸ The mid-December lightning visit by Rice to Turkey—where she met with local officials

¹⁷² Anadolu Agency, January 20, 2008.

¹⁷³ *Turkiye*, January 11, 2008.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Anadolu Agency, January 21, 2008; *Hurriyet*, January 21, 2008.

¹⁷⁶ *Milliyet*, January 21-22, 2008.

¹⁷⁷ *Milliyet*, January 22, 2008.

¹⁷⁸ *Hurriyet*, April 8, 2007.

before flying on to Baghdad—is an indication of Washington’s increasing realization of the potential volatility of Kirkuk to inflict further damage on U.S.-Turkish relations.¹⁷⁹ At the same time, Washington continues to maintain that there is no military solution to the issue of Kirkuk. In an interview with the U.S. Consul in Kirkuk, Howard Keegan remarked that the city’s status and current problems must be resolved not through political and military means, but by developing its economic structure.¹⁸⁰

The Future

The damage caused by the resurface of the Armenian genocide debate and issues over PKK has largely been papered over in U.S.-Turkish relations. Nevertheless, the troubling development is that the two issues now seem to be merging. On October 16, according to the web site PanARMENIAN.Net, the Center of Halabja against Anfalization and Genocide of the Kurds (CHAK) reportedly issued a statement lauding the Armenian genocide resolution:

The mid-December lightning visit by Rice to Turkey—where she met with local officials before flying on to Baghdad—is an indication of Washington’s increasing realization of the potential volatility of Kirkuk to inflict further damage on U.S.-Turkish relations.

This decision is an important step toward the wider recognition of the brutality that took place at that time...Recognition of the genocide committed against the Armenian people is important, as is the recognition of other crimes committed against the Greeks, the Assyrians, and the Kurds before and after the mass killings of the Armenians.¹⁸¹

Furthermore, the Armenian genocide issue is quietly shaping up to become a factor in the November U.S. presidential elections. On January 19, Democratic frontrunner Barack Obama released a statement supporting passage of the Armenian genocide resolution, pledging to recognize the Armenian genocide if elected.¹⁸² Turkish government officials have noted the role of Samantha Power—a human rights and genocide academic—as a foreign policy adviser to Obama’s campaign. Some of these government officials believe that Power harbors unfavorable views on Turkey. Additionally, Adam Schiff, sponsor of the genocide resolution, is one of Obama’s key supporters in the House of Representatives.¹⁸³

Democratic contender Hillary Clinton swiftly followed Obama’s lead; on January 24 she sent statements to two leading U.S. Armenian groups, also promising to recognize the

¹⁷⁹ KUNA, December 18, 2007.

¹⁸⁰ *Hawal*, January 26, 2008.

¹⁸¹ PanARMENIAN.net, <<http://www.panarmenian.net/news/eng/?nid=23710>>. Interestingly, the CHAK website has no reference to the statement:

<http://www.nawandihalabja.com/en/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1>.

¹⁸² <http://www.barackobama.com/2008/01/19/barack_obama_on_the_importance.php>.

¹⁸³ *Turkish Daily News*, January 17, 2008.

genocide if she is elected, even writing that “[a]mong the presidential candidates, I am the one who supports Armenian bills the most.”¹⁸⁴ In response, Levent Bilman, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman, iterated his country’s disappointment regarding the statements and cautioning somewhat ominously for candidates to consider the delicacy of Turkish-American relations.¹⁸⁵

The issue is less pronounced among Republican contenders. Arizona Senator and presumptive nominee John McCain has consistently opposed genocide resolutions, while former governors Mike Huckabee and Mitt Romney—both of whom subsequently withdrew from the race for their party’s nomination—lack close ties to the Armenian-American community and are thus disinterested.¹⁸⁶

Armenian issues continue to impact diplomatic relations between Ankara and Washington. In mid-January, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Matt Bryza created a minor diplomatic flap when he commented that Turkey and Azerbaijan should abandon their common motto of “one nation, two states,” in favor of normalizing their relations with Armenia. Bryza reportedly made his observations while in Yerevan.¹⁸⁷

Azerbaijani political analyst Vafa Quluzada immediately condemned Bryza’s comments, accusing the deputy assistant secretary—who is also co-chairman of the OSCE Minsk Group—of taking a pro-Armenian stance.¹⁸⁸ Bryza subsequently denied making the inflammatory comments, saying: “I have never said that. This is Turkey’s policy and, perhaps, Azerbaijan’s and I do not have a right to demand to change it. I have just mentioned the fact of such policy in Ankara and someone misinterpreted my words.”¹⁸⁹

The issue of covert Armenian support for the PKK continues to percolate through the Turkish media. A recent report in Istanbul’s *Ortadogu* newspaper quoted the leader of a group opposing Armenian genocide claims, Professor Savas Egilmez, as stating that the Armenian diaspora increased its logistical support to the PKK in December after Turkey began air attacks on PKK sites in northern Iraq. Egilmez claimed this was done through increasing the number of PKK camps in Armenia as well as augmenting logistical support to PKK publications and internet websites.¹⁹⁰

Ironically proving that economics sometimes trumps politics, Armenians searching for a better life have already begun their own peace initiatives. While attending the Davos economic summit, Foreign Minister Babacan told a *Hurriyet* reporter that 70,000 Armenians had immigrated to Turkey to find work. Several years ago, then Foreign Minister Gul asserted that 40,000 Armenians sought employment in Turkey.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁴ *Sabah*, January 26, 2008.

¹⁸⁵ Anadolu Agency, January 26, 2008.

¹⁸⁶ *Today’s Zaman*, January 26, 2008.

¹⁸⁷ Anadolu Agency, January 16, 2008.

¹⁸⁸ *Yeni Musavat*, January 16, 2008.

¹⁸⁹ Today.az, January 18, 2008.

¹⁹⁰ *Ortadogu*, January 16, 2008.

¹⁹¹ *Hurriyet*, January 27, 2008.

On the military front, Ankara clearly feels that it is slowly gaining the upper hand in its struggle against the PKK. After its first 2008 meeting, Turkey's Counter-Terrorism Supreme Board issued a statement concluding that the PKK no longer feels safe in northern Iraq. State Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Cicek chaired an almost three-hour meeting consisting of cabinet members and high-level military and intelligence officials who discussed the struggle against terrorism and future diplomatic, economic, social and measures.¹⁹²

PKK activists are also coming under increasing police pressure in Europe. On January 23 the Berlin Court of Appeal sentenced a former PKK member to almost three years in prison after determining that he functioned as a "party soldier" and regional PKK leader in Bavaria from April 1994 to February 1995. The former militant was accused of having "subordinated" himself to the will of the organization, knowing that the PKK wanted to implement its goals by "dangerous" means like arson attacks.¹⁹³

Ankara is scoring further diplomatic points in Washington. During a January 8 White House visit by President Gul, President Bush reiterated that the United States would continue to assist Turkey in its fight against PKK guerrillas. President Gul's visit resulted in a broadening of Washington's definition of Kurdish terrorist groups, as two days later the State Department issued a press release classifying the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK)—a group affiliated with the PKK—as such.

Leaving little to chance, Ankara is also keeping up its pressure on the KRG, having recently barred the import of 18 mine-resistant ambush protected vehicles (MRAPs) that private British security contractors had ordered from Britain and attempted to import via the Habur crossing. After embargoing the shipment last November, citing a lack of documentation from the Grand National Assembly, the equipment was loaded aboard ship for return to Britain.¹⁹⁴ The unnamed British company was exporting the vehicles to the British private security contractor Olive Group, currently operating in Iraq.

While the Kurds have for the moment ceded the diplomatic high ground in Washington to the Turks, they continue attempts to influence international attitudes by stressing the importance of Kurdish approval to any eventual peaceful border settlement between northern Iraq and Turkey. During a recent interview, Washington Kurdish Institute Chairman Najmaldin Karim made a number of trenchant observations about U.S.-Kurdish relations, first noting the mutual benefit of U.S.-Kurdish relations, before adding an ominous comment about Kurdish abilities to manipulate regional neighbors: "It is true that the Kurds may not be able to defeat the U.S., they may not be able to fight Turkey and Iran on their behalf, but they can always undermine those countries and make them lack political stability." Karim concluded: "If the U.S. wants its politics in Iraq to succeed and bring about a federal democratic Iraq, it must not abandon the Kurds."¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Anadolu Agency, January 26, 2008.

¹⁹³ DDP Nachrichtenagentur, January 23, 2008.

¹⁹⁴ *Vatan*, January 16, 2008; Anadolu Agency, January 15, 2008.

¹⁹⁵ *Al-Sulaymaniyah Kurdistani Nuwe*, January 19, 2008.

On January 13, Italian Deputy Foreign Minister Giovanni Vernetti met with KRG President Barzani in the northern Iraqi city of Salahaddin. Barzani subsequently told reporters that his administration did not have to declare the PKK as a terrorist group solely because Turkey had, and added that if Ankara truly wanted a peaceful settlement, then his administration would be willing to provide assistance. Vernetti diplomatically disagreed with his host, telling journalists that while Italy recognizes the PKK as a terrorist group, recent Turkish cross-border military operations against the PKK have damaged northern Iraq's security and stability.¹⁹⁶

A 2005 poll indicated that the Kurds would overwhelmingly prefer to be a part of Europe than an isolated "greater Kurdistan," finding that more than 80 percent of respondents answered affirmatively when asked about EU membership.¹⁹⁷ As a measure of the success of Ankara's reconciliation efforts with Turkey's Kurdish population, the Kurdistan National Congress issued a communiqué criticizing Kurds in southern Turkey for supporting Prime Minister Erdogan, whose AKP government, it claims, waged a war against the Kurdish people. The statement urged Kurdish youth not to enlist in the Turkish army and to boycott Turkish media because it engaged in psychological warfare.¹⁹⁸

Conclusions

The root cause of the turmoil in relations between Washington and Ankara is the latter's perception of a gap between U.S. rhetoric and action. The Armenian genocide resolution has infuriated the Turks; they perceive it as a cheap political ploy to twist history for partisan political needs while overlooking America's historically barbarous treatment of its indigenous peoples, even as it inflicts massive suffering on the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan. As presidential candidates, both George H. W. Bush and his son George W. Bush endorsed Armenian genocide legislative initiatives in what Ankara saw as an opportunistic appeal to Armenian-American voters, only to repudiate their stance once in office. In light of the U.S. government's past history, some political observers query the wisdom of Congress busying itself with this particular issue. The reality is that Turkey remains crucial to the Bush administration's efforts in the Middle East, from pacifying Iraq and solving the Palestinian-Israeli dispute, to coping with Iran's nuclear program and securing Caspian energy supplies.

The Bush administration, which is seeking to develop a comprehensive solution to the seemingly intractable Israeli-Palestinian dispute, has long had the support of Ankara in its efforts to negotiate a settlement. This does not mean that Turkey is blindly following Washington's initiatives, however. The Gaza protest has impacted Turkish-Israeli relations; on January 23, for instance, Prime Minister Erdogan noted that while no Israelis have been killed by Palestinian Qassam missiles, every IDF counterattack in Gaza kills dozens of Palestinians. These remarks prompted senior Israeli Foreign Ministry officials to issue a protest to Turkish Ambassador to Israel Namik Tan, along

¹⁹⁶ *Milliyet*, January 14, 2008.

¹⁹⁷ *Boston Globe*, November 1, 2007.

¹⁹⁸ Roj TV, January 16, 2008.

with a request for clarifications of Erdogan's observations. During a televised speech to lawmakers, Erdogan said: "The Palestinian territories are like an open-air prison, they are under siege from Israel... The people of Gaza are facing a humanitarian tragedy. We cannot accept a practice that amounts to punishing nearly two million innocent people due to some rocket attacks...When we ask [our Israeli colleagues] how many Israeli citizens died as a result of these rocket attacks, we do not get an answer."¹⁹⁹

Yet, despite the seeming tension between Ankara and Tel Aviv, if Washington undertook the opportunity, Turkey could serve as a bridge between the Muslim world and Washington's unconditional support of Israel. All of these initiatives will be put at risk if Congress continues to press legislation to validate a version of tragic events whose exact historical parameters have yet to be objectively determined. If the U.S. Congress is sincere about helping to establish the terrible truth of eighty years ago, it should at the very least back Erdogan's research proposal rather than pursuing an overtly political agenda.

Similarly, in the Bush administration's self-proclaimed war on terror, the U.S. government's definition of terrorism seems suitably elastic to serve U.S. political goals ahead of larger international concerns. While Turkish-U.S. relations will undoubtedly weather 2007's controversies, the relationship has changed, perhaps irrevocably.

Ankara adroitly played on Washington's fears of unilateral Turkish military action in Iraq and a growing Turkish disengagement with U.S. Middle East initiatives, to be replaced by closer ties with Syria and "axis of evil" member Iran. Last November a deal was finally struck—Turkey would forego a massive ground operation against the PKK in Iraq in return for U.S. data allowing for "surgical" strikes.

It remains to be seen whether the extraordinary intelligence-sharing agreement becomes a "one-off" event or deepens into a more permanent relationship. Turkey is apparently adding indigenous intelligence assets to its information provided by the United States. Defense Minister Gonul, addressing an AKP meeting in Izmir, said of recent cross-border operations into northern Iraq: "We had an unmanned air operation. The only U.S. support was for intelligence," which was of great assistance.²⁰⁰ The TSK remains upbeat about U.S.-Turkish military cooperation; Gen. Saygun's recent meetings in Washington, which discussed issues such as joint U.S.-Turkish efforts against the PKK, joint military cooperation, technical issues, and defense

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¹⁹⁹ ANS, January, 2008.

²⁰⁰ *Turkiye*, January 28, 2008; Anadolu Agency, January 28, 2008.

cooperation training, were described by the general as “positive” and “fruitful.”²⁰¹ Other issues remain, however, including the extradition of PKK members from Iraq.

Significant problems also exist in Turkey’s Kurdish regions: General Secretary of the Southeast Businessmen and Industrialists Association Nedim Dengiz observed that unemployment in Diyarbakir exceeds 60 percent, commenting: “No investment comes here, with the conflict and the bombing of Northern Iraq next door, everyone has just been scared off.”²⁰²

For all of Turkey’s recent successes against the PKK, however, the possibility remains that the group could mount an offensive in the spring after the snows have melted around Qandil; if the scale of the operation were significant, then Ankara might be forced to reconsider its forbearance in mounting a major cross-border operation.

The status of Kirkuk also remains unresolved. Simply put, Turkey does not want Kirkuk in Kurdish hands, nor does it want the city to fall under Iranian influence. If for no other reason than Kirkuk’s immense oil reserves, Turkey will not abandon its efforts there.

There are encouraging signs that prominent Turks are calling for a reevaluation of Turkey’s policies toward Iraqi Kurds. Former Foreign Minister Iltar Turkmen—who is now a columnist for *Hurriyet*—told Anadolu Agency that Ankara should move toward normalizing its relations with Iraq and begin formal contacts with the Iraqi Kurds, stating:

A regional government in northern Iraq has been established in line with the Iraqi constitution. I don't understand why there is no formal contact with its officials. We speak to the Iraqi prime minister but not the president. This is not understandable. Turkey's Iraq policy is not so bright.²⁰³

Closer to home, AKP is aiming to influence events in the country’s Kurdish southeast, attempting to create a moderate Kurdish Islamic party in Diyarbakir to undercut the popularity of the leftist DTP, which has frequently been accused of close ties to the PKK.²⁰⁴

The Turkish government is also dropping hints that its relations with Armenia could change. On January 29 during a television interview, Foreign Minister Babacan mentioned the possibility of discussing “the Armenian issue” after the presidential elections there.²⁰⁵ Then, in President Gul’s congratulatory message to president-elect Serzh Sarkisyan, the Turkish president expressed hope that Sarkisyan’s “new position will help create an environment for the normalization of relations between” Turkey and Armenia.²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ Anadolu Agency, January 30, 2008; *Sabah*, January 31, 2008.

²⁰² Al-Jazeera, January 19, 2008.

²⁰³ Anadolu Agency, January 20, 2008.

²⁰⁴ Awene, January 29, 2008.

²⁰⁵ 24 Canli TV, January 30, 2008.

²⁰⁶ Interfax, February 21, 2008.

As for thoughts on the other side of the border, on January 29, Armenian presidential candidate and member of the Dashnaksutyun party bureau Vahan Hovhannisyan, speaking to reporters in Yerevan's NATO Information Center, remarked that he hoped that NATO would eventually attempt to influence Turkey to normalize its relations with Armenia. Hovhannisyan observed that Turkey's ongoing discussions with the EU over its entry have produced reforms which will also have a positive influence on normalizing Armenian-Turkish relations. Hovhannisyan commented that NATO had always considered Turkey to be the "Western advanced post of the alliance...In Soviet times, Turkey opposed the Soviet Union, today it also has a 'special role' caused by the instability in Iraq and in the whole Middle East."²⁰⁷

The reality is that Ankara and Washington need one another; Turkey remains a critical U.S. ally in Washington's initiatives to bring peace to Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Conversely, Washington has consistently supported Turkey's efforts to join the European Union. Significant opposition remains, giving the United States a chance to exercise its influence behind the scenes. Turkey remains adamant that its EU interests are of paramount importance to both Turkey and the EU. In late January, Foreign Minister Babacan noted that Turkey is not only a European Union candidate country but also a participating nation:

Over the last five months, 229 meetings were held in both Ankara and Brussels to advance various chapters. In the same period, 46 visits were paid to EU countries at the level of state minister and head of government. Now the EU process is part of Turkey's daily work. We have no time to lose. Turkey will declare its readiness as of 2013. Turkey's full membership is one of the most important peace projects of the 21st century.²⁰⁸

Not that Turkish accession is by any means certain; many Turks suspect that several EU nations have a covert pro-Christian, anti-Muslim bias. At the Davos annual meeting of the World Economic Forum on January 26, Babacan warned: "If the EU finds itself as a club of Christians... it is against the very soul of the EU...At the end of the road, the decision has to be made over whether Turkey is going to add new richness to the EU, so that the EU has a truly global voice and a truly representative voice."²⁰⁹

Babacan's optimism is not shared in Paris and Berlin, however; while Prime Minister Erdogan met with Chancellor Merkel on February 8,²¹⁰ on January 30 President Sarkozy and Chancellor Merkel reiterated their opposition to Turkey's full membership in the European Union. Addressing his Union for a Popular Movement Party (UMP), Sarkozy repeated his belief that Turkey's relationship to the EU should be that of privileged partner. Merkel recently stated that her Christian Democratic Union shares the UMP's views on the subject.²¹¹ Tensions intensified in mid-February when Erdogan canceled a

²⁰⁷ Mediamax, January 30, 2008.

²⁰⁸ *Turkiye*, January 31, 2008.

²⁰⁹ EUbusiness.com, January 26, 2008, <<http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/1201353422.32>>.

²¹⁰ *Today's Zaman*, February 8, 2008.

²¹¹ *Sabah*, January 31, 2008.

planned tripartite meeting between himself, Sarkozy and Merkel; the Turkish prime minister complained that Sarkozy had several times broken his promise not to “talk through the press” on the issue.²¹²

In the economic sphere, Washington has indicated its willingness to assist Turkey’s chronic energy problems by aiding in the development of nuclear power plants there. The White House announced on January 24 that President Bush had approved an agreement with Turkey concerning the peaceful use of nuclear energy, which was forwarded to Congress.²¹³ By asserting its influence with the EU, Washington could generate a lot of goodwill on the energy issue, as, according to European Union Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn, the EU is also ready to offer Turkey assistance and advice on its nuclear power plant construction program.²¹⁴

U.S.-Turkish military and strategic ties are epitomized by both their membership in NATO and their alliances with Israel. Turkey has also indicated its willingness to assist Western efforts on Kosova, and indeed recognized the breakaway republic’s independence soon after the United States and several European countries did.²¹⁵ During a visit by Macedonian Defense Minister Lazar Elenovski to Ankara, Gen. Buyukanit said that the most important problem in terms of security in the Balkans is Kosova, remarking that a “military act that would pose a threat to security would have an affect on the whole region and cause difficulties in other countries...As you know, the Balkans is a very sensitive part of Europe. In the recent past, we have witnessed great pain in the Balkans.”²¹⁶

As nothing has been definitively resolved on neutralizing the PKK and the Congressional Armenian genocide resolution backers have declared their determination to revisit the issue at a more propitious time, the only certainty is that both subjects will continue to roil relations for the foreseeable future. Yet, developments since November 5 point to a definite lessening of tensions, if only temporarily.

However, the Turks have a proverb: *Bin isit, bir soyle*—Listen a thousand times, speak once. The Turks have spoken on both issues of concern to them, and for the moment it seems as if Washington is listening.

²¹² *Hurriyet*, February 14, 2008.

²¹³ *Milliyet*, January 25, 2008.

²¹⁴ *Turkiye*, January 31, 2008.

²¹⁵ *The New Anatolian*, February 19, 2008.

²¹⁶ Anadolu Agency, January 30, 2008.

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