



AHi

AMERICAN HELLENIC INSTITUTE, INC.

January 16, 2023

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Nick Larigakis

President & CEO

Kostas Alexakis, Esq.

Timothy Ananiadis

Leon Andris

Elizabeth Bartz

Peter Bota

Violetta Kapsalis Buhler, Esq.

Nicholas E. Chimicles, Esq.

Van Coufoudakis, Ph.D.

Dimitrios Halakos

Aleco Haralambides, Esq.

James Lagos, Esq.

James Pedas

Georgea Polizos

Nico Bamberger Priskos

Yanni Sianis

George Tsetsekos, Ph.D.

John Vasiliou

Maria Wills

Gene Rossides (1927-2020)

STAFF

Yola Pakhchanian

Communications Director

Demo Theofanopoulos

Special Projects Coordinator

Elias Gerasoulis

Policy Consultant

Honorable Antony Blinken

Secretary of State

Department of State

2201 C St., NW

Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

On behalf of the nationwide membership of the American Hellenic Institute (AHI), I write to you in context of this week's visit of Turkey's Foreign Minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, to Washington, DC.

On September 29, 2022, I wrote to President Biden to raise concerns regarding inflammatory statements spoken by President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and members of his government, toward the United States and Greece. I highlighted a wide variety of incendiary comments, including missives President Erdogan made against Greece at an aerial festival on September 3, 2022. There, he advocated for an invasion of the Greek islands. In addition, I noted that the Turkish Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu, said in a speech posted to *CNN Türk's* YouTube channel on September 3, 2022, that the United States government supported terrorism. Mr. Soylu then threatened to "rip" the United States from the region.

Unfortunately, since I wrote to President Biden, President Erdogan has ramped up his rhetoric.

- In mid-November 2022, the Turkish government rejected the United States' condolences for a bombing in Istanbul that left at least six people dead and dozens injured. Instead, the Turkish government accused the United States of complicity in the attack, with Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu stating, in reference to the United States, "This message of condolence should be interpreted as 'killers always arrive on the scene first.' We will certainly give a clear answer to this message." In addition, Minister Soylu stated: "Our alliance with this state [United States] must be of course questioned. This is crystal clear."
- At that same time, President Erdogan reiterated his threats to invade Greece during a G-20 meeting in Bali, Indonesia, stating, Turkey "can come suddenly one night" and that Greece should "mind its place" and "remember the history."

- In December 2022, President Erdogan discussed launching ballistic missiles at Greece.

In addition to employing dangerous rhetoric, the Turkish government has actively worked to undermine the interests of the United States and NATO on a range of fronts, including inflaming the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, meddling in Syria and Libya, supporting radical Islamic terrorism, enabling Iran to evade sanctions, among other issues. In addition, Turkey has acted as a trojan horse for Russia within NATO, actively blocking the accession of Finland and Sweden.

Further, Turkey constantly challenges Greek sovereignty, violating Greek airspace over 11,000 times in 2022 alone. Also, Turkey continues to maintain its 48-year-old illegal military occupation of Cyprus. Turkey and the leadership of the pseudo-state have advocated for a “two-state” solution in Cyprus, and in recent months have threatened to illegally reopen the entire city of Varosha.

Media outlets have reported the Biden Administration plans to send a notification to Congress regarding a proposed sale of F-16 jets to Turkey. We urge the Administration to reconsider the sale, in view of Turkey’s outrageous behavior. It has been AHI’s longstanding position to oppose any sale of arms to Turkey, especially aircraft, because Turkey’s violations of Greek airspace are in contravention to the Arms Export Control Act (AECA). In addition, Turkey had been removed from the F-35 program for its purchase of Russian S-400 missile defense systems, for which it continues to remain sanctioned under The Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). Your predecessor, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, has made it clear that any attempt to sell F-16 jets to Turkey would be in violation of current CAATSA sanctions, which is a position AHI holds as well.

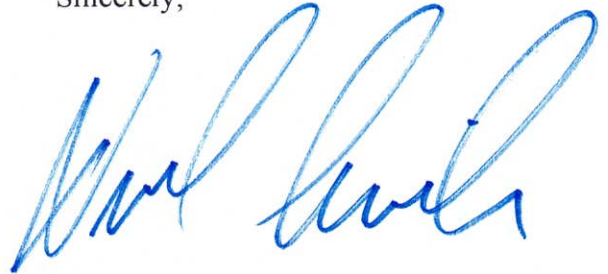
In addition, President Erdogan and members of his government have demonstrated a long-established policy of designs against Greek sovereignty in the Aegean Sea and are a clear and present threat to Greece. More broadly, their assertions reflect an increasingly deranged obsession with reconstructing a religio-nationalist neo-Ottoman sphere of influence. As such, Turkey views U.S. regional presence as well as Greece and Cyprus as a threat to its hegemonic aspirations. At a time of war in Ukraine, the United States must not enable, through arms sales, Turkey’s efforts to destabilize NATO’s southeastern flank, either through action against Greece or by Turkey’s attempts to undermine the influence of the United States in the area.

Turkey is actively working against United States interests and values. Appeasing a rogue dictator such as President Erdogan will not result in better behavior. As such, under your leadership, we request the Administration reverse its support for the sale of F-16 jets to Turkey. Instead of offering fighter jets to Turkey, the Biden administration must condemn Turkey as the aggressor. The U.S. government must demand that Turkey cease and desist from its inflammatory assertions against the United States and Greece. Should Turkey fail to desist, it should face additional sanctions from the United States.

Turkey, as demonstrated by Minister Soylu’s statements, is openly reconsidering its relations with the United States and the West. The United States must reconsider and recalibrate its relations with Turkey. In your meeting with Minister Çavuşoğlu, I strongly encourage you to have an honest dialogue on the current state of U.S.-Turkey relations. Moreover, we ask you to

confront Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu about the statements made by President Erdogan and his colleagues against the United States and its allies, as well as the Turkey's malign and deleterious actions, some of which are mentioned in this letter. You should relay that should Turkey continue its current behavior; the United States will not hesitate to pursue a policy of containment vis-à-vis Turkey.

Sincerely,



Nick Larigakis
President
American Hellenic Institute (AHI)

CC: Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin
National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan
William J. Burns, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency
Karen Donfried, Assistant Secretary of State, European and Eurasian Affairs, Department of State
Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman
Victoria J. Nuland, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Department of State
Amanda Sloat, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for European Affairs, National Security Council
Kevin Boyd, Director for Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Malta, National Security Council
George Tsunis, Ambassador of the United States to Greece
Jeff Flake, Ambassador of Turkey to the United States
Erika Olson, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, Department of State
Josh Huck, Director of Southern European Affairs, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, Department of State
David Mendez, Greece Desk Officer, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, Department of State
Sophia Berhie, Cyprus Desk Officer, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, Department of State
The Congress