



# AMERICAN HELLENIC INSTITUTE, INC.

July 17, 2018

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Mr. Mick Mulvaney  
Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
The White House

Dear Director Mulvaney:

On behalf of the nationwide membership of the American Hellenic Institute (AHI), I write to convey our strong disagreement with the Trump administration's opposition to section 7046(d)(3) of S.3108, Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2019 as stated in your July 9, 2018 letter to Senate Appropriations Chairman Richard Shelby. The section cited in your letter would restrict the use of funding for the transfer of F-35 aircraft to Turkey. Although we appreciate the Administration's shared concern with Congress about Turkish actions, we are disappointed the Administration has taken this position.

First, we disagree strongly with the Administration's contention that Turkey is an important NATO ally. We maintain Turkey continues to demonstrate it is not a true and dependable NATO ally. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan threatened United States military forces with an "Ottoman slap" if they continued to partner with Syrian Kurds. Turkey's military campaign against the Kurds in Syria has compromised U.S. military assets that are also stationed there. Further, Turkey's \$2.5 billion purchase of four divisions of S-400 surface-to-air missiles from Russia has raised concern among NATO members and is a serious threat to United States security and interests in the region. In an interview with *Reuters*, General Tod Wolters, who is the NATO Allied Air Commander, stated, "Anything that an S-400 can do that affords it the ability to better understand a capability like the F-35 is certainly not to the advantage of the coalition."<sup>1</sup> Further, the purchase of the S-400s has the strong potential to trigger U.S. sanctions under the recently enacted Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

Looking at history to demonstrate Turkey's unreliability as an ally, during the George W. Bush administration Turkey refused to allow the United States to use bases in Turkey to open a northern front against the Saddam Hussein dictatorship. Turkey's reasoning was that it wanted \$6 billion more -- in addition to \$26 billion irresponsibly offered by the Bush administration through then Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz -- for a total of \$32 billion. A former Bush administration official called Turkey's negotiating tactics "extortion in the name of alliance."

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-plan-to-buy-russian-defense-system-a-risk-for-nato-says-us-general-134577>

In addition to threatening U.S. forces, Turkey has wrongfully imprisoned Pastor Andrew Brunson for more than a year and continues to harass Turkish nationals who work at, or with, the U.S. Embassy in Turkey. In addition to the case of Pastor Brunson, the Turkish government has tolerated assaults against its Greek Orthodox Christian religious minority, the Ecumenical Patriarchate (the spiritual home of the world's oldest and second largest Christian Church) and continues the illegal closure of the Greek Orthodox Halki Patriarchal School of Theology in Istanbul. These actions violate U.S. principles and law on freedom of religion as expressed in Section 2804 of the FY98 Omnibus Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act (PL 105-277). This law calls for the Turkish government to safeguard the Ecumenical Patriarchate, its personnel, and its property, and to reopen the Halki Patriarchal School of Theology.

Moreover, Turkey is the force that creates instability in the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkey's antagonistic behavior—or “gunboat diplomacy”—in the Aegean Sea against NATO member Greece, have been taken to new dangerous heights. A Turkish coastguard vessel collided with a stationary Greek coastguard vessel near the Greek island of Imia, on February 12, 2018. Video footage of the incident has since been released and shows damage to the Greek vessel's stern. In addition, Turkey continues to violate Greece's airspace on a daily basis and at a shocking rate.

- According to the Hellenic National General Staff, in the first quarter of 2018, there have been 351 violations of Greece's sovereignty on the sea and 920 violations of Greece's national airspace.

Combined with what transpired on the seas, these are very serious and egregious reoccurring incidents that risk placing lives in harm's way and violate international law. They have led U.S. Ambassador to Greece Geoffrey Pyatt to express concern over the possibility of an “accident” happening over the Aegean. These incidents also cost the Greek government approximately \$400 million.

Furthermore, Turkish warships harassed the surveying vessel of Italian oil company Eni and threatened on February 23, 2018 to sink it in the exclusive economic zone of Cyprus. According to press reports, Eni's ship was forced to make maneuvers to avoid a collision after the Italian captain's request to the Turkish vessel to change course went unanswered.<sup>2</sup> This example of Turkish aggression toward a multinational oil company headquartered in NATO-member Italy is egregious and occurred in the EEZ of the Republic of Cyprus—an EU member that has aspired to join NATO's Partnership for Peace, but whose application would be subject to veto by Turkey.

- Based upon a long, demonstrated history of Turkish aggression in the Eastern Mediterranean, the acquisition of F-35 fighter jets by Turkey will pose an even greater threat to peace, stability and security in the Eastern Mediterranean, which is not in the best interest of the United States.

Clearly, Turkey does not share NATO's core purpose or best interests and is a force of instability in the Eastern Mediterranean. Numerous foreign policy and defense policy analysts and journals have called into question Turkey's actions as a NATO ally. It is unbecoming of a NATO member to act in the aggressive and provocative manner as it has toward fellow Alliance-member countries, United States and Greece. The United States swiftly condemns, rightfully so, nation-states for actions that violate international norms. However, when a nation within the Alliance, such as Turkey, also commits these violations, it is even more egregious. We believe it is time for the United States to send a strong message to Turkey that its actions and behavior run contrary to the ideals and principles of the United States and

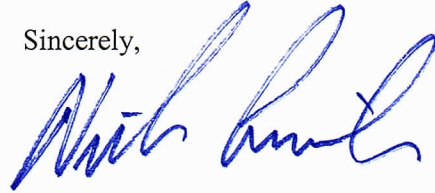
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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ekathimerini.com/226092/article/ekathimerini/news/turkish-ships-threaten-to-sink-eni-drill-vessel>

NATO and pose a threat to United States security and interests. We strongly contend that message is to halt the transfer of F-35 aircraft to Turkey.

Thank you for your consideration of AHI's position.

Sincerely,



Nick Larigakis  
President

cc: Vice President Michael Pence, Vice President of the United States  
Secretary Michael Pompeo, U.S. Secretary of State  
Secretary James Mattis, U.S. Secretary of Defense  
A. Wess Mitchell, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs  
Yuri Kim, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs  
The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
The 115<sup>th</sup> United States Congress