

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-1504

AGRICULTURE

JUDICIARY

SMALL BUSINESS

In Solemn Remembrance of the 45th Anniversary of Turkey's Invasion of the Republic of Cyprus

Although I regret not being able to attend this morning, I want to take this opportunity to express my support for the Republic of Cyprus, which is a strong U.S. ally and a beacon of liberty in the Eastern Mediterranean. Cyprus remains a stronghold of Christianity and outpost of the earliest expansions of the foundations of our Western Civilization into the far corners of the globe, many of which are well known today but were still obscure to the ancient world.

The last 45 years have witnessed the Turkish intrusion into Cyprus, an occupation which has been accompanied by the double standard of those who wish to impose their dictates on foreign lands, but are unwilling to reciprocally extend those demands to others located in their own territories. I have long spoken out against such a double standard, and in favor of the religious freedom and Rule of Law that we enjoy here in the United States. Just this month, I offered an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), stipulating an additional requirement to Section 1255 of the bill, requiring Turkey to provide credible assurances that it has ceased persecuting Christians in order to receive the F-35 aircraft that it has sought.

Although my amendment was not made in order, and so did not receive a vote on the floor, I am confident that it would have passed the House overwhelmingly. Moreover, I was very supportive of the language that was included in the House-passed NDAA prohibiting the transfer of F-35s unless Turkey refused to accept, or else dispossessed itself of, the Russian S-400 air and missile defense system. As you know, Turkey subsequently did accept S-400 missiles from Russia, and I applaud President Trump for assuring that the U.S. in fact will not sell F-35s to Turkey. We certainly should not, as I think it much more likely that any F-35s transferred would be far more likely to be used against our interests and friends, including Cyprus, rather than in favor of them.

I will never forget being in a meeting with Turkish President Erdogan in which he claimed the offshore resources of Cyprus for the Turks. He also asserted that the Mediterranean is an area of Turkish influence—not American influence. Since that day, I have had the benefit of an unobstructed view of Erdogan's objectives in Turkey, the surrounding region, and the world. As always, I reject them outright and will continue to hold Turkey accountable for its actions, past and present.

