

Testimony of Francis J. Ricciardone
Ambassador-Designate to the Republic of Turkey
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Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as ambassador to the Republic of Turkey. I am grateful to President Obama and Secretary Clinton for their trust and confidence in me. With me today is my wife Marie, who both studied and taught in Turkish universities, and our daughter Francesca, who was born in Turkey. Our daughter Chiara, who went to school in Ankara for three years with her sister, is unable to join us today. Also joining us from Massachusetts today are my father, Francis Ricciardone, Sr., a Seabee veteran of World War II, my niece Sophie Stone, and my brother-in-law Dr. David Stone. During my 32-year career in the Foreign Service, I have had the pleasure of serving three times in Turkey, most recently as the Deputy Chief of Mission from 1995 to 1999. Through more than three decades I have observed Turkey's continuing transformation into a more democratic, more open, and more economically vibrant, modern state and a player with growing influence on the world stage. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and your colleagues, as well as the many private American organizations with a strong interest in Turkey and its regions to advance United States interests in this critically important and complex relationship.

Turkey remains as ever a key ally and strategic partner of the United States and an important member of the NATO alliance. It is also a member of the G-20 with one of the fastest growing economies in the world, and it is currently a member of the UN Security Council. Noting Turkey's history as a majority Muslim nation and as a secular democratic state that respects the rule of law, President Obama has cited Turkey's "critical role in helping to shape mutual understanding and stability not only in its neighborhood, but around the world." If confirmed as ambassador, I will do everything possible to reinforce Turkish-American cooperation in support of our common goals.

For decades Turkey and the United States have cooperated intensively to promote regional stability through many specific areas of collaboration, including countering terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; resolving regional conflicts; promoting energy security; expanding trade, investment, and economic development; and, essential and integral to all of these,

strengthening democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Several such strategic priorities merge in cases of particularly immediate consequence, including in Iraq and Afghanistan, the quest for peace between Israel and all its neighbors, and Iran's evident pursuit of nuclear weapons. On these last two, we have had concerns, especially our disappointment on Turkey's vote against UNSCR 1929 and in the deterioration of Turkey's relations with Israel. Other conflicts with historical antecedents require no less sustained and intensive joint attention and cooperation, including the unresolved issues of Cyprus and normalization of relations with Armenia.

Let me describe Turkey's role in relation to our foreign policy priorities. If confirmed, my responsibility will be to strengthen Turkey's cooperation with us in all of these areas, notwithstanding the differing perspectives and independent sovereign interests of each of our countries.

Turkey recognizes that our success or failure in Iraq will directly impact its own domestic and economic security. The Turkish government has contributed very meaningfully to stabilizing Iraq through its high-level strategic dialogue with the Government of Iraq and its dialogue with the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government. Turkey also is contributing to Iraq's progress, by hosting regional meetings on political and economic cooperation, and through trade and investment that promote Iraq's reconstruction and help develop Iraq's oil and electricity infrastructure.

Our military ties with Turkey remain vital to both the United States and Turkey. Turkey is a crucial logistics hub, supporting U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. Over 70 percent of the air cargo for our mission in Iraq transits Incirlik Air Base, which is also the primary refueling stop for flights to Afghanistan. Turkey provides blanket clearance for U.S. aircraft supporting these operations and authorizes the use of its bases and ports to support humanitarian and reconstruction operations in Iraq. The Habur Gate border crossing also serves as a key line of communication to Iraq; through it, 25 percent of our fuel and 40 percent of other sustainment requirements enter Iraq. There are more than 1,700 U.S. military personnel stationed in Turkey. Turkey has a long tradition of hospitality to our service men and women, including hosting the USS Eisenhower in early July.

Turkey is one of our strongest partners in the fight against international terrorism. Turkey and the United States are working together to fight the regional transit and support of international terrorists.

We are aligned with Turkey's foremost security objective of defeating the PKK, a group which has led to the deaths of over 30,000 Turks since the 1980s. For our part, the United States supports Turkey's operations against the PKK; we cooperate with EU partners to cut off PKK facilitation efforts in Europe; and we support the growing cooperation between Turkey and Iraq, including the Kurdistan Regional Government. Turkey's leaders also recognize the need for political, economic and cultural measures to counter PKK terrorism. Turkey's "National Unity Project" aims to improve the human rights and economic situation for Kurds and other communities or vulnerable groups in Turkey. We believe that further pursuit of this initiative can help not only to undermine the PKK, but also to advance and to strengthen Turkish democracy and the human rights of all Turks.

From my tenure as Deputy Ambassador in Kabul, I can attest that Turkey has also been an essential partner in Afghanistan, where it has long-standing cultural and historical ties and has been a leading proponent of Afghanistan's unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Turkey shares our goal of a stable, Afghanistan that can protect itself from al-Qa'eda and any other terrorists who would use that country as a base for international terrorist attacks. Turkey has 1,700 troops serving in the the International Security Assistance Force, commands the Regional Command for Kabul, and will soon send still more civilian humanitarian relief and development assistance experts to establish its second PRT in Jowzjan Province. It is also a leader on training the Afghan National Security Forces, responding positively to requests from ISAF and the Afghan Ministry of Interior for additional trainers. Turkey has pledged to train a brigade's worth of Afghan National Army troops and 1,500 Afghan National Police this year. Turkey has also pledged \$300 million for development projects in Afghanistan, built schools and clinics, and invested in the repair or construction of bridges and roads and the drilling of new wells, and facilitated economic development through support to the agriculture, marble and carpet sectors. In addition to our cooperation with Turkey through NATO/ISAF and our two Embassies on the ground in Kabul, we coordinate closely through regular bilateral meetings led on our side by Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke. In support of cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan, Turkey hosted four trilateral summits in Turkey with the participation of both Afghan and Pakistani presidents.

Turkey and Israel are both important partners of the United States. The two countries have shared vital political, economic, security, and military ties for many

years. The increasing strains in their relations, particularly since the Gaza flotilla incident, risk setting back the vitally important interests of both those countries, and of the United States, in regional peace and stability. Therefore we have underscored to both countries the importance to them and to us of their mutually beneficial relationship.

On Iran, we work with Turkey both bilaterally and as a member of the UN Security Council and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors. As a neighbor, Turkey shares a long border and history with Iran. Turkey has said that it shares the international community's concerns about the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran, and recently has again reaffirmed its absolute commitment to upholding UN Security Council resolutions in this regard. But we have not always agreed on tactics regarding Iran, particularly with regard to sanctions. We were disappointed that Turkey, our ally and partner, chose not to stand with its NATO allies in supporting UN Security Council Resolution 1929. While we acknowledge Turkey and Brazil's efforts to reach an agreement with Iran on transferring low-enriched uranium (LEU) to Turkey, we have explained to Turkey that the Tehran Research Reactor initiative was intended to be a confidence building measure, not a substitute for Iran living up to its international obligations and UN Security Council requirements. Our message has been, and continues to be, that the IAEA channel between Iran and the P5+1 is the only channel for action and that the fate of the Tehran Research Reactor proposal remains secondary overall to the more important goal of preventing the advancement of Iran's nuclear enrichment program. As Ambassador, I will continue to emphasize that the United States needs Turkey's help for Iran to understand that it must engage directly with the IAEA and P5+1 on the international community's concerns about its nuclear program.

The United States continues its long-standing support for Turkey's aspirations to join the European Union. The prospect of EU accession has been a strong impetus for Turkish reform. Over the past few years, Turkey has implemented meaningful political and economic reforms necessary for EU membership, but more needs to be done. Turks themselves are demanding further progress on promoting human rights and the rule of law, including such particular rights as freedom of the media. We are particularly interested to see Turkey shine, as a protector of religious freedom. There could be no more powerful modern testimony to Turkey's historic legacy of religious tolerance than reopening the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Halki Seminary. As Secretary Clinton has said, we have repeatedly and publicly called for the reopening of Halki Seminary and protecting the rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and will continue to do so until this is

addressed. If confirmed, I look forward to paying my respects to His All Holiness Bartholomew, more than 10 years since I last had that honor.

The division of Cyprus has gone on far too long. The United States encourages the negotiations between the two communities under the auspices of the UN Secretary General, and we urge the leaders of the two communities to seize this opportunity to negotiate a settlement that reunifies the island into a bizonal, bicomunal federation. Turkey and Greece can play a constructive role in helping the Cypriot parties toward a lasting solution to their differences. The Government of Turkey has made clear its support for this process, including recently as Mr. Eroglu assumed leadership of the Turkish Cypriot community.

Facilitating regional integration is a high priority for the United States. Rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia will foster increased stability and prosperity in the entire Caucasus region. As President Obama noted in his Armenian Remembrance Day statement of April 24th, “Together, the Turkish and Armenian people will be stronger as they acknowledge their common history and recognize their common humanity.” We commended the governments of Turkey and Armenia on their signing of the historic protocols on normalization of relations on October 10, 2009 in Zurich. Both countries publicly reiterated their commitment to normalization this spring. The United States will continue to urge Turkey to ratify the protocols, and we will support programs that build understanding between Turks and Armenians.

The President and Secretary Clinton have established economic cooperation with Turkey as a strategic priority, and have emphasized the importance of supporting American firms and promoting U.S. –Turkish trade and investment. During President Obama’s April 2009 meeting with Turkish President Gul, the two leaders agreed to elevate our economic relations to the level of our already strong political and military relations. To follow through on this commitment, the U.S. and Turkey launched a new Cabinet-level dialogue – the Framework for Strategic Economic and Commercial Cooperation -- during Prime Minister Erdogan’s visit to Washington last December. In addition to our official dialogues, we are also launching a public-private sector U.S.-Turkey Business Council to advise the U.S. and Turkish governments on strategies for increasing trade and relationships, improving the business climate, and eliminating impediments to trade and investment. Turkey is a leading focus in the President’s New Export Initiative to double U.S. exports globally in five years.

Building on our close cooperation in the 1990s that helped make Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) a reality, the U.S. and Turkey are working together to bring Caspian gas to European markets for the first time through a new route called the "Southern Corridor." We welcome the June 7 agreement signed by Turkey and Azerbaijan on the gas purchase and transit of Azerbaijani gas to Turkey. This agreement is an important milestone in laying the foundation for the Southern Corridor. This corridor could include the Nabucco pipeline, the Turkey-Greece-Italy Interconnector (ITGI), or the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP). Turkey would play an integral transit role in all three pipelines. The corridor would provide commercial benefit for the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia and also create a long-term partnership based on mutual interests with Europe. Overseeing the safe passage of oil through the Bosphorus Straits and the transport of oil through the BTC pipeline, which pumps nearly a million barrels of oil a day to the Turkish port of Ceyhan, Turkey plays an important role in world energy markets.

Many Americans, including my family and I, have had wonderful experiences living and working in Turkey. It would be a special privilege to return to Ankara to strengthen the communications and friendship between our two peoples in all fields of private as well as official endeavors, including the fields of education, science, and health – in which my wife has practiced while on previous service in Turkey. Led by this committee, the Senate has formally recognized the importance of public diplomacy. Increasing contacts and communications between Americans and Turks must be a primary means of advancing our interests on all issues we face today. If confirmed for this post, I pledge that all members of U.S. Mission Turkey will warmly welcome the advice and support of the American people, both through our elected representatives and through direct and continuous contact and communication. In particular, I would pledge the highest standards of service to the American community and American travelers, whether for business or any purpose.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, if confirmed as ambassador, in my service in Ankara as in my past service at other posts, I will trust to your help and advice, and that of your colleagues. I look forward to working with you.