

Testimony of David M. Satterfield
Ambassador-Nominee to the Republic of Turkey
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
April 11, 2019

Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you today as the President's nominee to Turkey. I am grateful to President Trump and Secretary Pompeo for the confidence they have placed in me. If confirmed I look forward to continuing a close, consultative relationship with the Committee.

Next month will mark forty years of my service with the U.S. Government, almost entirely as a career Foreign Service Officer with focus upon the Middle East. My overseas assignments have been largely in unaccompanied critical threat assignments – Beirut, Baghdad, Tripoli, the Sinai – and I am profoundly aware of the importance of family as such service and the separations it entails have become routine for all in the Foreign Service. In this regard, I want to thank my spouse, Elizabeth Fritschle, also a career Foreign Service Officer with her own three decades of service, including in those same posts I noted, for her love, understanding and support in what has been a rewarding but very challenging life. She and our daughter Mary Parker are at post in Tel Aviv today, but they are with me always in spirit.

If confirmed, I will be going to Ankara at a particularly complex and challenging moment in U.S.-Turkey relations. As this Committee is aware, in the 66 years since Turkey became a NATO Ally, we have worked closely with the Turks to advance key national security interests, from Korea to Kosovo and beyond. Our partnership with Turkey – which has the second largest standing military in NATO and is a G-20 economy – enables us to defend NATO's eastern flank and project U.S. power in the region.

Today, Turkey hosts the NATO Land Component Command in Izmir, serves as one of four Framework Nations for Operation Resolute Support in Afghanistan, and fills the deputy commander position in NATO's new training mission in Iraq. Turkey has stood firm in support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, refusing to recognize Russia's attempted annexation of Crimea. We have worked together to counter terrorism. Turkey has been integral to our efforts to bring about a political solution to the Syrian conflict and achieve the lasting defeat of ISIS, not least because of our access to Turkish air bases. Meanwhile, the Turkish people merit recognition for their generosity in hosting nearly four million Syrian refugees. As the President has made clear, as we draw down U.S. forces in Syria, we are determined to ensure that those who fought with us will not come to harm. At the same time, we will continue to work with Turkey to address its legitimate security concerns.

Our interests extend beyond U.S. security priorities. Turkey is an important economic partner hosting more than 1,700 U.S. companies, particularly in the aerospace, pharmaceutical, and financial and insurance services industries. Bilateral trade topped \$20 billion in 2018. Presidents Trump and Erdogan have pledged to significantly increase our trade.

As this Committee is all too aware, the relationship faces profound challenges.

The Administration has worked tirelessly with Congress to address Turkey's legitimate security needs. However, by moving ahead with its purchase of the Russian S-400 missile defense system, Turkey puts its participation in the F-35 program at risk and faces potential sanctions

under CAATSA. As Vice President Pence said April 4 on the occasion of NATO's 70th anniversary, "Turkey must choose. Does it want to remain a critical partner in the most successful military alliance in history, or does it want to risk the security of that partnership by making such reckless decisions that undermine our Alliance?" If confirmed, I will ensure we continue to press Turkey to make the right strategic choice by procuring NATO interoperable military equipment.

Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member, if confirmed my highest priority will be the safety and security of American citizens in Turkey.

The Trump Administration has worked tirelessly to achieve the release of our staff and U.S. citizens. Let me express our appreciation to Congress and to this Committee for your sustained efforts. While we are grateful that Pastor Andrew Brunson and one local employee are out of jail and reunited with their families, the United States cannot accept Turkey's continued detention and prosecution of other U.S. citizens – including NASA physicist Dr. Serkan Golge – and Mission Turkey local employees. If confirmed, you have my assurance that I will be clear that this is unacceptable and will urge a swift and fair resolution to these cases.

The United States, along with many others in the international community, is troubled by the negative trajectory of democracy and respect for freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly in Turkey. Turkey currently incarcerates more journalists than any other country in the world. No democracy can flourish without a vibrant, diversely-owned, and free press. Accountable and responsive government, an independent judiciary, and respect for

individual rights are pillars of established democracies. Turkey should protect freedom of expression, especially for those voices that are critical of the government, and release journalists imprisoned for their work.

Rebuilding confidence in the rule of law in Turkey would go far towards expanding the potential for economic investment and partnership. The U.S.-Turkish partnership is strongest when Turkish democracy is thriving. If confirmed, I will work to challenge Turkey to uphold its domestic and international human rights commitments while pushing Turkey to live up to its status as a NATO Ally and EU aspirant.

Despite the very real challenges in U.S.-Turkish relations, Turkey remains an essential partner in a complicated geostrategic position, presenting both opportunities and challenges. There is no alternative to an 80-million strong Ally on the edge of a region in constant flux. The United States and Turkey must work together to confront the very real threats to global peace and security that emanate from Russia, Iran, and elsewhere in the region. If confirmed, I am committed to working to advance our national security interests.

Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member, Members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you. I look forward to taking your questions.