

Mr. Speaker, this is the wrong weapon sale to the wrong country at the wrong time.

Earlier this month, I circulated a letter with the gentleman from Florida [Mr. BILIRAKIS] which was signed by 35 Members from both sides of the aisle, calling on President Clinton to reconsider this sale, based on our very serious concerns over how these weapons would be used. The Turkish Government's domestic and international behavior—including the ongoing campaign against the Kurdish people, the occupation of Northern Cyprus, and the blockade of Armenia—makes us deeply concerned that providing such destructive power to that Government has the potential to cause terrible, and preventable, human suffering.

Today I am joining with my colleagues, Mr. TORRICELLI and Mr. BILIRAKIS in introducing House Concurrent Resolution 124 expressing the sense of Congress that the President should suspend the proposed sale of the Army Tactical Missile System to the Government of the Republic of Turkey until the Government takes significant and concrete steps to end the military occupation of Cyprus, lift its blockade of Armenia, cease its ongoing campaign against the Kurdish people, and demonstrate progress on the protection of human and civil rights within Turkey.

Mr. Speaker, the timing of this sale is peculiar to say the least. The Foreign Operations appropriations bill includes a cut in economic assistance to Turkey. This provision, which has strong bipartisan support, was enacted in response to the concerns cited above. We believe that the message we are trying to send with this provision would be undermined by approving a new sale of military hardware at this time. In Ankara, the conclusion would inevitably be that, beyond limited symbolic measures, Americans do not take seriously the shocking breaches of international law and decency committed in the name of the Turkish Government.

The proposed transaction represents the first sale of these weapons to any foreign nation. The Turkish military track record is not consistent with what we would expect of any recipient of United States arms, much less a NATO member. The Human Rights Arms Project has cited numerous examples of the indiscriminate use of weapons by Turkish forces in Kurdish civilian areas. We are also concerned about the evidence strongly linking Turkey to unauthorized transfers of United States and NATO weapons to the Republic of Azerbaijan.

While it is our contention that the weapons sale should be halted entirely, in our letter to the President we recommended that, are the very least, strong conditions governing the use and transfer of these weapons be attached to any sale, and that these conditions be strongly enforced.

Mr. Speaker, this sale has been strongly opposed by Greek-American,

Armenian-American, and Kurdish-American organizations, as well as Human Rights Watch, the Council for a Liveable World, and the Federation of American Scientists. And for good reason.

Turkey claims it needs the ATACMS as a deep strike weapon against the threat of tanks in Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Yet, in Greece, Turkey's neighbor to the west, there is deep concern about the threat posed by these offensive weapons. In the regional arms race, Turkey already has a substantial edge, with F-16 fighter jets, attack helicopters, and antiarmor missiles. In addition Turkey has imported more than 1,000 tanks from the United States alone in the past 5 years.

The Government of Turkey is conducting a war against the Kurds within Turkey and has made incursions into Kurdish areas of Iraq, resulting in thousands of civilian casualties and millions of refugees. This cruel war is one part of an overall effort to essentially negate the Kurdish people as a distinct entity within Turkey. Many people are concerned that these missiles could be used as part of this military campaign, resulting in terrible civilian casualties.

Also, Turkey continues its occupation of one-third of the territory of Cyprus, having declared a "Northern Republic of Cyprus," an entity that has no international recognition, and resisting good-faith efforts of the United States, Greece, and other nations and international bodies to end the conflict. The occupation of Cyprus is well into its 21st year. There is no sign that it will end if we continue to send the message to Ankara that there are no significant consequences to this illegal occupation, and that our protests are largely symbolic and rhetorical.

Another illegal and immoral Turkish Government policy is the blockade of its border with the Republic of Armenia. This blockade has blocked the delivery of American humanitarian aid to Armenia and complicated its delivery. In the foreign ops bill, we have language, with strong bipartisan support, known as the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act, which restricts aid to those countries that block the delivery of aid to other nations. Although the language does not mention Turkey by name, clearly that is the country that would be targeted.

Why are we taking these seemingly significant legislative steps—Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act, cutting aid to Turkey—and then turning around and giving them this terrible weapon system?

Mr. Speaker, we also have to worry about whether Turkey will see fit to transfer this technology—our technology—to other nations. Strong evidence has linked Turkey to the unauthorized transfer of United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization weapons to the Republic of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan and Armenia are engaged in a tense conflict over the region of Nagorno-Karabagh. A tenuous cease-fire is holding, and the administration

has recognized the importance of resolving this crisis by appointing a special negotiator with the rank of Ambassador. Why, again, do we turn around and take steps that will potentially undermine our efforts to negotiate a just and lasting resolution to this conflict?

International human rights organizations continue to cite Turkey for egregious violations of the basic human rights and freedoms of its own citizens. Earlier this year, an American journalist was jailed in Turkey because of her reporting on the campaign against the Kurds. She was released, thank God. Unfortunately, there has not been such a happy ending for those few brave Turkish journalists and human rights activists who try to tell their countrymen and the world the truth about what's going on. These brave souls languish in prison, largely forgotten by all but a few friends and supporters.

Mr. Speaker, I am very discouraged and disappointed by the reaction of Western governments—not only our own—to Turkey's continued flouting of international law and standards of decency. Just last week, the European Union admitted Turkey into its Customs Union, a likely first step toward full membership in the EU—despite the strong objections from many legislators and activists on the other side of the Atlantic.

Why are we doing this? Sadly, we are witnessing the triumph of Realpolitik, in other words, putting economic or strategic interests ahead of our own values. The argument is that we need Turkey because of its strategic location and as a bulwark against Islamic fundamentalism. Well, in the first place, I believe that these goals could be achieved by more positive means than weapons sales. But I also wonder whether we're making a terrible strategic mistake over the long term, investing billions, sending our most advanced weapons and otherwise hurting America's good name by associating with a regime that isn't very stable and may collapse anyway.

While it may be too late to stop this ill-advised weapons sale, I urge all my colleagues to work with me and other Members of this House to stop coddling the regime in Ankara, to stand with Turkey's neighbors, and to stop basing our foreign policy on the bad bet represented by the Government of Turkey.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. SAXTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

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