

**CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES (CSIS)**

**“TURKEY AND THE UNITED STATES:
AN ENDURING PARTNERSHIP”**

**WELCOME AND MODERATOR:
JOHN HAMRE, PRESIDENT,
CSIS**

**INTRODUCTION:
THE HONORABLE BRENT SCOWCROFT,
COUNSELOR AND TRUSTEE, CSIS**

**SPEAKER:
HIS EXCELLENCY RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN,
PRIME MINISTER OF TURKEY**

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[Note: Remarks in Turkish made through translator.]

(Applause.)

JOHN HAMRE: Prime minister, the last time we had this many cameras, I think it was Bill Gates who was speaking to us. So it takes a world-class personality to draw out this kind of an audience, both media, and the audience, as well. Thank you very much for coming. I'm delighted you're here.

My name is John Hamre. I'm a president at CSIS. I am very proud to be able to welcome back Prime Minister Erdogan. He has been a frequent visitor here at CSIS, as has been his distinguished colleagues, who are here today. Defense Minister Gonul, thank you for coming back. We're delighted to have you here. Foreign Minister Babacan, thank you for coming. We're delighted you're here. I think this is your third time or fourth time back to CSIS. We're grateful for that.

We have a strong program here at CSIS on Turkey. I personally believe it's one of the most under-appreciated allies that the United States has. And I was joking with Brent Scowcroft. It always takes a crisis for us to find each other, and I think we have found each other yet again. So we welcome the prime minister back. We're looking forward to hearing him.

I'm going to turn to one of my bosses, a man who is very famous in Washington and around the world. That is Brent Scowcroft. I asked Brent when did he first visit Turkey, and he said it was in 1960. This is a man who has been a close friend, observer – let me emphasize friend – of Turkey going back now for 46, 47 years. And it is in that spirit we ask Brent to come this afternoon to introduce the prime minister. I introduce to you Brent Scowcroft. General Brent Scowcroft.

(Applause.)

THE HONORABLE BRENT SCOWCROFT: Thank you, John. It's a real privilege for me to be able to introduce to you the prime minister of Turkey, someone I consider a friend and a true statesman.

This past July, Prime Minister Erdogan, and his Justice and Development Party won a truly historic victory, and a decisive mandate in Turkey's parliamentary election. With 341 seats and victories in all but one of Turkey's 81 provinces, the question was never whether Prime Minister Erdogan would again lead Turkey but how he would lead. The post-election challenges are many, both domestic and foreign. Unemployment, sustaining Turkey's economic progress, secularism and symbols of personal expression, legal reforms, relations between the military and the civil authorities. But externally, given the region in which Turkey is at the center, profound challenges are also present.

I was in Turkey about two weeks ago when I met with Prime Minister Erdogan and Defense Minister Gonul, and it was a very difficult time for me because it was in the immediate aftermath of the House Foreign Affairs Committee passing the Armenian resolution, and a dramatic increase in Turkish casualties, both civilian and military as a result of cross-border PKK terrorist attacks. I frankly dreaded to go on the trip, but I went, and I was greeted warmly and graciously by everyone from the prime minister down. We had good, frank conversations, and I felt very good about the visit. And I want to get back to that in just a moment.

I told the prime minister that the United States needed to demonstrate the continued value of the political and security relationship that we enjoy and the qualities of a five-decade-long friendship, in deed, as well as just in word. But the past few days have seen accelerated discussions between friends on what those deeds might be. They began with Secretary Rice's discussions in Ankara and Istanbul, our shared concerns for stability, security, and political progress in Iraq. They have continued today with the prime minister's meeting with President Bush.

I worry a lot about the troubles, which have plagued our relationship over recent times, but those same concerns are because of what I believe about the relationship. And I believe that any objective analysis of the national interests of both sides will see such an intertwinement of those interests that in the long run, this special relationship must continue to deepen and prosper. And I am convinced that is the case, but we need to work at it, both of us, with a full knowledge of what we mean to each other.

So with deep friendship for Turkey and the people of Turkey, I present to this distinguished audience, the prime minister of Turkey, the Honorable Tayyip Erdogan.

(Applause.)

HIS EXCELLENCY RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN: Chairman, distinguished guests, first of all, I would like to thank CSIS for this very important occasion. I also would like to thank Minister Hamre and also General Scowcroft for his kind introduction. As you will remember, I came here in 2004, which was the second year – the first – end of the first year of our government, and during that visit, I had made a presentation here in this very room about the economic prospects of Turkey. Before that in 2002, I was here in this room again as the chairman of my party, and I had an opportunity to address you then.

We are going through a very sensitive period of time, and in this period of time I want to talk to you about the relationship between Turkey and the United States, who are strategic partners. Relations between Turkey and the United States began based on a strategic partnership and it continues to be the case today. Relations between the two countries have had their ups and downs, but depending on changing circumstances and conditions, this relationship has always been very important.

The international system in the aftermath of the Cold War has not yet completed its transformation, and this has created new risks and threats. Different ideologies, beliefs, and systems lie at the crossroads of Turkey, and so Turkey is very much involved with these risks and threats.

The attacks on 9/11 added a new dimension to terrorism, and that, as well as weapons of mass destruction, migration, disparity in levels of income and poverty are some of the problems which are of great concern to us all. And in the context of all of these problems, Turkey is a symbol of peace and works to contribute to regional peace and security and sustainable peace and security in general.

Within this framework, NATO membership and our strategic partnership with the EU, as well as our membership perspective to the European Union, constitute the main tenets of our foreign policy. Geographically speaking, Turkey is at the crossroads of beliefs, cultures, and civilizations. No doubt, this character brings about important risks as well, but as a country, we are aiming to translate those risks into opportunities.

And I would like to specifically draw your attention to the fact that within the Islamic world, Turkey is the only country that is democratic, secular, and has a membership prospective to the European Union. Turkey's membership to NATO, its strategic partnership with the United States, and its accession process to the European Union are important for regional peace as well as world peace. This constitutes a very important opportunity for peace. So Turkey's stability and economic power in that context is very important because Turkey is also important to ensure that dialogue can be realized between different civilizations, and Turkey has a key role to play in that sense.

As long as Turkey moves forward in a stable manner and carries on with its economic development, regional problems will be more easily resolved. I also would like to underline here that any steps taken in the region, despite Turkey, have not yielded positive results. And in the future too, any steps to be taken, despite Turkey, will not yield results.

And I want to specifically underline that because in achieving peace and stability in this region, Turkey's presence, Turkey's contribution to the process. These are all very important. We have seen this in Afghanistan. We have seen it in Lebanon. We continue to see it. And I'm sure that any step taken in the Middle East, taking Turkey into consideration will contribute to peace if we believe in peace, if we believe in the region, that Turkey must definitely be, in my opinion, one of the actors involved in trying to find a solution.

The United States and our European friends must revisit Turkey's importance in light of the developments taking place in the region, and I'm sure that they will do that. I would like to specifically draw your attention to two points, which are important in Turkish-American relations. The first one is about fighting against terrorism. The PKK terrorist organization continues to exist in Northern Iraq, and continues to attack our country from Northern Iraq, and this is a serious issue for Turkey. Blood that has been

spilt as a result of the PKK attacks continues to increase the frustration within the Turkish people every day and tries the patience of the public opinion.

For a country securing the safety of its people is no doubt one of the most important responsibilities. No country would like to see a terrorist organization just beyond its border, which targets its territorial integrity and security. No country can turn a blind eye to such an action. International law too, is very clear on that, and based on this, on the 17th of October, our parliament discussed a parliamentary motion, and in this motion, there were 507 votes in favor and 19 votes against this motion, and with this overwhelming majority, our government was given the mandate to take every measure necessary, including military measures.

I would like to specifically underline here the fact that this step does not target the territorial integrity of Iraq and the people in Iraq. This mandate is given only in fighting against the PKK terrorist organization. You will remember that immediately after 9/11, the United States announced that the operations in Afghanistan did not target the Afghan people; that it was only against al Qaeda and Taliban. So as Turkey and the allies, we lended our full support to the United States in fighting against terrorism.

After the operations, Turkey worked to contribute to peace and stability and restructuring of Afghanistan, and to Turkey took over the command of ISAF twice, at the moment, for the third time. We have central command, as Turkey in Afghanistan. And Turkey looks for the same solidarity and same support from the United States and her other allies.

Fighting against terrorism is a multidimensional issue, a thorny – a difficult issue. And terrorism is never national; terrorism is always international because there are different countries where logistical support is received, there are different countries where different methods of support are exercised. And we speak of these to our friends in Europe. They announced the PKK as a terrorist organization, but it is not sufficient to list them as a terrorist organization; what happens in practice is important. If we don't get the response in practice – if we don't get the result in practice, there is no point in declaring an organization as a terrorist organization only; we need to go beyond that, and this is what we are looking for.

I always say, and I know a little bit about football, this is not the time to keep the ball in midfield. The time has come to score the goal; in other words to get the result because the game isn't played in any other way. You can't say, well, we played well, but we were defeated; we couldn't get the result. That we cannot accept; we have to get a result, and for that we need to be in solidarity with our friends, and that is what we are trying to do in fact.

It is not possible to speak of simple solutions to this issue. We established a tripartite mechanism. And for 15 months now, we waited for these mechanisms to work, but it didn't; there was no result, and this mechanism sort of dissolved itself because there was no result that was achieved. But we cannot move forward with these mechanisms

anymore; we need to be implementing, we need to have actors who are involved, and the most important actor of course will be us.

We are in a position to take this step because the 550 members of the parliament that represents Turkey voted – 507 of them voted in favor of a motion and gave us a responsibility – 19 opposed, and 507 out of 550 is almost all of the parliament, so we as the government are charged with this mandate, and at the right – or in specific time under specific circumstances, we can exercise, and we will exercise this right and take necessary step because we should not just fight against the attacks of this scourge called terrorism; we have to also find ways to stop it at its root.

If a European country, for example, catches, apprehends a terrorist leader and tries him in court but does not detain him, and this leader of the terrorist organization there escapes that country, goes to another EU-member state, and from that other EU member state gets on a plane, goes back to Qendil Mountains, then how can we speak of a test of sincerity in fighting against terrorism because that test has failed in effect in that case.

There is no meaning to stating the PKK is a terrorist organization because Turkey, for example – whenever Turkey captures any terrorist or their leaders, then Turkey always delivers them to the people involved, and that is what other countries ought to do in the face of Turkey's demands. So in fighting terrorism we must cooperate because doing this alone is not possible. We can succeed. Those who adopt terrorism as a method look for new ways to achieve support for themselves, and in that framework, it is important to have a meaningful solidarity internationally because otherwise our efforts and the impact of our efforts will be limited, and we will have to accept the fact that any limited efforts will not resolve – help resolve the problem.

As Turkey, our expectations are very clear: We would like to see the United States and the Iraqi government to take concrete steps urgently and go beyond the rhetoric in order to clean out the PKK in Northern Iraq. And in my meeting with President Bush, today I saw signs of this because for us, protecting the territorial integrity of Iraq and political unity of Iraq, these are all important; we know how important these are for the region. And we know that Iraq, which is stable, will also be important for us, for our own stability because it will help increase, grow our stability. But if you have an unstable Iraq that will also be a problem for us, we are very much aware of that.

And we – we cannot think of another Iran-Iraq war that took place. The Iran-Iraq war lasted for eight years, and 1.5 million people died. And we have been taking our steps, we said that we are not aiming at war; we are aiming only at an operation, an operation which targets only the terrorist organization. And the – from the point of the view of the long-term interests of the United States, we believe that the United States will access this situation, taking into consideration those long-term interests.

Of course, for us, and Turkey, we will continue to do whatever we can to ensure that there is a peaceful Iraq next door to us. And we are trying to do whatever we can to

achieve this. We are providing all kinds of support to build infrastructure, the superstructures in energy, in water resources, so we continue to provide all of the support that we can. And we will continue to provide any support we can to ensure a smooth transition to democracy in Iraq. And we continuously give this message to the Iraqi central government.

The enlarged meeting of the neighboring countries of Iraq, at foreign ministers level that took place in Istanbul was an opportunity where both myself and our foreign minister had an opportunity to communicate these messages to our Iraqi counterparts, and we hope that the steps can be taken in this direction as soon as possible so we can achieve a peaceful environment in our region.

In this context, another important issue with respect to Iraq is the status of the city of Kirkuk. This issue is an issue of interest to all of the Iraqi people, and it should be – result not with haste. And in that context, it has been logical to postpone the referendum on the status of Kirkuk. The neighboring countries process, which was initiated under our country's leadership, has become a very important platform where regional countries and the Iraqi government are able to discuss problems related to Iraq and where they develop certain concrete solutions – suggestions for solutions. And the secretariat has now been established and from this point forward too, it will be possible to follow up on what has already been done, when what will be done. So the secretariat will be very important.

As you know, the first meeting of the enlarged neighboring countries – the event took place in Sharm el-Sheikh at the beginning of this year, and we hosted the second one on the 2nd and 3rd of November in Istanbul. And on this occasion, we also had an opportunity to exchange news on important matters with the U.S. secretary of State, Ms. Rice, who was there.

Now, I move on to the second point, which is very important in Turkish-American relations. And that has to do with resolutions that are presented to the U.S. Congress almost in every term by certain circles who are trying to damage our relations. This is the – these are the drafts which are presented to the Congress involving some unfounded allegations about events in 1915. The Foreign Relations Committee took a decision in the House on the 10th of October. We were very sad to see this happen. It is not – it should not be up to parliaments to judge history.

The Armenian allegations have not been proven historically or on a legal basis. The ones who are best suited to look at historical events and look at the documents about those events are the historians themselves; otherwise, if we were to do it any other way, the international – the system of international relations would be very complicated, and we should not allow such foreign elements to damage our strategic partnership; we should not allow that to happen.

Turkey has made a historic suggestion to Armenia in order to take this issue up. And in 2005, I sent a letter to the president of Armenia, Mr. Kocharian, and in this letter,

I suggested the establishment of a joint historic commission. And this commission, I suggested, should work, and we have already opened our archives, and so far we have declassified, gone through about 1 million documents in our archives. There is more, but 1 million of them have been looked at, and we continue to work on them. And this is not just our archives in the state but also the archives in the military. And work is ongoing to look through them.

If the Armenian – if Armenia has archives, and they say they do, they should make them available, and if third countries have archives, they too should make them available so that this work can move forward. And as a result, if the work indicates that there are – there is a basis to these allegations, then we are ready to settle accounts with our history. But what about Armenia, will they have the same capacity to settle their own accounts with history?

We should have the historians; we should also have legal experts, political scientists and archeologists in this work. They should be a part of it too, and they should work jointly. And after that, once they have done their work, we as the politicians can reach a decision. But this is what I suggested, but since 2005, I have not received a reply to my letter.

And the suggestion that was an invitation to commonsense, actually, went unanswered. So then we start thinking what is there something to be gained here for pursuing these resolutions? The Armenian diaspora is after something because they are lobbying and having these – or wanting to have these resolutions is something that we must all think of. We must understand why they are trying to do this in different countries.

If such genocide did occur, it would have to do with that country. Or if you claimed to that – if you claimed that there has been genocide, then it concerns that party. So it's the two parties of the alleged genocide that would be of interest. And it's very interesting – or difficult to understand why third countries, other countries should be involved. Why?

So unfortunately this – the current state of affairs prevents us from having normal relations with Armenia. And third countries should not tolerate these negative attempts of the Armenian diaspora. And in that sense, I would like to express our appreciation to the efforts of the American administration so far. And I hope that this will be the case in the future. The President and the Secretary of State have worked very hard and we appreciate those efforts very much. We thank them very much. And also, many of our American friends who are here, I know, who have worked very hard for this, thank you all very, very much for this, because this is an issue, which we must consider in that light, because you see the strategic relations look into the future.

Government states do not look for only a month; they look into the future, into the longer future, into decades into the future. This is what statesmen do. The politicians do not play just for the spectators, because if they think only the short term and try to please

in the short term, they will not succeed. We have to look into the future, because that is what we have to be able to conquer. And for that to happen, we need to have a future of forward-looking cooperation between our countries. And this is, of course, what we hope to see, what we look for, and we hope to see these resolutions off the agenda completely.

This resolution is hurtful to the Turkish people and it is important to prevent the discussion of this resolution on the House floor, because that will poison the relations between Turkey and the United States, and I am sure and I know that our friends here in Washington will work very hard for that not to happen. So I hope that this topic will not take our relations hostage into the future. And it's our responsibility to protect our relationship against such attempts.

This is a responsibility for future generations. And that increases our responsibilities because future generations may not know many things like we don't know today because we have to base our ideas on documents. We didn't really live through those times. But we also have to remember that there are about 3,400,000 Turks or people of Turkish origin living in the United States, either as students or with a green card or as citizens. And they serve as a bridge between our countries and they have integrated to American society and they contribute to the development of American society here. And we must remember that such resolutions hurt them too.

So these are all very sensitive issues and other than those issues, of course, there are many positive elements, which have a determining role to play in developing and strengthening our cooperation between the two countries. Last year, we accepted the common vision and structure dialogue document, which is a very concrete example of our developing relationship. This document includes areas of cooperation on various subjects, such as the issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the broader Middle East and what can be done, Iran's nuclear program, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Afghanistan, energy, et cetera. In the same document, we see mention of our economic cooperation and our annual trade volume of \$10 billion U.S. and the aims to grow this potential further. We can consider this document as a basic reference document, which aims to further develop the strategic cooperation between Turkey and the United States.

As I said before, another basic tenet of our foreign policy is our goal to become a member of the European Union. On the issue of the European Union, we have always received American support. The Turkish Republic took its place in the world scene as a modern state at the beginning of the 20th century, and became a member of NATO in 1952 as a European state, has been part of all institutions of the West, and back in 1963, signed an association agreement with what is the European Union today, with the perspective for full membership.

Where we stand today shows that Turkey has fulfilled the political criteria to begin accession talks with the European Union. And within the framework of harmonization with the European Union legislation, our government has been engaged in reforms, as we did in the previous term of government. We have completed the first phase of meeting the Copenhagen criteria of the European Union. Now, we have moved

to the second stage where we're working to meet the Maastricht criteria – what is called the Maastricht criteria.

We have prepared all of our institutions in line with an EU objective. We have a good team that is doing its homework. But unfortunately, there are certain political barriers, which are brought before us in the opening of chapters of accession. And we are very sad to see these barriers put up. In 1996, Turkey reached a customs union with the European Union, whereas other countries, other member states, first became members before achieving a customs union; whereas in Turkey's case, Turkey achieved customs union, but is still not a member of the European Union. And the European Union continues to resist Turkey's membership.

We are sad to see this. And we see them introducing new rules after the game has started. But that's not possible, because you start the game; you know all the rules. Penalty has its own rules. In the 90 minutes of the game of soccer, you don't change the rules once the game is started. It's ridiculous to do that. And in international relations, this is far removed from sincerity and seriousness. And we hope that we will overcome these difficulties.

We are determined in our quest for bid for EU membership. As the government, we stand by all the decisions we have taken, and we will continue to be just as determined in the future, because an enlarged EU, including Turkey, will strengthen, not weaken the European Union. Why – because as you may know, most recently, we initiated under the auspices of Mr. Annan, a project called the alliance of civilizations together with the Spanish Prime Minister Mr. Zapatero, and we continue to work on this initiative.

And this process has defined the European Union as an important player in achieving an alliance of civilizations, because alliance of civilizations in my opinion is the most important instrument for achieving global peace. So while some may be looking for a clash of civilizations – but I am sure that the people who believe in peace cannot want to see a clash of civilizations. And that is why we have taken steps for an alliance of civilizations, and we continue to work in this initiative.

And the support that the United States has given to Turkey in Turkey's bid to join the European Union is always very much appreciated. We are grateful for this support. And I would like to once again express our appreciation to American support. And this, in fact, falls in line with the strategic partnership between the two countries, and I hope that American support for Turkey's bid to join the EU will continue to be the case in the future.

Of course, Turkey is much closer and sometimes in fact in the middle of many important issues in the world, much closer than the EU and the United States. We know what is taking place in the Middle East. Turkey is serving in such difficult circumstances, and these are problems that concern Turkey's future too. And so, we are all – or should be all – aware that Turkey must deal with all these issues, and it cannot

remain indifferent to these issues. And in that framework, Turkey needs the support and friendship of her friends and allies. And that support Turkey expects most from its strategic partner, the United States, with whom we have had an alliance of more than 50 years.

As I end, I would like to thank CSIS and the chairman and you all for your patience. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. HAMRE: Mr. Prime Minister, you have spoken as friends speak to friends. You have spoken directly and forcefully and we value that candor. And we thank you for such a strong and clear presentation.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have about 15 minutes. And the prime minister has agreed to take questions. I would ask you to identify that you would like to be recognized. And please tell us who you are with, so it is easier for us to identify. If there are any questions, can I – yes, please.

Q: (Inaudible, off mike) – with the RAND Corporation. Thank you very much, Mr. Prime Minister. Steve Larrabee – is it on? The RAND Corporation. Thank you very much for a very candid and frank presentation of Turkey's interests. I'd like to ask you a question related to the PKK and to your relationship with the Iraqi Kurds.

In the early 1990s and mid-1990s, Turkey actually cooperated quite well with the Iraqi Kurdish leadership of Masud Barzani and al-Talabani. And in fact, they, at that time, cracked down on the PKK, and in fact were privy to Turkish protection. Turkey gave them passports that allowed them to travel and so forth. What in your view was the reason why the Iraqi Kurdish leadership has been so reluctant this time to crack down on the PKK when they were willing to do it in the 1990s? Thank you.

H.E. ERDOGAN: Thank you. Thank you. That was a very good question. In the 1990s, what happened in the 1990s – we compare it to what is going on today. In fact, we are also sad to see that, for example, in the 1990s, there were Kurds living in the northern part of Iraq who were escaping persecution of Saddam Hussein. They came and settled on the Turkish side of the border, and there were about 500, 600,000 of them who came over the border to settle on the Turkish side.

And at that time, I was the leader of a provincial organization of a political party, and I remember sending truckloads of food and clothing and medical supplies to them. The Turkish government at the time tried to support them through the Red Crescent and all the other organizations. And at the time, there was a very good communication.

And we also see what's happening now as opposed to what happened in the 1990s, and we wonder why we are where we are today, because the PKK is listed as a terrorist organization by the United States, by the European Union. And the regional

authority there cannot or will not call the PKK a terrorist organization. It is not possible for us to understand this change.

And we keep – now, you might say, what does it matter to call the PKK a terrorist organization? As I said to you before, European countries too list the PKK as a terrorist organization. But in practice, they won't deliver the leaders to Turkey when they catch them. And they send them back to the Qendil Mountains. And there are cases where we can prove this with documents. It's hard for us to understand it. And I expressed this to the president as well.

But we have to understand one thing. In Turkey, we do not have any problems with our citizens of Kurdish origin. And the terrorist organization does not represent the Kurdish population in Turkey. In the terrorist organization, there are Kurds, Armenians, others. So it is wrong to adopt an ethnic view of their activities. In the eastern and southeastern part of Turkey, my party won a landslide in the recent election. And there are 75 members of parliament from my political party who are of Kurdish origin.

I want to specifically explain this to you because this is very important. The PKK terrorist organization has never been the representative of the problems of people of Kurdish origin in Turkey. They have only pursued their own interests. And in fact, we do not discriminate against them. It's not in our culture to; it's not in our value system to discriminate against the people in the region. And we have, in fact, gotten a lot of support from the people living in the east and southeast part of Turkey.

In fact, Kurdish citizens don't live just in that part; they live in the Western part of the country too – in Istanbul, in Ankara, in Izmir, and the big cities. And there is no discrimination whatsoever. There are no ghettos there of that kind there. They live – and we all live in all parts of the country. There are intermarriages. So there are no problems. For example, I am married to someone from the southeast. My wife comes from Siirt. I come from the Black Sea. So we have no problem; it's not an issue in our value system.

But unfortunately, these terrorists are trying to engage in ethnic nationalism and they created problems and this is how they want to present their terrorist actions. And they claim that we don't think of the Kurds, et cetera, where as I told you, there are 75 members of parliament who are of Kurdish origin, in many government bodies, in the courts, in universities, in the bureaucracy. We have many people who are of Kurdish origin. I am talking about thousands of people. We can't really tell who is who because we don't do that. It would be wrong to do that. I think it would be a crime against humanity to try to differentiate or discriminate like that. So I hope that the regional authority will understand their mistake and reverse course.

We talked to Talabani. I talk to him frequently, most recently here in the United States when we were at the U.N. General Assembly. I saw him then. Before then, I saw him in Riyadh at the Arab League. We sometimes speak on the phone and I met Prime Minister Maliki twice in my country, and most recently in last weekend's meeting. Our

foreign ministers are always in touch. So we don't have a problem. But unfortunately, we see that the central government in Iraq and the regional authority in Iraq ought to take an active part in fighting against the PKK, the terrorist organization. And they should not just play for time, because we tell them, too, that we have to take the responsibility on us, because we have come to the end of our patience.

Q: My name is Arman Israeli, and I am the counselor for political affairs with the embassy of Armenia here in Washington, D.C. Mr. Prime Minister, first of all, I would like to thank you very much for your illustrative and emotional speech, and also to CSIS for this opportunity. I have a couple of very short remarks for the clarity of picture, just very briefly.

MR. HAMRE: I have so many people that want questions. I'll only take questions. Question only.

Q: Yes, okay. Thank you very much. No, but for the purpose of the audience, I would like to –

MR. HAMRE: Question, please.

Q: Okay, Mr. Prime Minister, as you know, when you mentioned your letter to the President Robert Kocharian, President Kocharian, in fact, answered you in his letter on April 25th. And in his letter, he was quite clear that Armenia is ready to establish diplomatic relations and open the borders with Turkey. And he asked you to do the same. And also he proposed instead of looking to the past and the part of your this lecture was devoted to the future – he proposed to establish the joint commission not only of historians, but also of the people who are currently dealing with all issues between our two countries. But I dare to say that it was this suggestion, this letter of President Kocharian that remained unanswered.

MR. HAMRE: May we have a question please?

Q: How would you comment that? Thank you. How would you comment that it was indeed an answer by President Kocharian? Thank you.

H.E. ERDOGAN: Well, first of all, as you said – well, in fact, you answered your question yourself, because you also said that the letter included suggestions about opening the borders, some historians about taking part in these activities. But that was not the answer I was looking for in my letter, because my letter was specifically about the allegations of the so-called Armenian genocide.

And I said that I suggested that a joint historians' committee be established for looking into this matter. And I asked Armenia to make its archives available and third countries, just like Turkey has done. And I suggested that we should work jointly. But the answer or the letter I get was nothing about opening archives, about including third

countries, or any commitment whatsoever about such a commission, and Armenia being ready to take part in such a commission.

The only concern is to get this door open. We can't open that door. I have made gestures. For example, we opened the air corridor. Immediately after I became prime minister, I opened the air corridor. Cargo planes could not fly from Armenia; but now they can. And they can land in Istanbul now. And then, I have Armenian citizens in my country, and they have no problems whatsoever living in Turkey. But the Armenian Patriarch Mutafian came here to Washington. But the Armenian diaspora, the Armenians living here, prevented the patriarch from speaking here in Washington. There were pressures to the university where he was invited to speak.

Now, there are people in my country who have escaped from Armenia who live in Turkey without a passport. Why are they coming to Turkey? Why are they leaving Armenia? That goes to show another reality. On the other hand, we have in the city of Van – there is a lake, Van Lake – and on it, there is an island called Akdamar. And there, there is an Armenian Orthodox church. And we used the money of the Turkish treasury, renovated this church. Why? This was a message of peace, of reconciliation.

But they are far removed from taking this message. What can I do? All they can think of or talk about is the border. But we say, well, we opened the airways; now we have to talk of these other things first. Take the steps. They are occupiers in Nagorno-Karabakh. The whole world accepts Armenian forces as occupying force in Nagorno-Karabakh, but they can't remove it.

So these are the things that must be done. And so, how can they expect us to open the door? We have to be fair. We can't. We can't open that door now, border.

MR. HAMRE: The microphone is coming right behind you.

Q: Sevgi – (inaudible) – Ph.D. student in political science. As we all know, although Turkey has justified reasons to consider a possible cross-border operation, unfortunately, it is perceived as a possible invasion by Turkey. How are we, Turkey, how are we going to convince the world that it is not irredentism what we are trying to do, but it is a matter of national security? Thank you.

H.E. ERDOGAN: Now, in the Middle East, in the EU, and today here in the United States, we have had meetings, and nobody can, and nobody does make that kind of a characterization. Why – because today, you look at the United Nations and international security organizations, and you see in international law that there is a rule, which says that. And this is also resolution 1546 is very much in line with this. If neighboring countries disturb your public order, then you have a right to intervene in that situation. And we say very clearly that we are aiming only and solely at the PKK terrorist organization.

What do we say? We say that the PKK terrorist camps must be disbanded. Who is responsible for doing that? The government where those camps are. So that country cannot harbor or shelter terrorists, because if they do, then they become an accomplice. And it's their responsibility to prevent this from happening. If they don't, then you have to intervene. And that's something I have to underline now.

They cannot provide logistical support, whereas we see today that there is logistical support to the terrorist organization, so much so that American weapons turn up in the hands of the PKK terrorist organization; the explosives turn up in the hands of the PKK. These are the things that we have actually found, because when they come across the border to our country, those who are captured are captured with weapons and we find them. So this is all food for thought.

Another interesting point, that's where they are based, and they have all sorts of communications activities. And that communication activity must come to an end. And another point is they are also involved in some political activity in disguise. And these are things where this is the where the neighboring country must intervene. If they don't, then they become an accomplice. So our goal – our very justified goal is not at all the civilians. We just target the terrorist camps, the PKK.

MR. HAMRE: Second row, please.

Q: Thank you. Stephen Flanagan from CSIS. Prime Minister Erdogan, you mentioned with regard to the bilateral relationship that we have this structured dialogue on a common vision about many important common regional and global issues. But yet, you also expressed some frustration at the idea that we somehow don't seem to be able to move the ball beyond midfield. And I wondered, do you think that we need, in terms of advancing our common interests, some new mechanisms or some new ways of advancing those common interests in a more systematic way in order to overcome some of this sense of frustration that I sensed in your speech that we seem to have a good dialogue, but yet when it comes to concrete action, be it on the PKK or other issues, that we don't seem to be able to move the ball forward.

H.E. ERDOGAN: Well, this is not only about the United States. This is something that has to do with all the friendly countries. And yes, there could be new mechanisms perhaps, or new steps that may be taken. And we have spoken of these briefly today, and the most important point, for example, is intelligence sharing. Intelligence sharing is very important. And with the general here, I don't know if I am the right person to speak about this, but what we mean by intelligence is not intelligence dragged over a long period of time. Is that right, general?

Any intelligence that is late in arriving has no value. You have to have real-time intelligence for it to have value so you can use it. So that's what we have to initiate. And we need to take some steps and that is what we are considering. And I think such actions would be important, as would be the other issues mentioned in the common vision document. And there would be other solutions that can pull out of this over time.

MR. HAMRE: I apologize. The hardest job I have is to stop a discussion when there are so many people that want to ask – there are at least a dozen people here that would like to ask questions. And of course, it's not possible. One administrative announcement – I'd ask that you please remain seated when the prime minister has to leave for security reasons, please. John, if you'd bring up – I come from the Midwest of the United States. It's our custom out there, when great tribes meet together, they share a trophy, which is often called the treaty pipe or sometimes peace pipe. And so, on behalf of CSIS, Prime Minister, I'd like to present you an American Indian peace pipe, as a symbol of what we want our two nations to do, is to be strong, enduring friends. Thank you.

(Applause.)

(END)