

Statement of James Jeffrey
Ambassador-Designate to the Republic of Turkey
Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
September 24, 2008

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear before you today as President Bush's nominee to serve as ambassador to the Republic of Turkey. I am grateful to Secretary Rice and President Bush for their trust and confidence in me. With me today are my wife Gudrun, daughter Julia, son Jahn, and daughter-in-law Dardana Rruka. During my 31-year career in the Foreign Service, my family and I have had the pleasure of serving in Turkey three times previously, most recently as the Deputy Chief of Mission from 1999 to 2002. I have seen first hand the remarkable transformations in Turkey over the last few decades as it has become more democratic, more open, and more economically vibrant. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and your colleagues on how best to advance the many shared interests of the United States and Turkey in the years ahead. In doing so, I would keep constantly in mind the heavy responsibility I would assume as ambassador responsible for this critically important and very complex relationship.

Throughout my career, during the times I was not working in Turkey, I was often working with Turkey – on Iraq, Iran, Greece, Bulgaria, and Albania. Turkey is a key friend and strategic partner of the United States in the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Balkans, Central Asia, and beyond, and a crucially important member of our NATO alliance. For decades Turkey has worked with the United States on issues such as regional stability, trade, democracy promotion, energy security, and counterterrorism cooperation. The events over the past two months in Georgia underscore Turkey's importance as a democratic bulwark, a military partner, and a strategic ally in a dynamic and challenging region.

Even among close allies, however, there are occasional differences. While Turkey and the United States have shared values and goals, our tactics and methods are not always the same and have caused some misunderstandings. Our diplomatic and military exchanges were strained when the Turkish parliament failed to approve in March 2003 the U.S. request to use Turkey to launch operations into Iraq. Starting in 2004, after several years of a cease-fire, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) terrorists once again began attacking Turkish soldiers and civilians, both from its safe haven in northern Iraq and from inside Turkey. Turkey was frustrated by what it perceived as American hesitation

concerning its plight in a struggle that has cost more than 30,000 Turkish lives over the last few decades. The unfortunate result of these differences was that the Turkish public, according to the 2007 and 2008 Pew Global Attitudes Surveys, had the lowest favorable opinion of the United States out of all the countries that were surveyed.

Thankfully, we started to see important improvements in our bilateral relations in 2007. First, Turkey's democracy was tested when challenges to its presidential election led to early parliamentary elections. These elections ultimately led to a strengthened mandate for Prime Minister Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party. Second, the United States responded to the growing PKK threat to the region when President Bush pledged last November to provide assistance to help Turkey defend itself against this terrorist organization, a common enemy of Turkey, Iraq, and the United States. Now Turkey, Iraq, and the United States are working together more closely than ever before to root out the PKK. Turkish public opinion of the United States is also now improving. If I am confirmed as ambassador, I will do everything possible to maintain and enhance this momentum and build stronger ties with this strategic partner.

Let me describe Turkey's role in relation to our foreign policy priorities. Turkey has been quick to respond to the crisis in Georgia and vocal in its support for Georgia's territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty. Prime Minister Erdogan carried that message to both Moscow and Tbilisi and has been working to garner regional support for Georgia. The Turkish Red Crescent provided needed humanitarian assistance with tents, food, and water, and the Turkish Government has assisted the United States in approving the transit of our naval vessels that have delivered assistance to alleviate the suffering of the Georgian people. We are looking to Ankara for its thoughts on how its Caucasus Stability initiative can integrate with efforts by the Euro-Atlantic community to advance peace, prosperity, and freedom in Georgia.

Turkey recognizes that our success or failure in Iraq will directly impact Turkey's domestic and economic security. Turkey is helping to ensure Iraq's progress, including by hosting the second Enlarged Ministerial Neighboring Countries Meeting in Istanbul November 2-3, 2007. Turkey in fact was instrumental in starting the Neighbors Process. Turkey also provides political party and military training, assists with reconstruction, and is helping to develop Iraqi oil and electricity infrastructure. We have seen increasing dialogue between leaders in Ankara and Baghdad, including critically important visits of PM Erdogan to Baghdad and Iraqi President Talibani to Turkey in 2008, opening the

way to further regional contacts with Iraqi democratic leaders. We are seeing as well growing contacts between Ankara and officials in the Kurdistan Regional Government. Finally, 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. Our military ties with Turkey remain vital to both countries, and I thank Turkey for its long tradition of hospitality to our military men and women. In short, Turkey is setting an example for the region.

Turkey's soldiers have been in Afghanistan since the beginning of the International Security Assistance Force. Turkey currently retains about 800 troops there, has a provincial reconstruction team in Wardak, and just upped its original \$100 million humanitarian assistance during the Paris Conference, for a total now of \$200 million in aid. Turkish firms have invested \$1.5 billion in projects in Afghanistan since 2002, including schools and mosques, hospitals and health clinics, bridges and water wells. Turkey has also worked to facilitate talks between the leaders of Afghanistan and Pakistan and to press for greater cooperation in rooting out terrorism emanating from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan.

Turkey has been a partner in the search for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Ankara hosted Israeli President Peres and Palestinian Authority President Abbas for an historic joint address to the Turkish Parliament just before the Annapolis Conference, which Turkey also attended and actively supports. Turkey followed up at the Paris Conference with a \$150 million pledge for Palestinian institution building to be used in 2008-2010. Most recently, Turkey began facilitating peace talks between Israel and Syria. We welcome Turkey's constructive engagement and hope the talks bear fruit.

Turkey is concerned as well about Iran's efforts to develop nuclear enrichment capabilities in direct violation of Iran's obligations in three Chapter VII UN Security Council resolutions, and Turkey supports the IAEA's ongoing investigation of Iran's nuclear program. While we understand Turkey's desire to maintain good relations with its neighbor, we work with Turkey to ensure full enforcement of all of UN Security Council resolutions, and to pressure Tehran to comply with international obligations. Turkey implements all relevant UNSCRs (1737, 1747, and 1803), which help stem Iran's nuclear and missile proliferation efforts. One concern I will emphasize in Ankara, if I am confirmed, is Iran's hydrocarbon sector, and our legislative obligations to oppose foreign investment of over \$20 million in it.

The United States strongly supports Turkey's aspirations to join the European Union. To its great credit, the ruling Justice and Development Party is implementing political and economic reforms necessary for EU membership, and we hope that process continues. We, like the EU, want to see Ankara expand further its democratic and human rights reforms. We welcomed recent changes to Article 301, the provision of the Turkish Penal Code that criminalized "insulting Turkishness," and amendments to expand non-Turkish broadcasting, including in Kurdish. We encourage Turkey to protect civil rights of all religious and ethnic groups, such as by reopening the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Halki Seminary as a vocational school. Turkey and the United States share the values of democracy and the rights of individuals, and we continue to see that reflected in the reforms that Turkey is undertaking.

We support Turkey's efforts to normalize relations with its neighbors and have been encouraged by new developments concerning both Cyprus and Armenia. The election of the new Cypriot president has led to talks between the two sides and a willingness to renew efforts with the UN on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. Turkish leaders welcomed their new counterparts after the Armenian elections, and President Gul just made a historic visit to Yerevan at Armenian President Sargsian's invitation. We strongly urge Turkey to work with Armenia to re-establish diplomatic relations and to have an open and honest dialogue about the tragic events at the end of the Ottoman Empire.

Our economic cooperation with Turkey would be a key priority, were I confirmed, with emphasis on supporting U.S. firms and investment. The United States recently ratified a Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy agreement with Turkey, which should provide new opportunities for U.S. businesses to invest in Turkey. The U.S. and Turkey are also working together on oil and natural gas pipelines, including the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, Turkey-Greece-Italy Interconnector, and the Nabucco pipelines, to develop a new generation of infrastructure that will help both Turkey and Europe secure and diversify their energy supplies. One of my proudest accomplishments on my last tour in Turkey was to help move the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline forward, paving the way for these further efforts benefiting both Turkey and global consumers.

Many Americans, including my family and me, have had wonderful experiences living and working in Turkey and, in the case of our daughter, graduating from a Turkish high school. It would be an honor to return to Ankara to represent our nation, promote U.S. interests, and ensure that we are providing needed services for American citizens in Turkey. If confirmed for this post, I will

ensure all members of U.S. Mission Turkey work effectively to advance U.S. goals in Turkey and the region, do our utmost to support our private American community, and remain safe in the face of terrorist threats.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed as ambassador, these are only a few of the many items that would be on my agenda in Turkey. If confirmed, I hope I can count on the help and advice of you and your colleagues. I look forward to working with you and urge you to travel to this beautiful and fascinating country. Thank you.

