



ORDER OF AHEPA
SUPREME LODGE HEADQUARTERS
AMERICAN HELLENIC EDUCATIONAL PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION

November 6, 2019

Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
Office of the Senate Majority Leader
S-230 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510-7010

Dear Majority Leader McConnell:

On behalf of the members of the **American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (Order of AHEPA)**, the leading international grassroots service association of American citizens of Hellenic heritage and Philhellenes, I write to request two pieces of bipartisan-supported legislation that serve to uphold American security interests and values each to be brought to the Senate Floor for a vote.

S.2641, Promoting American National Security and Preventing the Resurgence of ISIS Act of 2019

First, we request S.2641, sponsored by Foreign Relations Committee Chairman James Risch and Ranking Member Robert Menendez, be brought to the Senate Floor for a vote. Simply stated, the United States must send a strong message to Turkey. The American Hellenic community is concerned deeply by the West's inability to stop Turkey from its dangerous provocations and to hold it liable for its illegal actions. In fact, we contend Turkey challenges United States' interests in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean, and jeopardizes NATO, without regard for consequence.

- Turkey's invasion of northeast Syria and its acquisition of Russia's S-400 missile defense system are recent examples and S.2641 is a step in the right direction to hold Turkey liable.

However, as American citizens of Hellenic descent, we are also extremely alarmed that if Turkey does not face consequences for its actions in Syria that Turkey will take that as a "green light" to proceed with even more egregious actions in the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkey's provocative actions threaten the long-term potential for the Eastern Mediterranean to yield energy resources that could decrease Europe's dependence on energy from Russia, which is in the United States' best interests. The following U.S. companies are placed at risk by Turkish provocations: ExxonMobil, Shell, and Noble Energy; all of which are licensed to explore for hydrocarbons within Cyprus' exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

- Last month, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo publicly stated Turkey's drilling activities in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of Cyprus are "illegal" and "unacceptable."¹
- Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades called Turkey's stated intention at the time to drill in Cyprus' designated EEZ a "second invasion."²

In addition, oil companies from United States allies and strategic partners drilling in Cyprus' EEZ such as: France, Italy, South Korea, and Israel are placed at risk by Turkish provocations. In fact, in February 2018, Turkish warships harassed the surveying vessel of Italian oil company Eni and threatened to sink it in Cyprus' EEZ. According to press reports, Eni's ship was forced to make maneuvers to avoid a collision after the Italian captain's request to the Turkish vessel to change course went unanswered.³

¹ "U.S. warns Turkey over offshore drilling near Cyprus," *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-greece-pompeo-mitsotakis/u-s-warns-turkey-over-offshore-drilling-near-cyprus-idUSKCN1WK04>

² Cyprus: Turkey's drilling bid off island 'second invasion,' *Associated Press*, <https://www.apnews.com/e0ad4644ba3648e681ac1e613a7850f1>

³ "Turkish ships threaten to sink Eni's drill vessel," *Ekathimerini*, <http://www.ekathimerini.com/226092/article/ekathimerini/news/turkish-ships-threaten-to-sink-eni-drill-vessel>



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Page 2—Majority Leader McConnell

Furthermore, Turkey routinely violates Greece’s airspace and waterways in the Aegean unnecessarily placing individuals’ lives in harm’s way with mock dogfights and by engaging in the practice of “gunboat diplomacy.” As a result, U.S. Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt stated, “What I worry about is the risk of an unintentional confrontation.”⁴ A Turkish coastguard vessel collided with a stationary Greek coastguard vessel near the Greek island of Imia, on February 12, 2018⁵, is just one in a countless number of examples. These infringements of Greece’s sovereignty by Turkey are in violation of international and U.S. law, cause instability in the region, and must stop.

S.Res.150, A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that it is the policy of the United States to commemorate the Armenian Genocide through official recognition and remembrance

The United States must also send a strong message to Turkey to acknowledge a historical truth, the Armenian genocide, with the passage of S.Res.150, sponsored by Senators Ted Cruz and Robert Menendez. The United States must affirm this fact of history and end its denial, stand on moral high ground, and stand with fundamental human rights.

In addition to recognizing and condemning the Armenian Genocide, the American Hellenic community is pleased the resolution states the United States’ proud history of “...providing relief to the survivors of the campaign of genocide against Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syrians, Arameans, Maronites, and other Christians.”

Moreover, the passage of the Armenian Genocide resolution is about education and awareness to prevent future atrocities from occurring.

AHEPA is open to further discussion on these policy priorities. Thank you for your time and consideration to bring S.2641 and S.Res.150 to the Senate Floor for a vote on each one.

Respectfully submitted,

George G. Horiates, Esq.
President

⁴ “Greece vs. Turkey: Are We Headed for an Intra-NATO War?” *Washington Examiner*, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/weekly-standard/greece-vs-turkey-are-we-headed-for-an-intra-nato-war>

⁵ “Collision of Greek boat, Turkish vessel caught on video,” *Associated Press*, <https://www.apnews.com/2718e4ef72234f57ab600e39ec0d9015>