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Wexler Introduces Congressional Resolution Condemning PKK Attacks on Turkey

Reps. Hastings and Whitfield Co-Introduce Resolution

(Washington, DC) Today, Congressman Robert Wexler (D-FL), Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-FL), and Congressman Ed Whitfield (R-KY) introduced a resolution condemning the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) for its continued acts of terrorism against Turkey. The resolution, which highlights the PKK's two decades long campaign of terror against Turks, urges the Bush Administration, the Iraqi government and the Kurdish Regional Government to prevent further PKK attacks emanating from northern Iraq. Finally, the resolution expresses Congressional support for the Turkish government and people, urges the Bush Administration to appoint a new special envoy to counter the PKK, and reaffirms the longstanding partnership between the United States and our NATO ally Turkey.

Wexler and several colleagues are scheduled to meet with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Washington D.C. this evening following his meeting with President George W. Bush. Wexler's meeting with Prime Minister Erdogan will primarily focus on combating ongoing PKK violence and US-Turkish efforts, along with those of the Iraqi government and Kurdish regional government, to prevent further PKK attacks against Turkey.

"It is critical that the United States stand with our ally Turkey in preventing further PKK attacks emanating from northern Iraq. To date, the Bush Administration has failed to adequately address Turkish concerns regarding increasing PKK violence. The PKK attacks emanating from northern Iraq, not only threaten one of America's most important partners in Iraq, Afghanistan and War on Terror - Turkey, but could lead to further destabilization in Iraq," Congressman Wexler said. "It is time for the Bush Administration, the Iraqi government, and specifically the Kurdish regional government to take every measure possible to remove the PKK from Iraqi soil, release captured Turkish soldiers and prevent future acts of terrorism against Turkey."

The Department of State estimates that up to 3,500 members of the PKK are currently located in northern Iraq, and that the organization's attacks on Turkey have resulted in over 37,000 deaths since 1984. In August of 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice appointed General Joseph W. Ralston Special Envoy for Countering the PKK, with the specific assignment of coordinating efforts between Iraq, Turkey, and the United States to eliminate the threat operating out of northern Iraq.

"The attacks by the PKK against Turkey must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. I support Turkey's right to self-defense in an effort to protect her people, who have suffered innocent bloodshed at the hands of this terrorist organization. It is no doubt a difficult time for the United States and Turkey; however, I urge this Administration to work with both the Turkish and Iraqi governments to prevent future attacks and help stabilize the region," said Congressman Alcee L. Hastings.

"The PKK is a known terrorist organization responsible for tens of thousands of deaths," said Congressman Ed Whitfield. "It is my hope that President Bush will work with both the Turkish and the Iraqi governments to help eliminate the threat to stability that the PKK poses."

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Congressman Wexler is Chairman of the Europe Subcommittee and a senior member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the House Judiciary Committee; and he also sits on the Financial Services Committee.