

TALKING POINTS ON PKK TERRORISM

October 29, 2007

The PKK is an armed terrorist organization, listed as such by the U.S. Government and the European Union. It employs force and the threat of force against civilian and military targets to achieve its political goals. The PKK seeks to create an independent, communist, ethnically pure Kurdish state in an area that it calls Kurdistan. Calling PKK terrorists rebels or guerrillas undermines international efforts to fight terrorism in all its forms and shapes.

PKK's ambition is Kurdish secession from the Republic of Turkey by force and the threat of force against civilians and military personnel.

The PKK attacks civilian and military targets alike. Since it started its campaign of violence, the PKK has killed thousands of Turkish citizens, especially targeting elementary school teachers, doctors, technicians, engineers of infrastructure projects, Kurdish village guards and police. Today, the PKK has roughly 5,000 members under arms, many of them very young adults. It recently started to use suicide bombers, mainly women, and also remotely detonated roadside bombs, as well landmines, techniques learned and developed in Iraq. Even though they are portrayed in the western media as Kurdish freedom fighters, the PKK has in fact killed thousands of their ethnic brethren who do not support it.

The PKK is also a criminal enterprise, as it is funded by extortion, drug trafficking (particularly heroin) and the smuggling of illegal immigrants into Europe and the smuggling of petroleum products out of Iraq into Turkey.

Turkey's ethnic Kurds are first class citizens. Turks of Kurdish ethnicity are well represented in government and in business and industry. They have been Presidents, Prime Ministers, and have been well represented in the Turkish parliament. The vast majority of Turkish Kurds are well integrated into society and have the same rights and liberties as all other citizens. Restrictions that existed on cultural expressions of ethnic identities have long been lifted. Kurds in Turkey preserve their ethnic identity, language and local cultures. Turkey has taken laudable steps to open space for Kurdish culture in recent years: radio and television broadcasts in Kurdish have been authorized; the Turkish Public Television broadcasts in Kurdish; private instruction in Kurdish is permitted.

The southeast of Turkey, where a large number of Kurdish Turks live, has received the greatest per capita public investment, totaling well over 150 billion dollars through the course of the past three decades. In the past few years only, investments to the southeast of Turkey have surpassed 20 billion dollars in contrast to the fact that the region generates a miniscule contribution to the overall GNP of Turkey. In addition to public investment, Turkish civil society organizations, particularly charitable organizations that support education and healthcare, have poured millions of dollars in donations into projects specifically designed for the needs of this region.

Turkey has constantly extended a hand of friendship and help to Iraqi Kurds. Turkey gave safe haven to over 500 thousand Iraqi Kurds who fled Saddam's wrath and were taken care of by Turkey for several years. Today, Turkey is a major electricity supplier to northern Iraq, is its main supply route and has helped in the rebuilding of this part of Iraq. Friendly relations with Turkey are to the benefit of the Kurdish Iraqis. But Kurdish leaders are squandering this opportunity by harboring the PKK.

Under international law, Turkey enjoys a right to pursue the PKK into northern Iraq to protect its citizens and sovereignty, a right indistinguishable from the United States claim of authority to invade any country that harbors terrorists.

In sum, Kurds enjoy equal opportunity to pursue their political and economic ambitions in Turkey. Their achievements in those realms are impressive. The PKK is a Marxist-Leninist terrorist organization that has rejected Turkey's democracy for violence and terror to pursue the illegal aim of secession. Turkey's right to enter northern Iraq in pursuit of its PKK terrorist enemy is beyond question and fully in accord with international law and practice.

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