

**SPEECH OF
HON. ED WHITFIELD
OF KENTUCKY
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THURSDAY, APRIL 24, 2008**

Mr. WHITFIELD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize a strong friendship that has proven enormously important since the beginning of the Cold War. Time and time again, the Republic of Turkey has stood firmly with the United States as we have pursued our shared goals in a region where we have few steady allies. Turkey, a fellow NATO country, is a vital partner in our fight against extremism and an example of a vibrant democracy in a region burdened with inequality.

Turkey's assistance in supporting combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan has been instrumental in our efforts to bring opportunity and prosperity to millions of people. Its proximity to both countries has made it an ideal place to coordinate logistics and center supply routes. Over 74 percent of the air cargo that reaches American forces in Iraq passes through Incirlik Air Base in Southern Turkey, and around 4,000 trucks carrying fuel, food, and water cross into Iraq from Turkey every day.

The Turkish government also has provided over \$50 million for reconstruction efforts in Iraq, and another \$100 million for Afghanistan. Turkey has committed over 800 troops and assumed command of the North American Treaty Organization (NATO) Regional Command Center in Kabul. Their Provincial Reconstruction Team has trained over 1,900 members of the Afghan army, treated 650,000 patients at two fully equipped hospitals and four clinics, and educated 37,000 young minds at the more than 30 schools it has constructed. In Iraq, Turkey's training programs for both Shiite and Sunni officials alike has been able to fill an important void in encouraging cooperation and reconciliation between the two rival factions.

Of course, our common bond goes deeper than mere military and political cooperation in Iraq and Afghanistan. We have in Turkey an ally that has proven it shares our commitment to spreading democracy, both within its own borders and amongst its neighbors. Their 70 million citizens have rejected an extremist version of Islam in favor of a secular, democratic government. Turkey also has been a valuable contributor to United Nations peacekeeping missions intent on halting the bloodshed in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Sudan.

Madam Speaker, Turkey has earned our respect, friendship, and gratitude, and deserves recognition for its crucial assistance over the last 60 years. I look forward to strengthening this important relationship as we continue working toward our mutual interests."