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Iraq: Turkey, the Deployment of U.S. Forces, and Related Issues

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Summary

On March 1, 2003, the Turkish parliament rejected a resolution authorizing the deployment of U.S. forces to Turkey to open a northern front in a war against Iraq. The rejection resulted from strains within the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), an inexperienced leadership, competing influences, and the overwhelming opposition of Turkish public opinion. Moreover, the powerful Turkish military had not actively supported the government's position before the vote, and the President had suggested that the resolution would be unconstitutional.

For a long time, Turkey had serious concerns about the prospect of a second Gulf war, and these affected the vote in parliament and the negotiations with the United States for the troop deployment. Concerns included fear that a war would lead to an independent Iraqi Kurdish state and inspire the revival of Turkish Kurdish separatism, worries over the fate of Iraqi Turkomans, who are ethnic kin of the Turks, potential economic losses, a potential refugee crisis on the Turkey-Iraq border, and possible detrimental effects on regional stability.

The Bush Administration engaged in intensive diplomacy to gain Turkey's support. The negotiations reportedly produced several tentative agreements. The parliamentary resolution that was rejected would have enabled a U.S. deployment of troops, planes, and helicopters to Turkey. The United States would have provided Turkey with a \$6 billion assistance package, some of which could have been used to support \$24 billion loan guarantees. Until the funds were available, the Administration would have provided a bridge loan of \$8.5 billion. It also would have provided enhanced trade benefits to Turkish businesses. A memorandum of understanding was said to have dealt with Turkish troops in northern Iraq and their coordination with U.S. forces. But the agreements were never concluded. After the war began, the Administration only wanted access to Turkey's airspace, which was granted on March 21, 2003, and to prevent Turkish forces from interfering in northern Iraq. Turkey agreed to provide food, fuel, and other non-lethal supplies for U.S. troops in northern Iraq. The United States will give Turkey \$1 billion in aid, with which it can leverage \$8.5 billion in loans.

The Turkish parliament's failure to authorize the troop deployment has significant implications. To govern effectively, the AKP needs to mend strains and rebuild its political standing. Moreover, despite Turkey's increasing democratization, the AKP cannot ignore the military's great influence. The prolonged negotiations and the legislative defeat strained bilateral U.S.-Turkish relations. Both sides developed hard feelings which may take time to overcome. Turkey may be deprived of some influence concerning postwar Iraq, the Iraqi Kurds, and the Iraqi Turkomans. It also lost the substantial aid package that had been tied to acceptance of the U.S. deployment, although a smaller one has been appropriated.

This report will not be updated. For background, see CRS Report RS21355, *Turkey's November 3, 2002 National Election*.

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Introduction

On March 1, 2003, the Turkish parliament, in a close vote, failed to pass a resolution authorizing the United States to deploy troops to Turkish territory to open a northern front in a war against Iraq. The vote surprised the U.S. government and its Turkish counterpart. Both governments may have greatly overestimated their understanding of the Turkish political situation that contributed to the defeat of the resolution. This report focuses on that political scene, Turkish concerns about an Iraq conflict, the tentative, but unfulfilled, bargain struck between the U.S. and Turkish governments to authorize the U.S. deployment - to the extent that it is known, the final arrangements for U.S. access to Turkish airspace, and attendant issues. This report also reviews the implications of parliament's actions for the bilateral U.S.-Turkish relationship, regional relations, Turkey's domestic politics, its economy, and broader issues.

Turkish Political Scene

The AKP Government

In the November 3, 2002, national election in Turkey, a single party scored a victory for the first time in over a decade by winning 363 out of 550 seats in parliament. On November 28, 2002, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) took power in unusual way. Party leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan had not been allowed to run for a seat in parliament, having been banned from politics because of a 1996 speech that had Islamist overtones, and did not become Prime Minister. Deputy party leader Abdullah Gul became Prime Minister instead. On December 27, 2002, parliament changed the constitution to lift the ban on Erdogan and allow him to contest a seat in parliament. He ran in a by-election in the southeast town of Siirt on March 9, 2003, and won. The Gul government then resigned, and on March 14, Erdogan finally became Prime Minister. Between November and March, despite their close collaboration, each man had acted as if he were in charge, producing a lack of leadership clarity.

AKP had been established by "reformers" rebelling against Necmettin Erbakan, the long-term, authoritarian, leader of Turkey's Islamists. To achieve its electoral victory, AKP had brought together centrists, nationalists, Islamists, and Kurds, and captured the votes of Turkey's Anatolian heartland. The underlying Islamist orientation of some AKP deputies undoubtedly motivated their votes against the resolution authorizing the U.S. troop deployment. Analysts note that the AKP's

grassroots workers, core constituency, and many members of parliament view the world through the prism of religion or Islamism. They believe that the United States is determined to wage war against Muslims.¹ Nationalism is another strong force among AKP supporters, and the party's nationalists suspected that the United States had imperialist intentions of occupying their country by seeking to impose a large ground force on Turkey. They also may not have wanted to be outflanked by the extreme nationalistic stance of the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP). Turkey had waged a long struggle against its domestic Kurdish separatists, and many in the AKP feared that the United States would use the war to support the establishment of an independent Iraqi Kurdish state. The AKP also has Kurdish members, and they reportedly were concerned about possible Turkish military operations against their Iraqi Kurdish ethnic kin under the umbrella of a U.S. military action in northern Iraq.

All of the above concerns were at play, when, on March 1, 533 out of 550 Members of Parliament were present to vote on the resolution authorizing the U.S. deployment of 62,000 troops to Turkey and the "foreign deployment" of an unspecified number of Turkish troops to an unspecified place (Iraq). The opposition CHP, ideologically nationalist as well as opportunistically negative, exercised party discipline and voted as a bloc to reject the resolution. The AKP allowed its members a "free vote," without party discipline. An absolute majority of those present, or 267 votes, was required to pass the resolution, but it got only 264 votes, failing by three. Ninety-nine members of the AKP voted against the measure; 19 abstained. Although the cabinet had unanimously referred the matter to parliament, three ministers voted against the resolution. In the party caucus prior to the vote, approximately 30 deputies reportedly had advised the leadership that they would oppose the measure and 15 had declared that they would abstain. Therefore, the vote revealed what many observers saw as an astonishing breakdown in AKP internal communications. Many believed that it also showed the inexperience of the party's legislators and its leaders, and the latter's inability to read the former.

Communication appears to be a major problem for the AKP. Since taking office, the party has spoken with many voices, which sometimes lacked harmony. Analysts view Erdogan as a pragmatist,² and he declared that it was in the national interest to respond favorably to the U.S. request to deploy troops to Turkey. However, while he determined this was an issue of national importance, he failed to explain that importance assertively, press members of his party's parliamentary delegation strongly, or enforce party discipline on the vote. After the defeat, Erdogan explained that the outcome was a demonstration of intraparty democracy. Meanwhile, Gul, who had served for years at the Islamic Development Bank in Saudi Arabia, had worked to form a consensus with Middle Eastern states to exhaust all opportunities for peace and only very reluctantly agreed to take steps to support a war. His government had reestablished ambassadorial level diplomatic relations with Iraq and sent a minister with a delegation of more than 300 to Baghdad to discuss

¹ "Turkish Rebuff to U.S. Shows Regional Strains," *Wall Street Journal*, March 3, 2003.

² These analysts include Soner Capotay of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and Sahin Alpay, a Turkish professor and journalist who spoke at the Washington office of the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD) on February 21, 2003.

trade. The normally soft-spoken Gul was particularly reticent in his advocacy of the resolution. Erdogan and Gul had publicly urged Baghdad to comply with U.N. resolutions demanding disarmament, but did not publicly support U.S. use of force to disarm Iraq, regime change, or any stated U.S. policy during the crisis. Moreover, Speaker of Parliament Bulent Arinc, who cherishes the AKP's formative Islamist agenda, encouraged opponents of the resolution in what may have been a power play against the party's pragmatists.³ None of the three main AKP leaders, analysts maintain, really championed the resolution or earnestly attempted to influence deputies and the grassroots on its behalf.

Another political player worked to undermine the AKP leaders' effort in parliament. Former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, leader of several successive Islamist parties and the godfather of Turkish Islamist politics, had been banned from politics in 1998. The ban was lifted in February 2003, and Erbakan is staging a political comeback. In recent years, his surrogates have led the Saadet (Felicity) Party (SP), which won only 2.5% of the vote in November 2002 and is not represented in parliament. Erbakan is expected to assume leadership of the SP shortly. He would probably relish embarrassing the "disloyal" AKP leaders and may be trying to attract disgruntled Islamist AKP deputies to SP. Party loyalties in Turkey are fluid, and SP can gain immediate representation in parliament with AKP defectors. Erbakan reportedly warned deputies that they would "pay for it in the afterlife" if they did not defeat the resolution.⁴

AKP leaders came to the issue of Iraq belatedly in mid-January. Much U.S. diplomacy since summer 2002 had focused on the prior government. Although Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Undersecretary of State Marc Grossman visited Ankara to consult in early December 2002, less than a week after the AKP took power, AKP leaders had other, imperative concerns. The AKP's highest priority was strengthening the country's domestic economic recovery after the worst recession 50 years. The government proposed an urgent action plan and set out to reassure international investors and the International Monetary Fund. It also had to deal with a December 12, 2002- European Union summit in Copenhagen and an end game in U.N. diplomacy to achieve a settlement for the 29-year division of the island of Cyprus. The U.S. troop request stood behind these issues in the foreign policy queue.

The Role of Turkey's President

President Ahmet Necdet Sezer is a former chief judge of the Turkish Constitutional Court and an advocate for the rule of law as well as Turkish secularism. He considers issues in a legalistic way, and has delayed AKP initiatives by exercising his right to veto legislation and delaying approval of government appointments. However, if parliament passes legislation a second time, unchanged, he cannot veto it again. He can only let it stand or refer it to a national referendum or the Constitutional Court. Sezer vetoed the measures that parliament passed to

³ "Turkish Vote Deals Blow to Government," *Financial Times*, March 3, 2003.

⁴ "Erbakan Calculating," *Hurriyet*, March 3, 2003, Foreign Broadcast Information Service (hereafter FBIS) Document GMP20030303000487.

lift the ban on Erdogan, but the President took no action when parliament passed them again probably because a referendum would have been a costly way to achieve the same, predictable result. Erdogan would undoubtedly have won a referendum.

With regard to the U.S. deployment of forces to Turkey, Sezer argued that the parliamentary resolution would be unconstitutional without “international legitimacy” to authorize the deployment of foreign forces in Turkey as required by Article 92 of the Constitution. He said that a new U.N. resolution specifically authorizing the use of force in Iraq, in addition to U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441, November 8, 2002, would convey that legitimacy. The Turkish press gave Sezer’s opinion wide coverage.⁵ After the war began, Sezer retained his legalistic perspective, maintaining, “The United Nations Security Council process on Iraq should have been allowed to finish. I do not find it right that the U.S. behaved unilaterally before that process ended.”⁶

The Role of the Military

The powerful Turkish military has identified Islamism and separatism as the greatest threats to Turkey. (It had not considered Saddam Hussein to be a threat.) Commanders have indicated that they view the AKP and its predecessors as part of the Islamist threat, while the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) guerrillas are a threat to the country’s territorial integrity. The Chief of Staff General Hilmi Ozkok recognized the AKP election victory as an expression of the will of the people, but he and other military leaders remained suspicious of the party’s Islamist intentions and indicated that they would remain vigilant. The National Security Council (NSC), where nine civilian leaders and five military commanders get together to decide national policy, met on February 28, 2003. AKP wanted the respected and popular military to support its very unpopular position on the U.S. deployment. But the commanders demurred, seeming to want the AKP leaders alone to be responsible for the resolution. If the measure passed over popular opposition, AKP’s popularity might decline. If it failed, the AKP would be weakened. Either way, some observers pointed out, AKP’s image might be tarnished and the military would be pleased. Another interpretation suggested that the commanders may have simply miscalculated, having concluded that a party with control of two-thirds of parliament would be able to pass its own resolution without their support.

On March 4, 2003, after the ramifications of the defeat of the resolution became clearer and its effect on the AKP had been felt, and after anti-Turk demonstrations by Iraqi Kurds, General Ozkok issued a statement explaining the Turkish armed forces’ position. He said that National Security Council was not charged to advise parliament and pressuring parliament “would not have been democratic.”⁷ Ozkok

⁵ “Sezer Notes Need for New U.N. Resolution,” *NTV*, February 18, 2003, FBIS Document GMP20030218000091.

⁶ “Turkish President Casts Doubt on Overflight Rights,” *Reuters*, March 20, 2003.

⁷ Statement by General Hilmi Ozkok, Parts I and II, *NTV*, March 5, 2003, FBIS Documents GMP20030305000088 and /92. As context, the European Union has urged Turkish civilian (continued...)

then asserted that Turkey was not able to prevent the war on its own. "Our choice is between bad and worse." If Turkey did not participate in the war, Ozkok said, it would still sustain the same damages, but without compensation. However, if Turkey assisted in waging the war, part of its damages might be compensated, and the war would be shorter, with less pain and suffering. So, Ozkok said that the government's parliamentary motion to authorize U.S. forces had been in harmony with the armed forces' reasoning. In other words, he supported the resolution after its defeat. He also laid a foundation for passage of a similar resolution if and when it were resubmitted. Immediately thereafter, politicians praised Ozkok's statement and some members of parliament said that they would change their votes if the resolution was introduced again. Their rapid about face and remarks testified to the continuing, strong influence of the military in Turkish politics. However, AKP leaders decided on a course of damage control and not to resubmit the resolution.

Public Opinion and the Media

At about the time the U.S. Administration was preparing its requests for the new government in Ankara, a November 2002 survey of Turkish opinion by the Pew Research Center was published. It indicated that Turks opposed letting U.S. forces use bases in Turkey for military action in Iraq by a margin of 83% to 13%. The survey further showed that pro-American perceptions in Turkey had dropped from 52% in 1999-2000 to 30% in summer 2002. Moreover, 58% of Turks opposed the U.S. war on terrorism.⁸ Some viewed it as a war against Muslims.

By the time the Turkish government submitted the authorization resolution to parliament, opposition to the war had grown to 95% of the public, according to Turkey's Ambassador to the United States. Mass protests are uncommon in Turkey. Yet, on the day of the vote, more than 50,000 anti-war demonstrators gathered outside parliament. These developments posed a challenge to the government, which had focused almost exclusively on preventing a war and then on negotiating with the United States. It had not focused on preparing the public for the kind of support that it was willing to give to the United States. Some commentators argue that the public's animosity could have been more effectively addressed in U.S. efforts to convince Ankara to provide that support. On the other hand, Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, one of the main U.S. interlocutors, delivered a well-reported speech on the Iraq problem in Istanbul and gave an in-depth interview to a journalist from a popular newspaper. He and other U.S. official visitors to Turkey also held press conferences. Yet, some suspect that the Administration may not have taken the pressure of public opinion into account sufficiently in its interactions with

⁷ (...continued)

leaders to exercise greater control over the military, and the military has heard these admonitions. The NSC decides by consensus, but, traditionally, civilian leaders do not oppose the military's views. Much of the military's influence is rooted in Turkey's culture and history.

⁸ "Turkish People Sharply Opposed to U.S. Use of Air Bases Against Iraq," New Survey Says, *Associated Press*, December 5, 2002. For more recent views documented in Pew surveys, see [<http://people-press.org/reports/print.php3?PageID=683>].

Turkish politicians, on war plans, or in the size of the projected U.S. deployment to Turkey. (See below.)

The Turkish press helps form and express public opinion. It is controlled by a few magnates, some of whom have anti-American tendencies. During the U.S.-Turkish negotiations, the press depicted U.S. officials as bullies, further fueling anti-American sentiment. Newspapers negatively described U.S. pressure for an accord as a great power trying to ride roughshod over a lesser one. They wrote about ‘bullying’ and ‘threatening’ U.S. tactics.⁹ The opposition newspaper *Cumhuriyet* presented what it claimed was the transcript of a February 14 meeting at which President Bush had allegedly “ordered” the Turkish Foreign and Economic Ministers to go home and pass the resolution.¹⁰ Although the Foreign Ministry said that the report was the product of imagination, the story gained a life of its own by repetition. The media also reported on the presence of the flotilla of U.S. ships bearing military materiel waiting off the Turkish coast since before the government submitted its resolution to parliament – as if confirming that the U.S. administration had taken Turkey’s approval for granted. In other words, the press helped to transform the U.S. request into an issue of Turkish national honor.

Turkey’s Concerns about a War

The Turkish opposition to a war in Iraq and to the U.S. deployment stemmed from many deeply felt concerns. These include fear of the emergence of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq; regard for the Iraqi Turkomans; the potential for economic losses; dread of a humanitarian crisis in Iraq and along the Turkey-Iraq border; and concern for effects on regional stability.

Iraq’s Territorial Integrity – The Kurdish Issue

Turkey argues that the power vacuum in northern Iraq after the first Gulf war enabled the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) to find safe havens from which to escalate its insurgency in Turkey. The PKK is a guerrilla/terrorist group that waged a war for independence or autonomy in Turkey’s southeast from 1984-1999 – a war that resulted in 30,000 deaths. Turkey feared that another war in Iraq would produce a new power vacuum and the partition of Iraq. The birth of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq could then serve as a model for Turkish Kurdish separatists, whom many Turks believe are still seeking their own state in southeast Turkey.¹¹

⁹ “Turkish Press Divided over Washington’s Opinion of Ankara’s Bargaining Skills,” FBIS Document GMP20030225000054.

¹⁰ “Intimidation from Bush,” *Cumhuriyet*, February 25, 2003, FBIS Document GMP20030227000117.

¹¹ On April 4, 2002, the PKK renamed itself the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK) and elected PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan as KADEK general chairman in absentia. (Ocalan was tried and sentenced to death for treason; but his sentence was changed to life without parole after Turkey abolished the death penalty.) KADEK

(continued...)

After the Gulf war, Turkey allowed U.S. and British planes flying from Incirlik Air Base to enforce a no-fly zone over northern Iraq (Operation Provide Comfort/Operation Northern Watch) to protect Iraq's Kurds from Saddam Hussein and to monitor his armed forces. Turkey developed a tenuous *modus vivendi* with the two main Iraqi Kurdish groups, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), but never trusted their assurances that they do not want an independent state. Turkish officials acknowledge that the Iraqi Kurds have a *de facto* state in northern Iraq, with institutions and infrastructure. But they do not want the Iraqi Kurds to take additional steps toward *de jure* independence.

Turkey's anxiety about possible Iraqi Kurdish statehood increased as an American military campaign appeared more likely. Some in Ankara suggest that the probability of war emboldened the Iraqi Kurds to take advantage of what they perceive to be the U.S. need for their assistance. Tensions surfaced between Turkey and the KDP in August 2002 over the latter's draft constitution to establish a federal Iraq in which the Kurds would have greater autonomy and control of oil-rich Kirkuk.¹² In reaction, Turkey closed the Habur border gate, cutting the KDP's revenue sources by restricting the semi-illicit flow of diesel fuel from northern Iraq into Turkey.¹³ The former Turkish Defense Minister claimed that Turkey has historic rights in northern Iraq, and to its oil resources, dating from 1920.¹⁴

The KDP's official newspaper responded by threatening to turn northern Iraq into "a graveyard" for Turkish soldiers if they intervened, provoking angry reactions from Turkish civilian and military officials and media.¹⁵ To end this war of words and repair bilateral relations, KDP leader Massoud Barzani and other KDP officials

¹¹ (...continued)

spokesmen contended that the armed struggle was over, and that they sought to resolve issues only by the "democratization" of Turkey, without changing borders of the countries in the region. Turkish Kurds currently seek increased cultural and language rights and freedom to participate politically as a party. Turkish officials believe that the PKK/KADEK change is tactical and that separatism remains the goal. On February 13, 2003, because of what it said was the Turkish state's failure to respond to its peace initiative and to its treatment of Abdullah Ocalan, KADEK called an end to its unilateral cease-fire and urged a new uprising.

¹² Kirkuk is now controlled by the Baghdad government and is not part of the Kurdish autonomous area created in 1991. Its population is ethnically mixed: Arabs, Kurds, Turkomans.

¹³ The United Nations and United States waive sanctions on Turkey for the illicit energy traffic because it aids both Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds.

¹⁴ This was before the emergence of the Turkish Republic and failed to recognize a 1926 Turkish-British agreement giving the Ottoman Mosul Vilayet (province), including Kirkuk, to Iraq, which was under a British mandate at the time. Other Turkish officials maintained that the Minister's comments should have been viewed in the context of his defense of Iraqi Turkomans.

¹⁵ "Turkish Daily Notes KDP Official Postponed Visit Fearing Ankara's Reaction," *Hurriyet*, August 23, 2002, translation entered into FBIS online, August 25, 2002; Turkish (Foreign) ministry says Iraqi Kurd leader's words "aggressive," *Anatolia News Agency*, BBC-Monitoring Europe, September 6, 2002.

repeatedly affirmed their commitment to Iraq's territorial integrity and assurances for Turkey's national security and sovereignty.¹⁶ Yet, on September 25, the KDP and PUK agreed to a revised version of Barzani's draft constitution for a federal zone in northern Iraq, with Kirkuk as its capital, to present to other Iraqi opposition groups.

Not until February 2003, probably with U.S. prodding, did the Iraqi Kurds agree to participate in a postwar Iraqi government with other members of the Iraqi opposition and not to take Mosul and Kirkuk. They thereby signaled that they do not have an immediate intention to declare their independence.

Turkey remained uneasy and acted accordingly. In the 1990s, Turkish forces had made regular incursions into northern Iraq in "hot pursuit" of the PKK, and at least 5,000 Turkish troops remained there ostensibly to control activities of the PKK, but also as a warning to Iraqi Kurds. In anticipation of a war, Turkey increased its military presence in northern Iraq and greatly strengthened its forces on the border. The role of Turkish forces in northern Iraq during a war was a critical part of U.S.-Turkish negotiations for a U.S. troop deployment to Turkey and subsequently. (See below.) At one point, U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad claimed that Turkish forces in Iraq would operate under U.S. command, prompting denials from the Turkish military and outrage in the Turkish media. Eventually, Khalilzad spoke instead about U.S. and Turkish military "coordination."

As details of the proposed U.S.-Turkish arrangement surfaced and appeared to favor Turkey, the Iraqi Kurds reacted. On March 1, 2003, Barzani voiced the Iraqi opposition's rejection of a "military intervention by the Turkish army in Iraqi Kurdistan."¹⁷ Other KDP officials predicted clashes between Kurds and Turks if there were a Turkish incursion. The KDP sent militia (*pesh merga*) to the border. Demonstrators burned the Turkish flag and made anti-Turkish speeches.

Once again, however, the Iraqi Kurds evidently perceived that it was not in their interest to provoke Turkey. PUK "Prime Minister" Barham Salih visited Ankara to calm tension, encourage Turkey to work with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees on preventing a humanitarian crisis, and discourage unilateral acts by the Turkish military. He seemed satisfied that Turkey had no intention of occupying northern Iraq.¹⁸ On March 8, the KDP Council of Ministers condemned "the behavior of some ignorant people who insulted the Turkish flag" and said that the culprits had been arrested. It also voiced respect for "mutual interests" with Turkey.¹⁹ Consultations among Turks, Iraqi Kurds, and U.S. representatives continued.

¹⁶ "Dialogue Can Resolve Problems Between Turkey, Iraqi Kurd Group-leader," *Anatolia News Agency*, BBC-Monitoring Europe, September 10, 2002.

¹⁷ "U.S. Vows to Keep Turks on Leash in Iraq," *Reuters*, March 1, 2003.

¹⁸ "Salih Received Guarantee from Turkey," *NTV*, March 7, 2003, FBIS Document GMP20030307000094.

¹⁹ "A Statement by the Council of Ministers" of KDP, *Brayati*, March 8, 2003, BBC Monitoring Middle East-Political, March 10, 2003.

Nonetheless, the situation remained tense. On March 10, soon-to-be Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan confirmed that the Turkish armed forces had sent 50,000 troops to the border with Iraq and were continuing to deploy troops there. Large quantities of Turkish military materiel were shipped to the area.

Turkomans²⁰

Probably in part to balance Iraqi Kurdish momentum toward autonomy, Turkey has championed the rights of Iraqi Turkomans, who reside alongside the Kurds in northern Iraq. Turkomans are ethnic/linguistic relatives of the Turks. The Turkish government and Turkoman leaders recognized by Ankara claim that there are three million Iraqi Turkomans, although most sources cite far lower figures.²¹ Historically, the Turkomans' relations with other ethnic groups in the region have been troubled. Turkey favors the Ankara-based Iraqi Turkoman Front, which calls for a unitary state in Iraq or a regionally, not ethnically, based federal government. Turkey seeks assurances that the Turkomans will be fairly represented in a postwar Iraqi government. It became angry when the Iraqi opposition named a leadership council without a Turkoman representative.

Of relevance to Turkey's interests is the residence of many Turkomans in Kirkuk, an oil-rich region. Turkey does not want the oil to finance an Iraqi Kurdish state. In the event of a U.S. military operation against Iraq, some analysts suggested that Turkey would use its concern for its ethnic relatives, the Turkomans, as a pretext to intervene and prevent the Iraqi Kurds from controlling the oil reserves.²² Turkish Foreign Ministry officials denied such designs and claimed that they would not interfere in Iraq's internal affairs. They compared their concern for the Turkomans to their feelings for Bulgarian Turks under communist rule, and said that they only wanted to see Turkomans similarly represented in a democratic Iraq.²³ The same mistrust of Turkey's alleged territorial ambitions was expressed during the first Gulf war; the inaction of Turkey's military then seemed to prove suspicions groundless.

The Iraqi Kurds agreed with the U.S. position that Iraq's oil assets belong to the entire Iraqi nation. There was concern, however, that the lack of a northern front from Turkey would prevent the insertion of sufficient U.S. forces in northern Iraq to secure

²⁰ Sometimes referred to as Turcoman and Turkmen. The latter usage, however, could be confused with the inhabitants of Turkmenistan.

²¹ Some sources estimate that Turkomans constitute about 1.4% of the Iraqi population and probably number about 330,000. According to one source, there are about 1.5 million Turkomans in the Middle East, residing in Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. Colbert C. Held, *Middle East Patterns: Places, Peoples, and Politics*, Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 2000, p. 104. The *CIA World Factbook 2002* says that Turkomans, Assyrians, and other non-Arab, non-Kurdish Iraqis together make up 5% of a national population of 24 million. Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz suggested Turkey's Turkoman claims were "exaggerated" during a visit to Turkey in September 2002.

²² "Turkoman Bargaining," *Sabah*, July 23, 2002, translation entered into FBIS online, July 23, 2002.

²³ Analogy by Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry Ugur Ziyal at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, August 28, 2002.

Kirkuk, prevent Iraqi Kurds from returning to their former homes there, and stop Saddam Hussein's sabotaging the oil fields.

Economic Factors

Turkey's opposition to a war against Iraq also was motivated by economic concerns. Before the first Gulf war, Turkey closed its border with Iraq, then one of its major trading partners, and abided by international sanctions. Turks estimate the cost of the closure at \$30 billion to \$100 billion, and argue that the international community never compensated them for their losses.²⁴ Others, however, suggest that this view fails to account for the willingness of international financial institutions to provide ample assistance during Turkey's financial crises, despite Turkey's history of poor governance and failed economic reform programs. Furthermore, as a result of the U.N.'s humanitarian "oil-for-food" program begun in December 1996 and of the semi-illicit trade in diesel and crude oil, bilateral Iraqi-Turkish trade totaled about \$1 billion annually. The two neighbors had hoped to reach pre-Gulf war trade levels of about \$2.5 billion annually. Turkey did not want this positive trend reversed.

Turkish officials and others feared a war might inflict rising oil prices, loss of foreign investment, collapse of the vital tourism sector, closure of the oil pipeline from Iraq to Turkey's Mediterranean coast, and loss of border and other bilateral trade. Achievement of the goals of a painful economic reform program Turkey has undertaken also might be set back. Turkey generally did not contemplate the possibility that its economic cost from a war might be diminished if a northern front from its territory led to a shorter war. Nor did it assess benefits that might accrue from normal economic relations with a post-Saddam Iraq because they were seen as uncertain long term prospects, while Turkey had many immediate needs in the aftermath of an impoverishing recession.

Humanitarian Issues

Turkey notes that the first Gulf war created a mass exodus of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Kurds to Turkey and a humanitarian crisis of enormous proportions for which it was unprepared. Turks believe that their response to the crisis was unjustly criticized. In the event of a second war, Turkey had contingency plans to establish camps for refugees on the Iraqi side of the border as well as at several sites in southeast Turkey.²⁵

²⁴ Commentators note that Turks sometimes seem to attribute all of their financial woes to the consequences of the Gulf war, and to ignore the effects of repeated financial mismanagement by a succession of governments in the 1990s.

²⁵ The plans reportedly were shelved weeks into the war, after it became clear that there would be no refugee crisis. "Turkey scraps Refugee Camp Plans," *Financial Times*, April 4, 2003.

Regional Stability

Turkey is concerned about the potential for postwar regional instability, including the unleashing of now latent interethnic and religious disputes and a worsening of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Ankara, like most governments in the region, preferred the United States to give priority to solving the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.

Proposed Bilateral Arrangements for the U.S. Deployment of Troops

Diplomacy

The U.S. Administration began its campaign to gain Turkey's support for a war in Iraq in mid-2002, when the previous Turkish government was in power. U.S. officials closely and frequently courted and consulted their Turkish counterparts. Secretary of State Colin Powell, Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Undersecretary of State Marc Grossman, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice were all active. Vice President Dick Cheney spoke to Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry Ugur Ziyal on videophone during the latter's visit to Washington in August 2002. Such high level meetings with an undersecretary are beyond the dictates of normal diplomatic protocol, but Ziyal is one of the ministry's experts on the Middle East and the Turkish General Staff Chief of Plans was in his delegation. When Secretary Powell saluted the Iraqi Kurdish parliament on October 4, 2002, he claimed that the Iraqi Kurds shared the U.S. vision for a "democratic, pluralistic, united Iraq" with its "territorial integrity intact." U.S. officials also assured the Turks of U.S. opposition to Kurdish control of Mosul and Kirkuk and stated that the oil resources would be controlled by the future central Iraqi government.

President Bush conferred via the telephone with President Sezer in October 2002. On December 11, President Bush met AKP leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the White House. Because Erdogan, at the time, was not a head of state or of government, the meeting was considered highly unusual and boosted Erdogan's stature and legitimacy. Some analysts would later suggest that the meeting also made the AKP believe that Turkey was indispensable to a U.S. military operation.²⁶ On February 14, 2003, President Bush met Foreign Minister Yasar Yakis and Minister of State for the Economy Ali Babacan at the White House. Secretary of State Powell met with the two Turkish ministers at length at his home to discuss the U.S. aid offer. On February 19, the Secretary telephoned Prime Minister Gul to urge finalization of an agreement, but Gul chose to wait until after a Muslim holiday. They subsequently spoke after the March 1 defeat of the resolution, when President Bush and Vice President Cheney also urged Gul and Erdogan to reconsider.

²⁶ The AKP Government has not Perceived the Situation with Regard to Iraq Yet, *Milliyet*, March 24, 2003, FBIS Document GMP20030325000062.

Undersecretary Wolfowitz appears to have been most active. Attempting to assuage concerns while in Turkey in July 2002, he declared that a separate Kurdish state in northern Iraq was unacceptable to the United States.²⁷ Wolfowitz and Undersecretary of State Marc Grossman returned to Turkey on December 4, when Wolfowitz gave an extensive interview to a popular Turkish journalist to publicly provide assurances. He said that he had discussed with Turkish authorities “What should we do in order to guarantee that an independent Kurdish state is not established in north Iraq after the Saddam regime falls? It is necessary to ensure that the central government in Iraq continues to control the national assets of the country....” “Our goal is to safeguard the territorial integrity of Iraq....” He added. “If we can liberate the Iraqi people, Turkey’s real reward will be having a democratic, prosperous neighbor” He expressed a preference for a “coordinated effort” among Turkey, the Iraqi Kurds, and the United States, but said that he had received assurances that if Turkey acts in northern Iraq, “this will not be an invasion, but will rather be certain temporary measures to defend Turkey’s interests.” He also tried to convince his interlocutors of the need for a “convincing threat not only from the south, but also from the north” to increase the chance of a peaceful solution or, if that is not possible, of the importance of rapid and decisive use of force.²⁸ Wolfowitz argued that it would be better for Turkey to act to protect its interests in northern Iraq as part of a coalition rather than alone.

The U.S. military also consulted their Turkish counterparts closely. Commander of the U.S. Central Command General Tommy Franks, responsible for Iraq, and NATO Supreme Allied Commander in Europe and Commander of the U.S. European Command General Joseph Ralston met Chief of the Turkish General Staff General Hilmi Ozkok and other officers in Ankara on October 21, 2002, for “collaboration, consultation, and discussion.” General Ozkok visited the United States, November 4-10, and met Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and others in Washington and General Franks at CENTCOM headquarters in Tampa. The Deputy Director of Central Intelligence and a large delegation visited the Turkish General Staff on November 13, and then went to Incirlik Air Base. On January 20, 2003, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers visited his Turkish counterpart. A week later the new NATO military commander, General James Jones, came to call.

Specific negotiations for the U.S. deployment of forces were conducted by the Turkish Foreign Ministry and the Department of State. The gist of several tentative agreements, derived from statements of officials and media reports, is summarized below. The accords were voided after Turkey failed to approve the U.S. troop deployment.

After the failure of the negotiations, former Foreign Minister Yasir Yakis admitted that the Turkish government had miscalculated. He said that it believed that the United States depended on Turkish support to set up a northern front and that protracted negotiations would only strengthen the Turkish position. In the end, he

²⁷ “AA Details Wolfowitz Address at TESEV Meet on US-Turkish Relations,” *Ankara Anatolia* in English, 15 July 02, entered into FBIS online, July 15, 2002.

²⁸ Sedat Ergin, Interview, *Hurriyet*, December 5, 2002, FBIS Document GMP20021205000151.

concluded, the prolongation of negotiations worked to Turkey's disadvantage as the United States shifted to alternative military plans. The government, he conceded, had made a "very serious strategic mistake."²⁹

U.S. Forces

Since the aftermath of World War I, when allied powers attempted to carry out an occupation and partition of Anatolia, Turks have been wary of the presence of foreign forces on their soil. During the height of the Cold War, the United States had 25,000 troops based in Turkey. During the first Gulf war, the United States used Turkish air space and air bases to launch strikes against Iraq, but it did not seek a ground presence or to open a northern front. At the time, Turkey closed its border with Iraq and deployed its forces to the border, which held Iraqi troops in the north while the war was being fought in the south. After 1991, as part of Operation Provide Comfort/Operation Northern Watch, about 2,500 U.S. forces participated in the allied effort enforcing a no-fly zone over northern Iraq.

The Bush Administration reportedly initially requested permission to deploy 80,000 plus troops to Turkey.³⁰ In view of Turkish sensitivities, the size of U.S. troop request related to a new war was controversial. Turkey initially countered the request with an offer to welcome 15,000 troops. The Defense Department deemed this insufficient to open a northern front and negotiations continued. The unsuccessful resolution that the AKP submitted to parliament on February 25, 2003, and that was defeated on March 1, would have authorized the United States to deploy 62,000 troops, 255 warplanes, and 65 helicopters for a period of six months.

Site Surveys/Base Modernization

In December 2002, the Turkish government had authorized negotiations to begin on a U.S. site survey of Turkish military bases and ports – to assess their capacity and the need for upgrades to accommodate American planes and forces. Legal issues delayed negotiations. Turkey wanted the status or rights granted the surveyors to be a precedent for U.S. troops to be deployed in country later, and for Turkish law to apply to them. It argued that, since the survey was not a NATO mission, the NATO Status of Forces Agreement, under which U.S. forces are subject to U.S. law, should not apply. The Turkish position was adopted, and the surveys began on January 13, 2003. The U.S. reportedly requested use of nine airbases/airports, including airbases at Batman, Diyarbakir, and Incirlik, and ports at Mersin and Iskenderun. On February 6, the Turkish parliament voted to allow the United States to upgrade bases at a reported cost of \$200 million to \$300 million.³¹ On February 6, the Turkish parliament approved the deployment of about 3,500 U.S. technical and military personnel in Turkey for three months to undertake renovation, development, and

²⁹ "Sensational Confession," *Sabah*, March 21, 2003, FBIS Document, GMP20030321000096.

³⁰ "Turkey, U.S. Near Accord on Deployment," *Washington Post*, January 17, 2003.

³¹ The Defense Department is probably using funds already appropriated for this work.

construction of bases and ports. The U.S. Department contracted with Turkish companies to undertake the work, which began on February 13.

Under the mandate of the agreement on modernizing bases, U.S. forces off-loaded military vehicles and equipment at Incirlik and other air bases and at the ports of Mersin and Iskenderun, and moved them to staging sites in southeast Turkey, not far from the Iraqi border.³² Some U.S. troops may have quietly moved into Iraq. After arrangements were limited to U.S. use of Turkish airspace, much equipment was withdrawn from southeast Turkey for shipment to Kuwait. Some of it remained to be used for search and rescue operations and refugee relief. In early April, Turkey permitted 204 U.S. Humvee all-terrain light vehicles to cross into Iraq.



Source: Map Resources. Adapted by CRS. (M.Chin 03/03)

³² Film of truck convoys was shown on CNN Turk and NTV in Turkey, and on The News Hour with Jim Lehrer, March 12, 2003.

Finances³³

Turkey's highest priority was obtaining protection against the economic impact of a war. As noted above, Turkey is recovering from its worst recession in more than 50 years and has sought to ensure that progress under an International Monetary Fund-supervised reform program is not set back by losses in its critical tourism sector, higher oil prices, and other difficulties. Some in Turkey had hoped for a very large aid package.

On March 6, 2003, Secretary of State Powell confirmed that the total cost to the U.S. treasury of the offered assistance would have been \$6 billion. Turkey's Minister of State for Economy Ali Babacan provided some details to the press. The package included \$2 billion in military assistance and \$4 billion in economic assistance.³⁴ The \$4 billion in economic aid could be leveraged to obtain \$24 billion in loan guarantees, i.e., private loans at lower interest rates. Furthermore, the United States would provide a "bridge loan" of \$8.5 billion immediately (from the U.S. Treasury's Exchange Stability Fund), which Turkey would repay out of the \$24 billion in private loans.³⁵ The Turkish government could use the longer term, lower interest guaranteed loans to replace short term, higher interest, domestic debt and thereby improve its debt management considerably.³⁶ Turkey has heavy loan payments due throughout 2003. The Turkish government reluctantly agreed to U.S. conditions that would tie disbursement of funds to continued adherence to the IMF program. The U.S. demand for these conditions resulted from Turkey's history of fiscal indiscipline and concern that the AKP might spend the funds profligately to fulfill campaign promises.

Military Understandings

Under proposals reportedly made during U.S.-Turkish negotiations, Turkish and U.S. forces would have coordinated their moves in northern Iraq through liaison officers. Turkish forces were to have entered northern Iraq shortly after U.S. troops

³³ After the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, the Administration resumed foreign aid for Turkey, which had been mostly discontinued in 1998 as part of a policy of "aid graduation," with \$20 million from the Emergency Response Fund. The United States also provided \$28 million in military aid and \$200 million in economic assistance as part of a FY2002 supplemental appropriation, largely to support Turkey's command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. For FY2003, Turkey was to receive \$17.5 million in foreign military financing (FMF) and \$2.8 million in international military education and training funds (IMET). For FY2004, the Administration has requested \$50 million in FMF, \$200 million in economic support funds (ESF), and \$5 million in IMET. Since 1999, the United States, as the largest contributor to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), has helped Turkey obtain \$31 billion in IMF loans.

³⁴ Turkey's \$12 billion military wish list for the next decade includes helicopters, submarines, frigates, and other materiel. Turkey Country Briefing – Growing Commitments, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, February 12, 2003.

³⁵ "Babacan: Donation to be Used for Military Purposes, Loans to Repay Debts," *Anatolia*, February 26, 2003, FBIS Document, GMP20030226000164.

³⁶ Turkey's domestic debt is \$90 billion and its foreign debt is \$80 billion.

to establish a buffer zone, about 12 and 1/2 miles into Iraq, increasing the Turkish presence to perhaps 40,000 troops.³⁷ They would not have engaged in combat against Saddam Hussein's forces, and would have remained for 18 months. Turks claimed that their primary purpose was humanitarian – to secure the border and prevent an influx of refugees. Iraq Kurdish leaders denied the possibility of a refugee crisis, although international and non-governmental organizations had prepared for one. Turks also wanted to protect the Iraqi Turkomans, and prevent remnants of the PKK in northern Iraq, perhaps numbering a few thousand, from taking advantage of wartime chaos to infiltrate Turkey.

Although Foreign Minister Yasar Yakis averred that Turkish troops would “never” try to occupy the oil regions of Mosul or Kirkuk,³⁸ it was widely believed that, should U.S. forces fail to do so, the Turkish military would act to prevent the Iraqi Kurds from declaring independence and from seizing Kirkuk and other oil-rich sites that could fund a state. For humanitarian purposes alone, 40,000 Turkish troops probably would not have been needed. Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul said that Turkish officers would be present during the U.S. distribution of arms to and later collection of arms from the Iraqi Kurds.³⁹ Turkey did not want to see the weapons fall into the hands of the PKK/KADEK or be used to defend a Kurdish state. This provision especially angered the Iraqi Kurds, who said that their militia will be integrated into a new Iraqi army and not be disarmed.

Political

Turkey wanted written U.S. assurances to safeguard the territorial integrity and national unity of Iraq, i.e., that an independent Kurdish state would not emerge in northern Iraq. The United States reportedly promised Turkey that it would be represented at final negotiations for a postwar Iraqi government to protect the interests of the Turkomans, and presumably of Turkey.

Trade

The United States has repeatedly promised Turkey enhanced trade, but Turks believe that the promise has not been fulfilled. In early 2002, the Bush Administration proposed the establishment of qualified industrial zones (QIZs) as part of the U.S.-Israel Free Trade Area.⁴⁰ QIZs are multilateral trade zones in which goods are produced for export to the U.S. market that benefit from tariff relief. In June 2002, H.R. 5002 and S. 2663 were introduced to authorize QIZs, but specified

³⁷ Mehmet Ali Birand interview of Erdogan, *Anatolia*, February 26, 2003, FBIS Document GMP20020226000245, “U.S. Assures Turkey on Kurds,” *Washington Post*, February 27, 2003, “Turkey Has a Lot at Stake,” *Turkish Daily News*, March 3, 2003.

³⁸ “U.S. and Turkey Reach Accord to Let G.I.’s Establish a Base,” *New York Times*, February 22, 2003.

³⁹ “Understanding Reached on Military Issues,” *NTV*, February 27, 2003, FBIS Document GMP20030227000044.

⁴⁰ See CRS Report RS21458, *Turkey: Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZs) – Issues and Economic Implications*, by Mary Jane Bolle.

that Turkey's major exports of textiles, apparel, and leather goods would not be eligible for the exemption from duties for goods produced in the QIZs.⁴¹ The Turks were unhappy with these exceptions. The legislation was incorporated into H.R. 5385, Miscellaneous Trade and Technical Corrections Act of 2002, agreed to in the House on October 7, 2002. The Senate did not act on the legislation before the 107th Congress adjourned.

As partial compensation for Turkey's agreement to the deployment of U.S. troops, the Administration reportedly proposed allowing the Pentagon to buy Turkish-made apparel for U.S. troops for one-year, waiving "Buy American" requirements. Turkey also would have been allowed to increase its duty-free exports of clothing above the present quota for goods made with American yarn and fabrics.⁴²

Actual Arrangements for Access to Airspace and Other Issues

The war began on March 19, without agreement on the various arrangements noted above. Therefore, no northern front against Iraq via Turkish territory opened and the United States withdrew its offer of aid. Days earlier, a dozen U.S. ships with missile-launching capabilities moved away from Turkey's coast to the Red Sea. Some 36 additional ships, carrying military materiel for the 4th Infantry Division which was to open the northern front, subsequently moved from Turkey's coast toward Kuwait.

Airspace

On March 13, President Bush sent a letter congratulating Erdogan on his election and requesting access to Turkey's airspace in the event of a war. Vice President Cheney then spoke to Erdogan requesting fast action on the request. Turkish officials determined that only parliament could grant the permission but delayed action because, they said, they needed time to overcome the negative atmosphere left after the March 1 vote. Foreign Minister Gul reportedly tried to revive some of the arrangements previously negotiated, but Washington was no longer interested. Secretary of State Powell emphasized that the United States was only interested in airspace, and he telephoned Gul several times, pressing the issue. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher observed that "overflights are

⁴¹ Over 57% of Turkey's exports are textiles and leather goods, leading some Turks to argue that proposed QIZs have limited value. They assert that the U.S. emphasis on using the QIZs for high tech products would not spur needed short term economic growth since, they maintain, the tech sector provides only a very small quantity of exports to the United States and its products are already subject to minimal tariffs, *Are the Qualified Industrial Zones Being Used as a Carrot for a Military Operation?* *Hurriyet*, August 28, 2002, entered into FBIS online August 29, 2002. See also, "A New U.S. Trade Relationship with Turkey: Good Idea, Plan Needs Work, Progressive Policy Institute Project on Trade and Global Markets," *Policy Report*, September 2002.

⁴² "Turkey Offered Deal on Textiles," *Washington Post*, February 27, 2003.

routinely granted by other (NATO) member nations without any question of financial assistance or the need for dealing with any economic consequences. So we would expect that to be handled in that manner.”⁴³ Even France and Germany, which strongly opposed to use of force against Iraq, had granted access to their airspace.

On March 19, the Turkish parliament, by a vote of 332 to 202, with one abstention, authorized U.S. access to 11 Turkish air corridors for six months and the deployment of Turkish troops abroad. U.S. aircraft based on carriers in the eastern Mediterranean and in Europe acquired a more direct route to Iraq. However, even after the motion was passed, the Turkish government did not immediately open its airspace. It reportedly wanted information on the number, frequency, nature, and load of overflights – information that the United States considered beyond the demands of safety. Turkish officials also tried to tie the issue to U.S. agreement to the deployment of Turkish troops to northern Iraq. The Administration resisted this conditionality. Only on March 21 did Turkey open its airspace without condition, and separately reserved the right to deploy its forces. Turkey was the last NATO member to grant the United States access to its airspace. It granted the same access to the United Kingdom.

Turkey’s airspace was used by armed Tomahawk missiles, U.S. Navy B-2 bombers, and U.S. planes that airlifted the 173rd Airborne Brigade paratroopers who jumped into northern Iraq. Three Tomahawks fell short of their targets and onto Turkish territory without causing casualties. Missile-firing was suspended on March 27, pending investigation.

Turkish Troops in Northern Iraq

The government motion submitted to parliament on March 19 justified the deployment of Turkish troops to northern Iraq as a “dissuasive” action, due to threats to Turkey’s security from “accelerated” acts of the PKK, risks to Iraq’s territorial integrity, an “environment of instability” that may threaten the safety of other national groups in the region, i.e., the Turkomans.⁴⁴

There was considerable confusion about Turkey’s intentions and actions, as well as concern that Turkish forces would enter northern Iraq without a prior agreement with the United States. U.S. officials feared that a unilateral Turkish action might disrupt the U.S. military campaign, spark clashes between Turks and Kurds, and provoke similar acts by Syria and Iran. On March 20, Prime Minister Erdogan told a *Washington Post* writer that he thought that the arrangement between the United States and Turkey for Turkish forces in northern Iraq was “approximately the same” as the agreement reached in the protracted negotiations discussed in **Military Understandings**, above.⁴⁵ Yet, U.S. officials denied that there was an agreement,

⁴³ State Department press briefing, March 19, 2003.

⁴⁴ “Turkish Motion on U.S. Use of Airspace Refers to Security Threats,” *Anatolia News Agency*, BBC Monitoring Newsfile, March 20, 2003

⁴⁵ “Q&A: Turkey’s Recep Tayyip Erdogan On Overflights and Understandings,” (continued...)

and negotiations continued. On March 23, Turkey's Ambassador to the United States hoped that the issue would be resolved in "days." He stated, "We reserve both the option and intention of sending troops into northern Iraq. But we have to do this in consultation with the U.S. administration, and hopefully with its consent."⁴⁶

The U.S. Administration communicated its position clearly and repeatedly. State Department spokesman Boucher said that the United States remained opposed to any military action that was not under coalition control and to unilateral action by Turkey or by any party in northern Iraq.⁴⁷ Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld noted that Turkish forces already go in and out of northern Iraq. With regard to a possibly increased Turkish troop deployment, however, he stated, "we have advised the Turkish government and the Turkish armed forces that it would be notably unhelpful if they went into the north in large numbers."⁴⁸ On March 23, President Bush said, "We're making it very clear to the Turks that we expect them not to come into northern Iraq. We're in constant touch with the Turkish military, as well as Turkish politicians. They know our policy ... and they know we're working with the Kurds to make sure there's no incident that would cause there to be an excuse to go into northern Iraq."⁴⁹ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Myers said that the U.S. government policy was that "Turkish forces should not go into northern Iraq, other than to support refugee flows.... [W]e have not seen those flows, and therefore there's no need at this point for Turkish forces to go in there." He added that the Turkish general staff had been very cooperative and that forces in the region, not just the Turkish forces, would conduct joint liaison activities to make sure that there is not miscommunication or misperception of what each force is doing.⁵⁰

General Myers probably was referring to the result of U.S. special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad's negotiations with eight Iraqi opposition groups, including Kurds and Turkomans, and the Turks. On March 18, Khalilzad claimed that the Kurds had agreed that their forces would operate "under the command and control of coalition commanders."⁵¹ He also said that the United States would be responsible for securing Kirkuk and Mosul. Turkey agreed to participate in a "mechanism" or standing committee in which Turks, Kurds, and Americans would deal with issues as they arise and thereby minimize the risk of clashes between Turks and Kurds. Turkey maintained that its troops would be under Turkish command, but would coordinate with the coalition.

⁴⁵ (...continued)

Washington Post, March 23, 2003.

⁴⁶ "Talks on Turkish Role are Underway," *Washington Post*, March 23, 2003.

⁴⁷ State Department press briefing, March 20, 2003.

⁴⁸ Defense Department press briefing, March 21, 2003.

⁴⁹ Bush-Remarks, *Federal Document Clearing House*, March 23, 2003. The European Union, Germany, and Russia all echoed U.S. calls on Turkey to stay out of northern Iraq.

⁵⁰ This Week, ABC Television, March 23, 2003.

⁵¹ "Iraqi Kurds Agree to U.S. Command - U.S. Envoy," *Reuters*, March 18, 2003.

On March 25, Khalilzad returned to Ankara. Washington was said to once again provide reassurances concerning Iraq's territorial integrity and the Turkomans. On March 26, Turkish Chief of Staff General Ozkok gave his own assurances.⁵² He said that the Turkish Armed Forces' most important security concerns were a possible attack against Turkish troops who have been present in northern Iraq for some time, a big refugee influx, and an attack by one armed group in northern Iraq against another or against the civilian population. If these threats occur, then a decision could be made to send additional forces to northern Iraq. All action "will be coordinated with the United States" in order to avoid misunderstandings. He stressed that Turkey had "no intention to establish a permanent buffer zone" and had no hidden goals. Turkish forces would not use force other than for self defense.

The United States established a command in northern Iraq to open a modified northern front. Its mission also was partly humanitarian, and probably partly to prevent the threats that would justify Turkey's entry into northern Iraq. On March 31, Khalilzad announced that agreement had been reached with Turkish officials that "Turkish forces would not enter northern Iraq just for the sake of entering the region."⁵³ On April 2 in Ankara, Secretary of State Powell heard Turkish officials reiterate developments which would provoke an incursion: a refugee crisis, a PKK reappearance, a threat to the Turkomans, and an Iraqi Kurd advance on Kirkuk. The Secretary assessed the likelihood of a need for an incursion as low because the United States had stabilized the situation in northern Iraq by close consultation, a U.S. military presence, control exercised by CENTCOM, and the U.S. relationship with the Kurds. He expressed hope that issues related to the establishment of the coordination group to create a process for early warning of potential problems would be resolved "within a week."⁵⁴ The early warning system reportedly was to have two levels. On the lower level, two units — one in Silopi, a Turkish border town, with Turkish and U.S. members, and another in northern Iraq, with Kurdish and U.S. members — were to be in direct communication with each other.⁵⁵ It is not clear if the lower level units were ever established. A higher level was said to involve direct communication by General Ozkok to General Myers, and appears to have worked.⁵⁶

On April 10, Kurdish militia entered Kirkuk. When Foreign Minister Gul expressed his alarm, Secretary Powell assured him that U.S. forces would be inserted and make sure that situations would not arise that would cause concern to the Turkish government. He invited Turkey to send military observers, who rapidly deployed to Kirkuk, Mosul, and the U.S. command headquarters in northern Iraq on April 11.

⁵² Statement to the media by General Hilmi Ozkok, *NTV*, March 26, 2003, FBIS Document GMP20030326000084. Turkish Army hints it might not enter Iraq, *Reuters*, March 26, 2003.

⁵³ "Khalilzad: We Reached an Agreement," *TRT*, March 31, 2003, FBIS Document GMP20030331000210.

⁵⁴ "Powell, Gul Hold News Conference," *TRT 2*, April 2, 2003, FBIS Document GMP20030402000163.

⁵⁵ "Turkey scraps Refugee Camp Plans," *Financial Times*, April 4, 2003.

⁵⁶ "Two-Stage Early Warning System for North Iraq," *Vatan*, April 5, 2003, FBIS Document GMP20030405000112.

No other new Turkish forces entered northern Iraq. On April 13, U.S. armor arrived in Kirkuk and the Kurdish militia presence appeared to diminish.

Use of Turkish Air Bases *Not* Included

Parliament's March 19 authorization of access to airspace did not extend to U.S. use of air bases in Turkey to launch attacks on Iraq, for refueling, or for resupply. On March 21, the Turkish Foreign Ministry informed the U.S. and British embassies in Ankara that Operation Northern Watch was terminated and that its planes should leave Incirlik. Some planes were redeployed to support Operation Iraqi Freedom, and others returned to the United States. Undersecretary of State Richard Armitage said that Operation Northern Watch was no longer needed, and the operation formally ended on May 1.⁵⁷ Turkish bases were used during the war for humanitarian purposes, such as evacuation of wounded coalition soldiers, and for emergency landings by several U.S. planes that fly missions over northern Iraq.

Resupply and Search and Rescue Operations

On April 2, Secretary of State Powell and Foreign Minister Gul announced that Turkey had agreed to allow the provision of non-lethal supplies, i.e., food, fuel, water, medicine, to U.S. units in northern Iraq. Turkish trucks would deliver these supplies, and the Turkish economy would benefit from U.S. purchases and other expenditures. They also agreed that U.S. wounded recovered by search and rescue teams operating in northern Iraq could be transported via Turkey and possibly be treated there. They further agreed on expediting the provision of humanitarian aid to northern Iraq. Gul later estimated that U.S. purchases would exceed \$1 billion.

Finances

On March 24, as part of his request for supplemental funding to pay for the war in Iraq, President Bush asked for \$1 billion in Economic Support Funds (ESF) for Turkey, which could secure direct loans or loan guarantees of up to \$8.5 billion. Officially, the funds are to help Turkey deal with the economic consequences of the war, "regardless of its level of cooperation." The Administration said that funds would be conditioned on economic policies and tied to continued performance on international financial institutions programs.⁵⁸ The President would set the terms and conditions of the grant. The State Department underscored that the \$1 billion was a request not a commitment. It and Congress could then assess Turkey's economic situation, and probably Turkey's role at least in not complicating the U.S. operation in Iraq.

The aid was included in P.L. 108-11, April 16, 2003, the emergency wartime supplemental appropriations act. The funds would not be provided if Turkey unilaterally deploys troops into northern Iraq, unless the Secretary of State determines

⁵⁷ At House International Relations Committee, Subcommittee on Foreign Operations' hearing, March 31, 2003.

⁵⁸ State Department Press Briefing, March 25, 2003.

that it is in the national security interest. The House Appropriations Committee and the House had earlier defeated an amendment to strip aid for Turkey from the bill.

The NATO Dimension

In January 2003, the United States asked NATO to begin contingency planning to protect Turkey in the event of a war. France, Germany, and Belgium prevented action, arguing that consideration would signal that war was inevitable and U.N.-supervised inspections futile. However, all three individually issued promises to protect Turkey if it were threatened. Other NATO members expressed dismay with the French/German/Belgian position. On February 10, Turkey invoked Article IV of the NATO Treaty, requesting consultation regarding a threat. The same three governments obstructed action. On February 20, however, Germany and Belgium allowed NATO to consider the issue in its Defense Planning Committee, where France does not participate. NATO then agreed to provide Turkey with AWACS surveillance aircraft, Patriot air defense batteries and missiles, and chemical and biological warfare response gear.

The Netherlands deployed Patriot anti-missile systems and troops, armed with German missiles to Turkey while NATO was still debating. NATO later sent two AWACS planes to Konya in Turkey. On March 21, the Spanish government authorized its air force to contribute to NATO's defense of Turkey with a contingent of six F-18 fighter bombers, a KC-130 Hercules refueling aircraft, and a search and rescue service Superpuma helicopter, and 232 personnel. Germany balked at sending additional Patriot systems. Its parliament was unlikely to approve deployment of the military manpower required because the government opposes war. The United States made up the deficit by sending two Patriot systems – an action unrelated to the troop deployment issue.

As the issue of Turkey's entrance into northern Iraq became more prominent, Turkey's NATO allies voiced their opposition. On March 22, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said that if Turkey became a participant in the war by entering northern Iraq, then Germany would withdraw its soldiers from the AWACS. Belgium and Greece adopted the same position. On March 25, the Spanish government announced that it would withdraw its military support from Turkey if it invades northern Iraq. Germany and Belgium warned that NATO might review its mission if Turkey invaded northern Iraq.

Turkey has always prized its membership in NATO, which remains its only formal anchor in the West. During the Cold War, Turkey was one of two NATO countries (along with Norway) that bordered the Soviet Union. The AKP downplayed NATO's reluctance to consider Turkey's concerns, saying it did not affect Turkey's security. Prime Minister Gul noted, however, that it "negatively affected the credibility of the alliance."⁵⁹ It is possible that the Turkish military may have been especially dismayed by developments.

⁵⁹ "Turkish Minister Says NATO Credibility Hurt," *Reuters*, February 13, 2003.

Implications

U.S.-Turkish Bilateral Relations

A U.S.-Turkish agreement for a substantial U.S. troop deployment and a large aid package would have been a high water mark in relations between the two countries. Instead, failure to reach an agreement may have been the worst episode in bilateral relations in decades. It produced a severe crisis of confidence. Analysts speculated that both sides may have overreached at the start of negotiations: the United States with the unprecedented number of troops it requested to deploy and confidence that permission would be granted, and Turkey with its exorbitant expectations of aid, which sources put at \$32 to \$92 billion.⁶⁰

The U.S. Administration publicly recognized the March 1, 2003, parliamentary vote against deployment as an expression of Turkey's democracy, and AKP leaders Erdogan and Gul quickly and repeatedly emphasized the continuing importance of Turkey's strategic alliance with the United States. But U.S. officials reportedly were furious.⁶¹ Months of negotiations had produced a package that they considered to be generous and to take into account Turkey's concerns. Yet their efforts did not bear fruit.

U.S. officials initially downplayed the importance of the deployment.⁶² However, without a northern front to worry about, Saddam Hussein was able to redeploy infantry and Republican Guard units from the north to reinforce Baghdad and his southern front. This could have produced more casualties and prevented U.S. troops from protecting Iraq's northern oil fields. On March 27, Undersecretary of Defense Wolfowitz told a House committee, "There is no question if we had a U.S. armored force in northern Iraq right now, the end (of the war) would be closer."⁶³

Because the worst case scenarios did not develop, American anger against Turkey did not increase. Yet, since Turkey did not allow the deployment, Turkey's strategic importance to the United States undoubtedly diminished. Turkey and its resources, such as the huge complex at the Incirlik Air Base, are important only if they are available for use in a crisis. The United States has unfailingly supported Turkey's many appeals to international financial institutions, lobbied for Turkey's membership in the European Union, and made concessions to accommodate Turkish concerns in the negotiations for the troop deployment because of U.S. appreciation

⁶⁰ "Turkey Demands \$32 Billion U.S. Aid Package," *New York Times*, February 19, 2003. One writer reported that Minister of State Babacan had demanded \$92 billion. "Aysli Aydintasbas, U.S. Said Seeking 'Guarantees,'" *Sabah*, March 7, 2003, FBIS Document GMP20030308000029.

⁶¹ "U.S. Fumes over Turkey Demand for More Aid," *Los Angeles Times*, February 19, 2003.

⁶² General Richard B. Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said, "There'll be a northern option with or without Turkey." Bush Weighs Attack Options, *New York Times*, March 6, 2003.

⁶³ "Wolfowitz Says Turkey Made 'Big, Big Mistake,'" *Associated Press*, March 27, 2003.

for Turkey's strategic importance. It is uncertain if such support, which Ankara has taken for granted, would be given in the future.

The unpopularity of the United States in Turkey grew during the negotiations for the deployment. Turks felt that the U.S. press had portrayed the negotiations as a bazaar, and had negatively described the size of the U.S. offer as "buying" a "coalition of the billing."⁶⁴ The Turkish press repeated these reports as outrages. U.S. officials were openly impatient,⁶⁵ and the Turkish media portrayed them as arrogant, peremptory, and as humiliating the Turks with whom they dealt. The Turks felt that money was only one issue out of many important ones that were dealt with in the negotiations and was overemphasized.

The Turkish military has long been the major supporter of the bilateral alliance, Yet, Chief of Staff General Ozkok himself expressed frustration with what he seemed to consider a lack of U.S. sympathy for Turkey's concerns. He said, "I have difficulty understanding those who claim there is a threat to them across the ocean, and when Turkey says the same threat exists on the other side of its border, this is found to be unbelievable."⁶⁶ In sum, the crisis over the U.S. deployment deeply strained bilateral relations.

Efforts at recovery have begun. Prime Minister Erdogan reached out to American audiences with opinion pieces in U.S. newspapers, saluting bilateral relations and the alliance. (However, he has yet to make a similar, comprehensive argument to a domestic audience.) Secretary of State Powell visited Turkey on April 2 and met with President Sezer, Prime Minister Erdogan, Foreign Minister Gul, and Chief of Staff General Ozkok. The Secretary expressed appreciation for the support Turkey was giving in the war and promised to be sensitive to Turkey's concerns about northern Iraq. His Turkish interlocutors described the visit as extremely beneficial. President Sezer underscored that "there will not be any change in Turkey's attitude" of attributing great importance to its strategic partnership with the United States."⁶⁷ President Bush called Erdogan on April 23 to reaffirm strong bilateral relations and to thank him for the role that Turkey was playing in resupplying U.S. troops in Iraq.

Congress has contributed to the recovery by approving the emergency wartime supplementary appropriations bill after defeating an amendment to cut the President's \$1 billion request for aid to Turkey. In the vote, those unwilling to jettison the long-

⁶⁴ See, for example, Editorial: Coalition of the \$\$\$ Willing, *Hartford Courant*, February 20, 2003; Editorial: Dollar Diplomacy, *New York Times*, February 20, 2003. In fact, the dean of the Turkish press corps, Sami Kohen, also used the bazaar analogy, observing, "Turks know about bargaining the bazaar. They can sense when the customer is about to walk out....," Turks in High Risk Game, *Reuters*, February 18, 2003.

⁶⁵ White House spokesman Ari Fleischer, "It Is Decision Time." "U.S. Warns Turkey Against Blocking Iraq Plans," *Reuters*, February 18, 2002.

⁶⁶ Statement to the media by General Hilmi Ozkok, *NTV*, March 26, 2003, FBIS Document GMP20030326000084.

⁶⁷ Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association, Washington Office, "Selected News on Turkey," April 1-6, 2003.

term bilateral relationship won out over those seeking to punish Turkey for its recent failure. Given the striking deterioration in historic ties, continuous work by both sides may be needed.

Regional Situation

Without an agreement on troop deployment, the United States may be less likely to consult closely with the Turkish government about the future of Iraq, the type of government to be established, or the rights of the Turkomans. As yet, there has been no noticeable Turkish presence at any of the postwar meetings to discuss the future.

U.S. troops initially were not present in numbers large enough to prevent the Kurds from entering Kirkuk, prompting transitory fears that Turkish forces might enter northern Iraq in large numbers with unforeseeable long term consequences. The lack of a sizeable U.S. presence appeared to allow the Kurds to assume a dominant role, perhaps foreshadowing their enhanced autonomy in the region. If Iraq's territorial integrity is questioned, ethnic groups in other countries might pose similar challenges to nearby regimes.

Domestic Politics

The AKP and its leaders have been weakened by the defeat in parliament. The delay in submitting the motion authorizing U.S. access to Turkish airspace may have reflected their wariness. On March 1, the AKP leadership had allowed members to vote their conscience, and allowed the measure to come to a vote without certainty that it would pass. The defectors embarrassed their leaders. The lack of political leadership and control on an issue of paramount national interest and national security was damaging to the party's credibility. It remains to be seen if AKP will splinter and if AKP's future attempts to govern strongly and pragmatically will be affected. Moreover, the military's abstention on the issue of deployment may be seen as a warning to the AKP. Although the product of an unprecedented, popular electoral victory, the AKP still needs to cultivate the military commanders. Its effort to democratize the country has to take into account a unique cultural and historical context in which a military role remains significant.

Some analysts have suggested that the vote in parliament signals the growth of Turkey's democracy because parliament had been responsive to public opinion. Yet, others see the failure of the ruling party in Turkey to have parliament pass an important measure as indicative of the inexperience and immaturity of Turkey's democracy and its proponents. Strong leadership and bloc voting are characteristic of most parliamentary democracies.

Economy

The U.S. offer of economic aid, military aid, and loan guarantees was intended to compensate Turkey for the cost of the U.S. deployment and was contingent upon Ankara's acceptance of the troops. Without the deployment, U.S. officials made clear after the vote, the larger aid package would not be forthcoming. The United States still would support Turkey in international financial institutions. Turkey

would still suffer serious war-related, and mostly uncompensated, economic losses. Moreover, it has large debt payments due throughout 2003, which the U.S. loan guarantees would have eased considerably. During the months of government indecision and immediately after the war began, interest rates on domestic debt rose 15% to above 70%. The government already submitted a budget that requires cuts in spending and tax increases and promised strict adherence to the IMF program. Interest rates fell only after President Bush requested \$1 billion in aid for Turkey. Thus, Turkey's economic fortunes appear to be tied more than ever to the perception of the status of its relations with the United States.

Wider Implications

Some observers have suggested that Turkey's stand emboldened the smaller countries which are nonpermanent, undecided members of the U.N. Security Council to withstand U.S. pressure for a resolution that would give Iraq a short deadline to disarm – in other words, authorize the use of force to disarm Iraq. This analysis suggests that if such a close, long time, dependable, and dependent ally of the United States could thwart the will of a great power, other countries could be encouraged to do so as well.

The independence of the Turkish parliament also may suggest that U.S. championship of democracy in the Middle East might bring unintended consequences. Governments might emerge that would be more responsive to the will of their people than the current authoritarian regimes, and perhaps less responsive to the will of Washington when the two conflict.