



OFFICE OF THE SUPREME PRESIDENT

February 13, 2018

The Honorable Rex Tillerson
U.S. Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

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, and our affiliated organizations, I am writing to express our grave concern about Turkey's acts of provocation and aggression in the eastern Mediterranean and the broader region.

This past weekend, Turkish warships blocked a rig belonging to Italian energy firm ENI from reaching Cypriot waters where the rig had intended to start exploring for gas.¹ The Republic of Cyprus has the sovereign right under international law to explore and exploit its natural resources within its exclusive economic zone. The United States has repeatedly stated it supports Cyprus' sovereign right to explore energy in its offshore areas and a State Department spokesperson has "discouraged" actions that elevate tensions in the region.²

Moreover, yet again, this morning, a Turkish coast guard vessel rammed a coast guard vessel of fellow NATO partner Greece, elevating tensions in the eastern Mediterranean.³ Incidents such as this one, in addition to many others that have occurred, has prompted U.S. Ambassador to Greece Geoffrey Pyatt to express concern about the possibility of an "accident" happening in the Aegean.⁴

Finally, Turkey's aggressive actions—both in the eastern Mediterranean and in hot spots such as Syria—are not in the best interest of the U.S. and are not attributes of a NATO partner.

Turkish aggression is a danger. It unnecessarily elevates tensions, contributes to instability and is a detriment to achieving peace. We are genuinely alarmed. We request the United States to address Turkish provocation and aggression with the Turkey at the highest levels of government. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Carl R. Hollister
Supreme President

Cc: House Committee on Foreign Affairs; Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

¹ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cyprus-natgas-turkey-ship/standoff-in-high-seas-as-cyprus-says-turkey-blocks-gas-drill-ship-idUSKBN1FV0X5>

² <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/greece-turkey-tensions-mount-over-plan-to-start-cyprus-gas-drilling>

³ <http://www.ekathimerini.com/225780/article/ekathimerini/news/turkish-coast-guard-vessel-rams-greek-patrol-boat-off-imia>

⁴ <http://neoskosmos.com/news/en/US-ambassador-worries-about-potential-Aegean-accident-between-Turkey-and-Greece>