

Rothman Leads Congressional Effort To Hold Turkish P.M. Responsible For Rising Anti-American And Ant

For Immediate Release

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Rothman Leads Congressional Effort To Hold Turkish P.M. Responsible For Rising Anti-American And Anti-Semitic Sentiments in Turkey

- Rothman, Colleagues Call On President Bush To Challenge PM Erdogan During White House Talks-

Washington, DC -With anti-American and anti-Semitic sentiments on the rise in Turkey, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-Fair Lawn) and ten of his House colleagues called on President George W. Bush to challenge Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to denounce all forms of discrimination and hate speech promoted in Turkey and renounce his connection to an ally of Osama bin Laden. President Bush and the Turkish Prime Minister will meet at the White House on Wednesday, June 8th. Rothman and his colleagues want Bush to hold Prime Minister Erdogan responsible for the increase of anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism in Turkey since his Justice and Development Party (JDP) took power in 2003.

Rothman noted the findings of increased anti-Americanism in Turkey to be particularly disturbing and a potential threat to our security. A poll by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) last year found Turkey to hold the most anti-American sentiment in the world. Examples include publishing anti- American books that go on to become best sellers, such as Metal Storm, a fictional story about the American military attacking Turkey. There have also been incidents of Turkish officials comparing the U.S. to Nazi Germany and President Bush to Adolf Hitler.

Congressman Rothman also cited the findings of the Middle Eastern Media Research Institute (MEMRI), which recently released a report on a number of anti-Semitic incidents made public in the Turkish media. The recent animosity against Jews in the Turkish media portrays Judaism as a sinister political entity that is seeking Jewish dominance in world affairs, business, and the media. Furthermore, MEMRI presents evidence that hostility toward Jewish citizens of Turkey has increased along with the recent rise in Turkish nationalism. Jews have been questioned about their loyalty to the Republic of Turkey, have been accused of treason and blamed for the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

Rothman also criticized Prime Minister Erdogan's relations with Afghan jihad leader Gulbuddin Hikmatyar. A couple of months after Erdogan was elected to office, he was pictured in the Turkish daily newspaper, Star Gazette, sitting with Hikmatyar, who was kneeling at his feet. Hikmatyar has long-established ties with Osama bin Laden and is responsible for sheltering him in Afghanistan after he fled Sudan in 1996. Following the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001, Hikmatyar pledged allegiance with the spiritual leader of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, to launch a guerrilla war on the Afghan government and American troops there.

"You have been outspoken regarding the dangers posed to the American people by terrorists who wish to do us harm. When you meet with Prime Minister Erdogan, we hope you will ask him to renounce his connection to this ally of Osama bin Laden and request that he immediately and publicly denounce anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism in all forms," Congressman Rothman wrote in his letter to President Bush. "Mr. President, you have also been vocal about the growing problem of Arab incitement against Jews. It is our feeling that Turkish incitement against Jews is equally troubling and must be addressed immediately. "