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Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Paving the Way for Peace

Turkey, strategically located on the Soviet Union's border, has long been a close and valued ally of the United States. The friendship is based on Turkey's western-style democracy and a common membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the post-war alliance created to protect Western Europe from invasion.

Greece is also an old and trusted ally, as well as a fellow NATO member. For the past 3½ years, the two countries have been feuding over the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, which has both Greek and Turkish residents. In 1974, the Turks quelled a coup on the island mounted by Greek officers and Cypriots who favored a political union between Greece and Cyprus.

Congress imposed an arms embargo on Turkey because the Turks violated U.S. law by using American weapons in the invasion. Also, it was felt that an embargo might pressure Turkey, which still controls the northern third of Cyprus, into making concessions.

The U.S. Senate has adopted an amendment I introduced to repeal the 42-month-old embargo while making further aid to Greece, Turkey and Cyprus dependent on resolution of the conflict.

The amendment also provides for an additional \$35 million in foreign military sales credits to Greece as well as Congressional review of progress in the Cyprus negotiations.

The embargo has served its purpose in registering

our discontent and has become counterproductive. It has not brought Turkey and Greece closer to agreement, and it has jeopardized Turkey's military strength and ability to contribute to NATO's defenses.

Unable to get spare parts or modern weapons, the Turkish army has been forced to cannibalize other equipment.

The Turkish army is the second largest in NATO and its diminished military capability leaves the whole of southeastern Europe, including Greece, more vulnerable to Soviet attack. Such an attack is a possibility, given the unprecedented Soviet buildup on the southern flank and the central front.

European leaders and NATO officials I talked with on my recent trip to Europe were unanimous in urging that the United States lift the embargo. A weakened Turkey weakens NATO, I was told.

There are indications that Turkey and Greece are ready to negotiate on Cyprus, and lifting the embargo improves the atmosphere for concessions. Turkish Cypriot leaders have offered to withdraw from the Greek city of Varosha so that some 35,000 Greek Cypriot refugees can return to their homes and live under an interim, probably U.N., government.

In repealing the arms embargo we are not turning our back on Greece. Our goal is to have strong and friendly nations in the Eastern Mediterranean to maintain the strength of NATO and make possible a just Cyprus settlement.