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NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE

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February 13, 2024

The Honorable Ben Cardin
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James E. Risch
483 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael McCaul
2300 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Meeks
2310 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Risch, Chairman McCaul, and Ranking Member Meeks:

The National Democratic Alliance, Armenia's largest pro-Western political party, is deeply concerned about the recently approved U.S. plans to sell new F-16 fighter jets and modernization kits to Turkey. We are also dismayed by Acting Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland's remarks on Turkey rejoining the F-35 fighter jet program.

An unreliable NATO ally that actively works against U.S. interests in the region, Turkey, under President Erdogan, aspires to reconstitute a new neo-Ottoman empire and is a destabilizing force in the Eastern Mediterranean, Middle East, North Africa, and the Caucasus.

It has supported Islamic terrorist groups, such as ISIS and Hamas, and has threatened U.S. allies and partners in the region, Israel, Greece, and Cyprus, which continues to remain under Turkish

occupation after 50 years. Turkey has frequently bombarded Northeastern Syria, attacking an American ally in the region in its fight against ISIS, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

Furthermore, Turkey purchased S-400 missile defense systems from Russia, which pose a threat to NATO's broader defense systems, and has actively assisted Russia in its evasion of Western sanctions. The U.S. has already expressed concerns about Turkey's involvement in sanctions' evasion and has targeted specific Turkish entities. Turkey is the only NATO ally to invite Vladimir Putin for a visit on its soil since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Finally, and more importantly for Armenia, which is fighting for its survival on the ground, Turkey used its existing F-16s to support Azerbaijan against Armenia during the second Nagorno-Karabakh war in the Fall of 2020.

Having initially been unsuccessful in its bid to acquire F-16s, Turkey was ultimately successful after it ratified Sweden's NATO membership. This tit-for-tat is a behavior unbecoming of an ally and sends a poor signal to the United States' current and future allies.

Providing Turkey with F-16s would be inconsistent with President Biden's April 24, 2021, pledge to prevent another Armenian genocide from taking place. Turkey has not made secret of its support of Azerbaijani actions in Nagorno-Karabagh, which accordingly international scholars and human rights prosecutors constitute a genocide. The sale of F-16's to Turkey will only further embolden such aggression.

This also sends a poor signal to people of Armenia, who—owing much to our own efforts on the ground—are ready to part ways with Russian dominance and embrace a pro-Western stance. This, however, cannot mean succumbing to pressures and blackmail from Armenia's historic adversary, Turkey, which continues to flex its muscles and show Armenia as part of Turkey on official television. The sale of F-16's to Turkey will fuel the propaganda of pro-Russian elements in Armenia, which portray the United States as pro-Turkish and anti-Armenian.

In conclusion, we reiterate our opposition to this sale, and hope you take into account the enclosed concerns when deliberating on future arms sales to Turkey.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

National Democratic Alliance
Governing Council