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March 25, 2025

President Donald J. Trump
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to you regarding recent media reports regarding potential proposals for Türkiye to rejoin the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter partnership. Any such deal would also require Türkiye to be removed from sanctions currently placed on it through the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

Based on these reports, we write to you to strongly urge you to categorically oppose any possibility of Türkiye rejoining the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter partnership under any circumstances, including both the 'boxing' or complete removal of the S-400 missile system. We also urge you to support the policy of keeping the sanctions placed on Türkiye through CAATSA, as Türkiye has not yet demonstrated a shift in its policy that would prove its loyalty to the United States will not again come into question.

In 2017, Türkiye signed a deal with Russia to acquire the S-400 missile system, despite your previous administration making it "clear to Turkey at the highest levels and on numerous occasions that its purchase of the S-400 system would endanger the security of U.S. military technology and personnel and provide substantial funds to Russia's defense sector, as well as Russian access to the Turkish armed forces and defense industry."¹ As a result, during your first term as President of the United States, the United States sanctioned Türkiye through CAATSA, which ended Türkiye's involvement in the global F-35 Joint Strike Fighter partnership.

Türkiye was clearly and repeatedly warned of being removed from the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter partnership when they purchased the S-400 missile system, yet it did so anyway. Allowing Türkiye to reenter the program - and have its sanctions removed - by simply disposing of the missile system will send a message that the initial decision to purchase the missile system will ultimately go unreprieved. Türkiye should dispose of the S-400 missile system not in an attempt to gain leverage with the United States, but rather, because of its agreed responsibilities to our country and the NATO alliance. The U.S. cannot reward Türkiye for addressing an issue it created in the first place.

Additionally, there is no guarantee that Türkiye will not re-engage or reacquire the S-400 missile system once it has received F-35s. It also would be both logistically and diplomatically difficult to ensure the proper and legal use of F-35s once in Turkish control.

Furthermore, it is possible, if not likely, that if Türkiye acquires F-35s, it will use them in a way that violates U.S. law. For example, Türkiye has already reportedly used its F-16s during the Azerbaijan war with Armenia during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.² Additionally, Türkiye has used these F-16s for repeated illegal flyovers over Greece's territory.³ This use of U.S. arms should constitute a violation of the Arms Export Control Act limitation that U.S. arms are to only be used for legitimate self-defense purposes.

Such use of U.S. arms by Türkiye for purposes other than its legitimate self-defense has already been documented; as stated in section 2373 of title 22 of the Code of Laws of the United States of America. Congress found that Türkiye continues to use U.S. arms to facilitate its occupation of the Republic of Cyprus, as “40,000 Turkish troops are stationed in the occupied part of Cyprus” which use equipment including “weapons procured from the United States through mainland Turkey.”⁴

Lastly, regardless of the whether Türkiye possesses the S-400 missile system or not, its recent and longstanding actions have demonstrated a wide enough divergence from U.S. policy that it should not receive weapons as advanced as the F-35 nor should the sanctions placed on it through CAATSA be removed. Türkiye continues to; attack U.S.-supported Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in Syria, jeopardizing the fight against ISIS; antagonize other U.S. allies, such as Israel, Greece and the Republic of Cyprus; support U.S. designated terrorist organizations financially, logistically, and politically, including Hamas, among many other instances of acting against the interests of the U.S.

Beyond this, according to the Department of State, Türkiye continues to have “significant human rights issues” including “credible reports of: arbitrary killings; suspicious deaths of persons in custody; forced disappearances; torture; arbitrary arrest and continued detention of tens of thousands of persons,” “restrictions on media reporting and the campaign environment, including the jailing of a presidential candidate,” “significant problems with judicial independence,” and “severe restrictions on freedom of expression and press freedom, including violence and threats of violence against journalists, closure of media outlets, and arrests or criminal prosecution of journalists and others for criticizing government policies or officials, censorship, site blocking, and criminal libel laws; serious restrictions on internet freedom; severe restriction of freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, including overly restrictive laws regarding government oversight of nongovernmental organizations and civil society organizations; restrictions on movement; refoulement of refugees; serious government harassment of domestic human rights organizations,” along with other human rights abuses.⁵ In light of all these actions by Türkiye, which are contrary to U.S. interests and values, it is in no position to receive F-35s or have the sanctions placed on it through CAATSA removed.

Accordingly, we request that you:

1. Categorically oppose any actions that would result in Türkiye rejoining the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter partnership.
2. Continue to urge Türkiye to dispose of their S-400 missile system – not with the intention of receiving compensation from the United States, but because it never should have acquired such a system in the first place, as possessing it is directly counter to the interests the U.S.
3. Continue to oppose removing sanctions placed on Türkiye through CAATSA.

Thank you for your consideration of these important matters.

Sincerely,



Nick Larigakis
President

CC: Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth
Secretary of State Marco Rubio
Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Josh Huck
National Security Advisor Michael Waltz
The U.S. Congress

¹ “The United States Sanctions Turkey Under CAATSA 231” *US Department of State*, December 14, 2020.

² “Armenia says its fighter jet ‘shot down by Turkey’.” *BBC*, September 29, 2020.

³ Chrysopoulos, Phillip. “Turkish Violations of Greek Airspace Double in Two Years.” *Greek Reporter*, November 12, 2020.

⁴ 22 U.S.C. § 2373

⁵ “2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Turkey (Türkiye)” *U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor*. 2022.