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NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH TURKISH PRIME MINISTER RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN

MODERATOR: JERRY ZREMSKI, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB PRESIDENT

LOCATION: NATIONAL PRESS CLUB BALLROOM, WASHINGTON, D. C.

TIME: 3:20 P. M. EST

DATE: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2007

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(Note: Prime Minister Erdogan's comments are provided through an interpreter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club for our speaker luncheon today. My name is Jerry Zremski. I work for the Buffalo News and I'm president of the National Press Club.

I'd like to welcome our club members and their guests, as well as those of you watching on C-SPAN. We're looking forward to today's speech, and afterwards I will ask as many questions from the audience as possible. Please hold your applause during the speech so that we have as much time for questions as possible. For our broadcast audience, I would like to explain that if you hear applause, it may be from the guests and members of the general public who attend our events, and not necessarily from the working press.

I would also like to mention again that for those of you who are here in the ballroom with us, we have translation equipment, and the channel for English is Channel 5; the channel for Turkish is Channel 6.

I'd also like to announce that because our program is beginning a bit late, we will be going to 4:15 this afternoon.

I'd now like to introduce our head table guests and ask them to stand briefly when their names are called. From your right, Mark Seibel, managing editor international for McClatchy Newspapers; Hiroki Sugiata, Washington bureau chief for Kyodo News; Kasim Sindemar (sp),

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Washington bureau chief for Hurriyat; Patricia Schoeni, executive director of the National Coalition on Health Care and chair of the Press Club's Travel Committee; H.E. Nabi Sensoy, ambassador of the Republic of Turkey; Donna Leinwand, reporter for U.S. Today and treasurer of the National Press Club; H.E. M. Vecdi Gonul, the minister of National Defense for the Republic of Turkey.

Skipping over our podium, Melissa Charbonneau of CBN News and the vice chair of the NPC Speakers Committee; skipping over our speaker for just one second, Andrew Schneider of Kiplinger and the National Press Club member who organized today's event; next, H.E. Ali Babacan, the minister of Foreign Affairs for the Republic of Turkey; Ron Baygents, correspondent for Kuwait News Agency; Aliza Marcus, reporter for Bloomberg News and author of a recent book on Turkey; Andrei Sitov, Washington bureau chief for ITAR-TASS News Agency; and Lazlo Trankovits, Washington bureau chief for Deutsche Presse Agentur. (Applause.)

Our guest today is the prime minister of a nation with an extraordinary history. For centuries, the land now called Turkey has been a bridge between Asia and Europe, and the home of a rich culture that left visitors in thrall.

But Turkey is now in the news as well as the history books. The PKK, which is on the U.S. list of designated terrorist organizations, has been launching attacks into Turkey from its base in northern Iraq, and the Turkish parliament has authorized military strikes in Iraq in response.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan joins us today immediately after a meeting with President Bush, where he no doubt discussed these serious matters.

Prime Minister Erdogan, welcome to the National Press Club. (Applause.)

PRIME MIN. ERDOGAN: (Audio break from source) -- so in those characters make Turkey a bridge which can fulfill a very important historic role.

Both our American friends and our European friends, if they wish to establish constructive relations in the region, they must take into consideration, in my opinion, Turkey's characteristics as such.

We have a strategic partnership with the United States, and that strategic partnership is very important for the region and also for the world. Relations between our two countries have passed through important tests over time, but both countries have managed to overcome these tests successfully.

There are risks and threats which are important for both of our countries, and our wish is to see our partnership continue into the future, as we work in solidarity to overcome these problems.

Distinguished guests, from the point of view of our relations with the United States, there are two important issues currently for us on the agenda. The first one has to do with the resolution about the events of 1915 and the second one is the unacceptable presence of the separatist terrorist organization the PKK in northern Iraq.

The resolution that has been presented to U.S. Congress in order to render legitimacy to the so-called Armenian genocide was passed through the -- passed from the External (sic; Foreign) Relations

Committee of the House of Representatives, and that left the two countries vis-a-vis a new test in their relationship.

Some circles say that resolutions of this kind are non-binding, but the fact that Congress, as the legislative body of our strategic partner the United States, is engaged in efforts that amount to a political judgment of Turkey is sad for us to see.

The sponsors of the resolution on the 24th of October sent a letter to the speaker of the House, Mrs. Pelosi, and asked that the resolution not be taken up on the floor at the moment. We view this with cautious optimism. This draft has the potential to deeply damage our strategic cooperation, and it is important to ensure that it is not discussed on the floor of Congress. And we appreciate greatly the commonsensical approach that has been presented by many members of Congress and the U.S. administration to prevent discussion of this resolution on the floor. And I have expressed this appreciation to President Bush, and I expressed our views in detail to him.

In fact, these Armenian allegations, which are being kept constantly on the agenda in some countries, have not been proven historically or legally to this date. To take this issue up clearly, Turkey, since 2005 -- and in 2005 it was myself who wrote a letter to President Kocharian -- and so Turkey has since 2005 worked to take this issue up clearly. And we have suggested the establishment of a joint historical commission, and we said that we would make available all the documents that we have in our archives. And so far we have classified -- worked through 1 million documents in our archives, which are available for scrutiny. If the Armenians have documents in their archives, they should make them available and so should third countries. And we should let the political experts, the archaeologists, the historians, all of the experts -- so that they can, after looking at the documents, prepare a report, and then we can politically decide on that report. If indeed this allegation of so-called genocide can be proven, we are ready to settle accounts with our history. But our documents indicate that there is no genocide that has taken place.

In fact, our values do not allow our people to commit genocide. It does not allow it, and there is no such thing as genocide. Those who claim it must prove it. Having simple lobbying activities and trying to achieve a result in this way is unacceptable to Turkey. We aim to reach a common understanding of this painful period in our history, but I still today have not received a response to my letter of 2005. So I told you what my suggestions/proposals were in this letter, but since we have not received a response, there is nothing I can say further on the subject. But it is my sincere wish that U.S. Congress does not keep this resolution as a sword -- (inaudible) -- and does away with the discussion of this resolution altogether.

Distinguished participants, as you know, Turkey is a country that has suffered from terrorism, that Turkey knows what terrorism can do, because we have been fighting against terrorism for more than 30 years. Many people died as a result of terrorist actions. Unfortunately, people continue to die because of terrorist actions, and in the last year, we have lost 45 Turkish people, most of which are soldiers, and about 15 civilians.

Fighting against terrorism is multi-dimensional and long term. We are aware of this, and in this context, it is clear that we cannot speak of easy solutions. It is necessary not just to put an end to the attacks -- actions of terrorism, but it's also important to dry up the sources -- the reasons that underlie terrorism. And no country

can do this alone for this we all need international cooperation because terror or terrorism is not a national event; it's an international event. And there are some who support it, who harbor terrorists. There are some who continue to provide logistical support to the terrorists.

Unfortunately, as we experience firsthand in our country, this happened in other places like the terrorist organizations in Spain and elsewhere; whereas Turkey in her region has been working very hard to ensure peace and stability in her region. But unfortunately, Turkey does not receive the international support she deserves in fighting against the Iraq-based PKK terrorism, which creates the biggest flow to peace and stability in the region. And it is impossible to accept some European countries must be side by side with us in our fight against terrorism despite the fact that the European Union has declared the PKK as a terrorist organization.

There are European countries where the leaders of the PKK are caught and they are -- go through a judicial process, but they are not kept in custody, and so they're able to flee and go back to Iraq. And I find it very difficult, I find it very difficult -- find the words to explain -- to understand this. It is impossible for us to accept this kind of behavior and action. In an environment where international support and cooperation does not exist, Turkey quite naturally will exercise its own right to protect itself and its people against terrorism because states are responsible for protecting their territorial integrity and their citizens.

We support Iraq's territorial integrity and political unity, and we would like to see Iraq regain its reputable place in the international community. We don't only wish for it, we also work for it. Two days ago, we hosted in Istanbul an enlarged meeting of the Foreign ministers of the neighboring countries of Iraq, and there were important decisions taken at that meeting. And a decision was taken to establish a secretariat for this activity, so we have once again shown our will and determination and commitment.

With respect to fighting against terrorism, we have always taken care to carry out our discussions with the central Iraqi government where the Iraqi Kurds are also represented.

Most recently, on the 26th of October, we had -- there was a meeting in Ankara with the Iraqi minister of the Interior and Defense and the minister responsible for external security. And the Iraqi delegation also included representatives from northern Iraq. So there were meetings between delegations of the central Iraqi government and the Turkish government very recently in Ankara. These meetings, contacts are all in the way of ensuring stability in Iraq and of course in the way of fighting against terrorism.

Stability in Iraq is stability for us as well, but instability in Iraq is also instability for us. So therefore it is important to immediately find a solution to this problem. If that is not done in the shortest time possible, we must remember that there could be potential important regional reflections of this problem. We -- no one should expect us to render our national interests victim to irrational calculations of power in the region.

Turkey has no patience left to deal with mechanisms which have been dragging over time, which were tried but did not yield any results. Turkey expects from the United States and the central Iraqi government concrete and urgent steps which will put a final end to PKK

terrorism emanating from northern Iraq. In this context, our government will continue to take necessary measures in fighting against the separatist terrorist organization.

I have many times on various occasions stressed that Turkey has the power to defend herself, and I repeat it today in your presence to confirm that capacity once again. This terrorist -- separatist terrorist organization is based in northern Iraq, and it threatens territorial integrity, public order, safety and the security of our nation.

And we are on the point of using our rights emanating from international law. This is a right that comes from international law, and we have the right to exercise that right. And our parliament, in fact, has given a mandate to the Turkish government allowing the government to use this right. Five hundred and seven members of Turkish parliament voted in favor of this motion, with 19 against. This in the history of the Turkish Republic is a decision with the greatest overwhelming majority supporting it. So this is therefore a very important decision and mandate.

In fact, that decision of the Turkish Parliament has been a reflection of the sentiments of the Turkish people, because Turkish people are in great expectations -- have great expectations and they are angry and frustrated.

And I would like to repeat here that our aim, our sole aim here is the PKK terrorist organization based in northern Iraq. This must be well understood by all of the international community. As Turkey takes steps to protect its legitimate rights of defense, Turkey is ready to take steps jointly with the United States. As I said before, we have jointly taken steps in different parts of the world to achieve peace, and we can do the same here, like we did in Kosovo, in Afghanistan or elsewhere where we worked together, and we can do that.

So in our just fight against the PKK, the dissolving of the PKK camps, cutting off the logistical support to the PKK and the capturing its leaders or any other efforts of the terrorist organization to expand its activities are things that we're focusing on. And there, I mean weapons and explosives and other activities such as drugs trafficking, because it is quite obvious the kind of role that this terrorist organization plays vis-a-vis drugs trafficking to the Western countries, and I believe that it will be important for all nations to be highly sensitive on such points. And so in our justified fight against the PKK, all who are against terrorism will and must side with Turkey.

There is one thing that attracts my attention from time to time. We are here today at the National Press Club and I would like to underline one point. The terrorists are sometimes called rebels or insurgents or other characterizations, but this mistake is something that the media too must address.

The PKK terrorist organization -- members of the PKK terrorist organization, if they are depicted as rebels or insurgents or resistance people or fighters, et cetera, it's very sad to see that the members of what is a terrorist organization are expressed as such. And we see this in the American press as well. This is impossible to accept this. When the members of al Qaeda are there, they are terrorists, and when they are members of the PKK, they are rebels. It's very difficult to understand this.

The world media -- press -- ought to know that they too are going

through a test, and this must be well understood. And nobody should try to attach different definitions. Then, everybody should sit down and clearly define what terrorism and terrorist is. That way, we know who's who. But from what we have understood so far, unfortunately, this kind of an approach is not a sincere one.

And I have had opportunity to share these thoughts with the president. We spoke clearly about these issues, and we have seen that on many topics, we agree with each other. We understand each other very well and we agree on the basic principles, in my opinion.

I would like to underline one point: Terrorist elements today are not confined to national borders only. The most striking and, unfortunately, destructive example of that was experienced on 9/11. Terrorists, too, engage in highly complicated international connections and networks and they threaten all countries.

And the activities of the PKK terrorist organization is not limited to northern Iraq and Turkey. They are engaged in drugs trafficking, humans trafficking and extortion, many such activities which directly have an impact on the people -- young people -- of -- in Europe or maybe in the United States. Those who turn -- the countries who turn a blind eye to PKK terrorism, one day, sooner or later, will pay a very heavy price for having done that. "Long live the snake that doesn't bite me" is not a maxim that can go farther, because that snake will, one day, bite them too.

We have already suffered from this, and we don't want people who have not suffered in other countries to suffer. We -- I am just telling you all this as a country that has itself suffered from terrorism. We will continue to fight against terrorism. And those who cannot see and understand this face of terrorism, those who shy away from combatting terrorism internationally, when they face the same problem tomorrow will find that they are very late in combatting it then. So we look for full solidarity and support both from the United States and the European countries.

Turkish-American relations are based on a strong friendship, strategic partnership and mutual confidence.

It is for that reason that both countries have always acted together in difficult times. And we look for the same kind of solidarity once again from our friends.

And as I end my words, I would like to once again express my thanks to the National Press Club for organizing this event. Thank you very much for listening to me. (Applause.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Thank you very much, Prime Minister Erdogan. We have many, many questions here. First of all, though, let me announce that our event will be closing down at 4:15. All right? We'll be done at 4:15.

First, some questions about your meeting with President Bush. Did you get any kind of commitment from President Bush regarding a crackdown on the PKK terrorists? And are you satisfied with what you heard from the president on this issue?

PRIME MIN. ERDOGAN: On this point, in our meeting, first, let me say that it is important to remember that the United States lists the PKK as a terrorist organization. As the president said in his comments to the press, the PKK is an enemy of Turkey, is an enemy of

Iraq and is also an enemy of the United States. I suppose I don't need to explain what we understand from the word "enemy."

He also -- another point we -- he touched upon too is the intelligence sharing as far as sharing of voice and image and intelligence on this point. This is very important for us. But this is not intelligence that will be provided over time, but we have also discussed the importance of real time and on-time intelligence sharing.

And another important thing is that establishing a joint platform to combat terrorism was important. And in his comments to the press too he also mentioned these and our determination in fighting terrorism. And as I leave your country, I see that we agree to a great extent, but I suppose you don't expect me to tell you everything we've spoken about. But I'm happy.

MR. ZREMSKI: Can you trust Iraqi Kurds to rein in the PKK? Why or why not?

INTERPRETER: (Off mi ke.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Can you trust Iraqi Kurds to rein in the PKK? Why or why not?

PRIME MIN. ERDOGAN: Of course, here, solidarity with the United States and solidarity with the central government in Iraq. These are things that we have already spoken about in the enlarged summit of the neighboring countries of Iraq, and on this point there is no disagreement and all have agreed, committed to this kind of a solidarity. And so I will trust this process and we'll see, as the process moves along, what takes place.

MR. ZREMSKI: What would the U.S. and Iraqi Kurds have to do to persuade you to pull Turkey's 100,000 troops from the Iraqi-Turkish border?

PRIME MIN. ERDOGAN: Now, nobody can decide within the borders of Turkey how many soldiers, Turkish soldiers, Turkey will deploy where in the country. And the steps taken in that respect are always in way of ensuring security of the country. And there are areas where the army has responsibility and areas where the police have responsibility, and they take necessary precautions. They will continue to take those precautions, because that is quite natural and also a responsibility for them. And this is how we will proceed.

One point I would like to specifically underline -- our target is the PKK terrorist organization based in northern Iraq, not the civilians. This is something that we cannot consider and we don't want to see happen because we have, especially with northern Iraqis, relationships -- our people living in the southeastern part of Turkey have family ties with people living there.

My party, my political party in southeast and eastern part of Turkey came out first in the election. And at the moment there are about 75 members of Parliament from my political party who are of Kurdish origin. So there are 75 members of Parliament who are of Kurdish origin, so the terrorist organization has never been a representative of my Kurdish people. They have simply tried to abuse that situation. And they try to depict some sort of a propaganda, as if there was discrimination between the Kurds and other ethnic groups in my country; this is not true. This is a complete abuse of the real situation.

I tell you there are 75 members of Parliament from my party who are of Kurdish origin, and if you look many different bodies in our government, organizations in our government, you'll see that there are people who are high levels who are of Kurdish origin. You go to the judiciary, you go to universities, you go to the state bureaucracy, and you'll see it in the highest levels. But this, unfortunately, is being constantly abused and this is misrepresented, and I wanted to specifically underline that. Thank you.

MR. ZREMSKI: In the 1990s, Turkey and Iraqi Kurdish representatives from Kurdistan Democratic Party and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the two main governing parties in northern Iraq, worked cooperatively to weaken and corral the PKK. What has happened to that relationship, and does any change need to come about to improve that relationship?

PRIME MIN. ERDOGAN: Yes, indeed, I find it quite difficult to understand this situation myself, because at the time, we hosted 500,000, almost 600,000 Peshmarga in Turkey who were escaping Saddam's persecution. We hosted them in Turkey. And at the time, I was the provincial director of a political party and I remember sending truckloads of foodstuffs, medication, clothing, et cetera, to the southeast part of Turkey to help the people who were relocated there.

So knowing that, I find it very difficult to understand that current situation, because at the time, as the Turkish state, we hosted the Peshmarga on our territory to protect them. So we were there in that kind of a relationship, and to see that relationship go in reverse is indeed very perplexing. And those who have responsibility for this reversal must revisit their approach to the terrorist organization.

MR. ZREMSKI: Kurds in southeastern Turkey voted for you in record numbers. Now a rising tide of nationalism and anger about the PKK terrorist attacks seems to be directed at Turkish Kurds. There have been at least a dozen attacks on the Kurdish Democratic Society offices. What will you do to protect the civil rights of Turkey's Kurdish population?

PRIME MIN. ERDOGAN: First of all, let me say that there's nothing aiming at the people of Kurdish origin. The reaction of the people is against the terrorist organization and against those who support -- clearly support, because some clearly do support the terrorist organization. So it is important not to create fertile ground through such provocation. Those are things one has to think of.

And there have been many democratic demonstrations in 81 provinces, and in those demonstrations our people have acted with democratic discipline and have expressed their anger against terrorism and have expressed sorrow over the deaths of soldiers. And the Turkish people have indeed achieved a very important sensitivity, and I'm very proud of my people, actually, for having shown and displayed such a balanced approach.

MR. ZREMSKI: Are Kurdish terrorist forces attacking Iran as well as Turkey?

PRIME MIN. ERDOGAN: At the enlarged summit of the neighboring countries of Iraq, we met with the foreign minister of Iran. Of course, Iran has similar problems and because of those problems, Iran

is also working to fight against such attacks. I can tell you that.

In fact, Iran, Turkey, and Syria, they suggest cooperation of the three countries, because Syria has similar problems too. They are also very determined in fighting it. Most recently, the president of Syria was in our country and he was very clear in his statements and he said that he supported the decisions that Turkey takes as far as cross-border action into Iraq, and the whole world watched that.

MR. ZREMSKI: What effect would a conflict or war with the PKK have on southeast Turkey's economy?

PRIME MIN. ERDOGAN: Let me -- I would like to first of all underline one point. We are not after war. We have taken a decision on an operation, and I have to underline this. What we do is an operation, and the shape of that operation would of course be determined by the relevant authorities -- that would be the chairman of Joint Chiefs, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and I do not think at all that it will be a cause for concern in the southeast or in the east. We have now the mandate to conduct an operation.

MR. ZREMSKI: What is the scope -- I'm sorry.

PRIME MIN. ERDOGAN: (Police ?) are very interested. We have the mandate from the Turkish parliament; that is the mandate I'm referring to.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: (Off mi ke.)

MR. ZREMSKI: If I may remind you, this is not a press conference. This is an interview. If you could --

AUDIENCE MEMBER: (Off mi ke.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Well, you could hand it up like everybody else hands it up, all right?

If you could please tell me, Mr. Prime Minister, the scope of the strength that the PKK has today. Has it grown? Has it diminished? Is it the same? And what accounts for what the PKK is doing right now?

PRIME MINISTER ERDOGAN: I think it would be better if the National Press Club did that, because I would not be in a position to give you any information on that, because what I tell you may be sentimental or you may evaluate it to be so. But you can investigate, and I'm sure you can talk to your international friends in the international media and determine the answer to that question.

Q Did the U.S. invasion of Iraq have any influence on what's happening in northern Iraq and in Turkey today regarding the PKK terrorists?

PRIME MINISTER ERDOGAN: Of course, developments in Iraq -- we're talking about the period of now five years almost. And if we look at this whole time span, we see, unfortunately, that Iraq has been going through a major destruction, infrastructure-wise, superstructure-wise. Tens of thousands of people died, and all of the infrastructure has collapsed and the superstructures have collapsed. So even the historical monuments are gone.

So Iraq is a historic country, a country which has been the cradle of civilizations. And I really wonder how it will be rebuilt.

And there are those who have responsibility here. And this will also be a test of history, the rebuilding of Iraq. And as far as what needs to be done to rebuild it, we have -- in Turkey we have been working. Our contractors are working very much in Iraq, providing help and support in infrastructure and superstructure.

And if we look at the most recent developments, if we don't see things emerging the way we want under the current situation, we may put in place sanctions -- economically speaking, that is -- because Iraq must also take its place amongst countries that fight against terrorism. If the people in the north do not take their rightful place in fighting against terrorism and if the central government does not pursue the same line, then we would be in a position to impose sanctions -- (inaudible).

MR. ZREMSKI: Now some questions on other topics. This week President Sarkozy and Chancellor Merkel will also meet with President Bush. How helpful, if at all, can President Bush be for Turkey's hopes for joining the EU? And did you talk to the president about this?

PRIME MINISTER ERDOGAN: Since the day the president came to the Oval Office, he has always supported Turkey's accession process to the European Union. And throughout our service in government the last five years, he has always supported us in our efforts to join the European Union. And when we met today, he expressed the continuation of his support for Turkey's membership to the European Union.

As far as our relations with France is concerned, we have had difficulties so far on issues like the so-called Armenian claims. And this we have discussed with President Sarkozy a few times. We've had opportunity to discuss. And he has told us that he will be working with us on this point.

We have also discussed political, economic, military relations between the two countries, and we have some work to ensure that that work also picks up. And I think that this will help us overcome the more difficult strains in relations.

We were sad to see an event take place most recently, and that was a PKK terrorist that was apprehended in France. He was captured in France. And while he was being tried, he was not detained. And he escaped, fled the country, and went to Austria, and from Austria to Iraq. So that involved two EU member states, and this is an unforgivable mistake on the part of two European Union member states, and we have sent a note to the Austrians and we have also expressed our regrets and our sadness to see this happen to the French.

So as far as your question, the part of the question about Germany, we have, as you know, almost 3 million Turks living in Germany, so we have very close ties with Germany. And Germany has always been supportive of Turkey's bid to join the European Union. And during the German presidency, three chapters for discussion for EU membership were opened.

Of course, it is not -- for us, it's not just the opening of these chapters for discussion, but it's also important to discuss the chapters and close them and have no political considerations play a role in preventing the completion of the work on the chapters.

There, the European Union falls short of satisfying the expectations on our part, and so we continue to work on this and

address this issue. We are also aware that it is a long process, membership to the European Union; it will be a long process. But we are determined to become a member and we will continue to be determined in our quest for membership.

MR. ZREMSKI: Regarding the resolution regarding Armenia that the House had considered voting on but has delayed, if you don't -- if you say that what happened during that time has to be studied, it has been studied to some degree, certainly. What is your personal belief as to what happened? If it was not genocide, what was it?

PRIME MINISTER ERDOGAN: Well, I don't know who looked at which documents, because if that was done, we would have received a response to our appeal. And they don't have documents. I'll tell you something. There is no genocide here.

What took place was called deportation, because that was a very difficult time. It was a time of war in 1915. This was about the time when there was rebellion in different parts of the empire. And there were groups of people in the empire who were actually -- Armenians included -- were known to be very loyal subjects of the empire.

But given the context of the time and the events that took place at that time, there was provocation by some other countries, and the Armenians became part of the rebellion in those years. And so the government of the time provided them even pocket money and started deporting the Armenian citizens at that time to other parts of the empire. And we have documents in our own archives which attest to this fact.

There are all sorts of instructions about how many people are to be sent from one area to another, how much money is to be paid to them, pocket money as they traveled. So we have all those documents. So what we say is those who counter those arguments must come up with their own documents, but there is no documents that they can show.

MR. ZREMSKI: Why do you think this issue, this historic issue, keeps coming up again and again?

PRIME MINISTER ERDOGAN: This is a problem of the Armenian diaspora. The Armenian diaspora is looking for a way to create some sort of benefit for itself, and this is what they have found. If it works, then they look to achieve some gains from it. If not, the world will have lost a lot of (time?).

MR. ZREMSKI: We are almost out of time. But before I ask the last question, I have a couple of important matters to take care of.

First of all, let me remind our members of future speakers. On December 5th, Lieutenant General Idriss Deby, president of Chad, will address a luncheon. And on December 10th, Jonathan Fanton, president of the MacArthur Foundation, will be here.

Next, we have some traditions here at the National Press Club. First of all, you get a certificate -- (applause) -- and the coveted National Press Club mug for taking your tea.

PRIME MINISTER ERDOGAN: Thank you. (Applause.)

(A gift is given to Mr. Zremski in behalf of the National Press Club.)

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MR. ZREMSKI: Yes, Oh, wonderful. Oh, thank you so much. That is beautiful. (Applause.) Thank you. We appreciate that.

Our last question. We've had so many questions on so many serious matters, but I do feel compelled to ask this as well. What is your position on President Musharraf's declaration of a state of emergency in Pakistan? And have you communicated with Islamabad since the declaration?

PRIME MINISTER ERDOGAN: Of course, it is not something that we would like to see. It is not possible to accept this state of affairs. Having a military in control is not something that people who believe in democracy can accept. And it is our wish and desire to see that the democratic agenda is followed in Pakistan and the election takes place in a democratic environment, democratic atmosphere.

I said this before; I'll say it again. We are against any kind of extremism, regardless of where it comes from -- from the right, from the left. We are against all types of extremism. For us, middle of the road is the best choice. It's the most peaceful one, and in Pakistan too. I will hopefully speak to my dear friends, the prime minister and the president, and I will tell them my views.

Thank you very much. Thank you all. Thank you for coming. Thank you for your patience. (Applause.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Thank you very much.

I'd like to thank you all for coming today. I'd also like to thank National Press Club staff members Melinda Cooke, Pat Nelson, Jo Anne Booz and Howard Rothman for organizing today's event. Also thanks to the NPC library for its research.

Thank you. We're adjourned.

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