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From: H <hrod17@clintonemail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 10, 2010 4:06 PM
To: 'sullivanjj@state.gov'
Subject: Fw: To Turkish PM Erdogan: Time to Consider all the Facts

Pls read and discuss.

----- Original Message -----

From: Lanny Davis [redacted]
To: H
Sent: Thu Jun 10 14:36:23 2010
Subject: To Turkish PM Erdogan: Time to Consider all the Facts

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Purple Nation

June 10, 2010

To Turkish PM Erdogan: Time to Consider all the Facts By Lanny J. Davis

<http://thehill.com/opinion/columnists/lanny-davis/102357-message-to-turkish-pm-erdogan>

When several years ago I first met Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and had the pleasure to have two private conversations with him, he immediately struck me as the ultimate "purple" leader. As The Washington Post wrote recently, "Erdogan's Justice and Development Party has religious roots, but it also draws conservative entrepreneurs and liberals with its free-market policies."

But Erdogan has recently appeared to be hostile not only to Israel, but also to the U.S. — flirting with Holocaust denier Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and undermining (apparently unintentionally) the world's efforts to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

Concerning the recent flotilla incident, there is no question Israel made serious mistakes in planning, intelligence and execution and the onboard deaths were horrible and tragic. But Erdogan's harsh criticism struck many people, even friends of Turkey, as way over the top, ignoring basic facts.

So I ask Prime Minister Erdogan, who I still believe has a good heart and wants to do the right thing, to assume that he faced the following purely hypothetical facts as leader of his country:

Suppose for years Greek Cypriots were shooting rockets intentionally aimed at Turkish Cypriot civilians, causing many deaths and injuries, and as a result, Turkey instituted a blockade, insisting on searching all ships for armaments;

Suppose that you learned there was a flotilla of ships leaving Greek ports destined for Greek Cyprus, called the "Free Turkish Cyprus" flotilla and sponsored by a Greek organization with leaders hostile to Turkey and with associations with an anti-Turkish terrorist organization;

Suppose that after you ordered that these ships be inspected for armaments and the leaders of the ships refused, your soldiers boarding the ships were accosted by people with pipes, iron bars and long knives, putting the Turkish soldiers in mortal danger; and your soldiers, seeing their brothers and sisters in such danger, reacted instinctively by shooting live ammunition, tragically killing nine people, some of whom were members of the same organization linked to an anti-Turkish terrorist organization.

Mr. Prime Minister: If all of the above were true — and in fact, each of the above “hypotheticals” precisely tracks the circumstances Israel faced — what would you and Turkey have done?

Now, you and your Turkish colleagues may argue that the big difference is that Israel is “occupying” the West Bank. Oh, really? An awful lot of Greeks and much of the rest of the world believe, rightly or wrongly, that Turkey is occupying one-half of Cyprus after a military invasion years ago. I know you and your fellow Turks feel that Turkey intervened to protect Turk Cypriots.

A lot of Turkish Muslims somehow believe that there is religious sacrilege by Israel in “occupying” holy sites in East Jerusalem and on the West Bank. Oh, really? Tens of millions of Orthodox Christians throughout Russia, Greece, Romania and Eastern Europe would remind you that in 1453, the Turks not only occupied the holiest site in all of Orthodox Christendom — the Holy Agia Sophia Church, which is to Orthodox Christians what St. Peter’s and the Vatican are to Roman Catholics — but also continue to this day to desecrate that site, which Turkey retains as a museum, with the priceless religious frescoes obscenely painted over and icons smashed, and refuse to allow the restoration of Agia Sophia to the Orthodox Church.

Compare what the Turks did to Agia Sophia to Israel’s protection of the sanctity and guaranteed absolute access by Muslims to the holy sites on the ancient Temple Mount of the al-Aqsa Mosque facing Mecca and the Dome of the Rock ever since Israel regained control over Jerusalem in 1967. These are facts, Mr. Prime Minister. Do you deny them?

I am hoping that once you discover the entire truth about the risks to Israel’s safety and security represented by these Gaza-bound ships, and recognize that Turkey’s history and role in being an occupier is not free from criticism, you will find a way to re-engage your prior friendship and relationship with Israel, especially with regard to the peace process, and open discussions with Israeli leaders, who I know appreciated the constructive role you have played over the years.

Even if publicly you cannot do this, I am hoping that you can privately — which would be consistent with my impression of the man I came to know and admire after just two meetings. I can only hope and pray that you do so, and that the world doesn’t lose you as a peacemaker in the Middle East and elsewhere.

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This piece appears today, June 10, 2010, in Mr. Davis's regular weekly column in The Hill "Purple Nation" and "The Daily Caller" an online political website.

Mr. Davis, with his own Washington firm, Lanny J. Davis & Associates PLLC, served as special counsel to President Bill Clinton from 1996-98 and was a member of President George W. Bush’s Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board in 2006-07. He is the author of Scandal: How “Gotcha” Politics Is Destroying America (Palgrave MacMillan 2006). This message was sent by: Lanny J. Davis & Associates LLC, 600 13th Street, NW Suite 600, Washington, DC 20005

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