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July 26, 2006

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:

I write regarding the nomination of Richard Hoagland to replace Ambassador John Evans as the Ambassador to the Republic of Armenia. I am concerned that Ambassador Evans has been forced to resign prematurely, considering he has one year left in a traditionally three-year term. I am particularly troubled by reports that Ambassador Evans is being recalled because he described the events in Armenia during 1913-1916 as genocide.

Ninety-one years ago the Young Turk leaders of the Ottoman Empire summoned and executed over 200 Armenian community leaders. By 1923, an estimated 1.5 million Armenians were murdered, and another half million were exiled, affecting the lives of every Armenian in Asia Minor. The United States, neutral towards the Ottoman Empire, condemned the Armenian massacre and was the chief spokesman on behalf of the Armenians. Had the term genocide been coined in the early 1900s, it would have been used to accurately describe the situation.

Both the International Center for Transitional Justice and the Association of Genocide Scholars have recognized the massacre as genocide, as has the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. Numerous heads of state and parliamentary bodies have acknowledged the Armenian genocide. Senate Resolution 320 and House of Representatives Resolution 316, both presently pending in Congress, declare that these events be constituted as a genocide and call on the President to acknowledge the same.

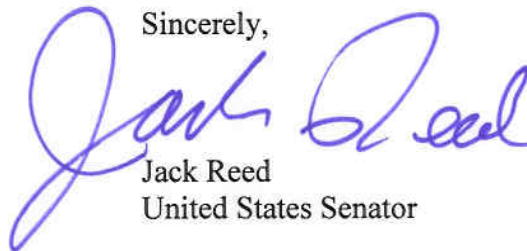
Ambassador Evans is a highly respected, dedicated, and accomplished diplomat with a successful record of government service spanning over 35 years. I would like to understand why such an individual would be terminated from his position a year early. I will not be prepared to support the nomination of a new ambassador to Armenia until I understand the answers to the following questions.

1. Why is Ambassador Evans being replaced a year before the end of the customary three-year ambassador term? If he resigned, why would the State Department accept the resignation of a truly dedicated individual who is highly respected by the Armenian community?

2. Has the President or State Department directed, either through written or oral means, Executive Branch personnel not to use the word 'genocide' when referring to the atrocities waged against the Armenian people by the Ottoman Empire? What is the justification for such a policy?
3. If it is the policy of the United States to not characterize the systematic killing of over 1.5 million Armenians as genocide, please elaborate on why these events do not meet the definitions of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.
4. During Ambassador Richard Hoagland's confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, regarding the Armenian genocide he stated "I simply have studied the president's policy. I've studied the background papers on the policy. And my responsibility is to support the President." What do the background papers say regarding the Armenian Genocide? I respectfully request a copy of these background papers so I can better understand the President's policy. If that is not possible, I would like to know why.
5. A recent press report outlined Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matthew Bryza as saying the following regarding Ambassador Evans, "Ambassadors serve the President and should follow his policy. President George Bush's policy on the mass killings of Armenians is very clear, as he points out in his annual addresses. If someone disagrees with it, they are at liberty to make their own decisions, but these should not be divulged. Certainly, our job is also to advise him, but we must support his policy when it comes to public statements." This reporting indicates that Ambassador Evans was asked to resign based on his prior statements regarding the Armenian genocide. If this is not the case, would you explain the statement by Mr. Bryza and its relation to Ambassador Evans?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Jack Reed
United States Senator