



Dear Senators Menendez, Risch, Reed and Inhofe:

We are writing in response to widespread reporting in the U.S. and international press regarding the Republic of Turkey's request to buy 40 Lockheed Martin-made F-16 fighter jets and nearly 80 modernization kits for its existing warplanes.

As a coalition of civic groups representing Americans across our nation, we have long shared the concerns you have each raised regarding the national security risks posed to the United States by Turkey's dramatic turn away from the Western alliance and our norms of democracy and the rule of law.

Ankara's initial purchase of Russian S-400s - compounded by its ongoing insistence on keeping them despite the clear violations they represent of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), represent a tipping point in our bilateral relationship. We fully agree with the points you raised in your 2019 declaration in The New York Times, "A U.S. Fighter Jet or a Russian Missile System. Not Both," and believe that these same principles should apply in preventing any potential sale of F-16s to Turkey.

We recall that - despite all of Turkey's open hostility against America and our allies - the previous Administration only imposed CAATSA sanctions against Turkey when it was clear that Congress was going to force its hand through provisions in last year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Even now, it appears, there are still senior officials across the Departments of State and Defense engaged in a misguided search for technicalities to evade CAATSA and allow the reckless sale of new F-16s and upgrade kits to Turkey.

We believe this is inconsistent with CAATSA as well as the broader legislative intent of Congress, which passed this law with overwhelming bipartisan support and has maintained a hold over new American weapons purchases by an increasingly malign Turkey. Ankara not only followed through with its acquisition of Russian S-400s, but has promised to acquire and even co-produce more. Without any indication that there is an end in sight to Turkey's persistent violation of American law and policy, there is no reason to even consider Turkey's request.

We would also like to point out that a broad array of Turkey experts have raised serious concerns about this potential purchase. Aaron Stein of the Foreign Policy Research Institute has noted that

the block 70 upgrades share some sensors in common with F-35s. This raises the same co-location concerns you expressed in your New York Times opinion piece, and potentially puts American fighter pilots and the fighter pilots of American allies flying upgraded F-16s at risk. Furthermore, Turkey has used American weapons in a manner inconsistent with American values and American interests. As the American Enterprise Institute's Michael Rubin has noted, Turkey has not been using its F16 fleet in "defense of the Turkish homeland. They're for threatening Greek islands in the Aegean Sea. They're for bombing Yazidis in Sinjar and so forth."

Access to American weapons systems — including upgraded F-16s — is a privilege that Turkey must earn, not a right to which it is entitled. Such access must be withheld until Turkey proves that it will honor and align with American law, values, interests, and alliances.

We urge you to reassert your opposition to the sale or transfer of F-16s or any major weapons system to Turkey.

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