

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEBRUARY 5, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

Pursuant to Public Law 94-104, I am submitting the second report on the progress of Cyprus negotiations and the efforts this Administration is making to help find a lasting settlement. In my first report, on December 8, 1975, I outlined the Administration's policy toward the complex Cyprus problem, and indicated in detail the major effort we have made to encourage a resumption of the Cyprus negotiations between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities.

In that report, I also stated that Secretary Kissinger planned to place special emphasis on Cyprus during his meetings with the Greek and Turkish Foreign Ministers at the NATO Ministerial meetings in Brussels in December. He did this, and in the course of these meetings, he found a desire on the part of both sides to move forward. Indeed, the constructive spirit which characterized those discussions was translated on December 12 into an agreement by the Foreign Ministers of Greece and Turkey to seek the prompt resumption of the intercommunal talks. Acting on instructions from their governments, the Greek and Turkish permanent representatives to the U.N. thereupon called on Secretary General Waldheim to begin a discussion aimed at resolving questions relative to the timing, venue, and content of intercommunal talks. Subsequently, discussions between United Nations officials and the two Cypriot communities were initiated, and have been sustained over the past month. The task of resolving the existing differences was not an easy one, but the efforts of the Secretary General have resulted in the parties indicating their agreement to a resumption of the intercommunal talks in Vienna on February 17.

Throughout December and January the United States has urged upon all the parties the earliest possible resumption of Cyprus negotiations. We have been joined in this effort by our European allies. Major assistance was also provided by Chairman Morgan and members of the House Committee on International Relations who visited Athens and Ankara in mid-January. On January 23 in Brussels Secretary Kissinger again saw the Turkish Foreign Minister who confirmed Turkey's support for the resumption of the intercommunal talks.

The decision to resume the intercommunal negotiations is encouraging, and there have been other positive developments during the past sixty days. The Turkish government announced on January 31 that during the first week in February an additional 2,000 Turkish troops will be withdrawn from Cyprus, thus bringing Turkish troop presence down approximately 12,000 since mid-1974 to a figure below 30,000. Meanwhile, Greece and Turkey have begun a process of reconciliation.

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Meetings have been organized at various levels in December and January to discuss outstanding Greco-Turkish bilateral differences, including the problems of air space and of resource development in the Aegean. An improved climate between Greece and Turkey will surely have a beneficial effect on the Cyprus question.

Developments in December and January have convinced us that the process of bringing a lasting and just solution to the island of Cyprus is moving in the right direction, though the pace has been slower than any of us desire. The knowledge that thousands of refugees are enduring a second winter in temporary shelters is reason enough to move faster -- and try harder. This we intend to do.

I believe it important that the talks which begin later this month provide the basis for the development of a negotiating atmosphere conducive to prompt consideration of all the key issues. I intend to stress this point in the weeks ahead. In this regard I am looking forward to meeting with Foreign Minister Caglayangil of Turkey on February 11. His visit to Washington will provide us with a timely opportunity to review bilateral issues as well as the Cyprus question.

I know that during the recent Congressional recess, members of both Houses visited the Eastern Mediterranean, and came away with a greater appreciation of the complexities of the Cyprus situation and the attitudes and concerns of all the parties. At the same time, these legislators were able to convey our shared conviction that no more time should be lost in the search for a solution.

The action of the Congress on October 2, easing restrictions on military shipments to Turkey, has proved valuable in restoring momentum toward a negotiated Cyprus settlement. If we are to continue to play a key role with the parties, the support and understanding of the Congress is essential. Continued cooperation between the Executive Branch and the Congress on this critical issue will serve the common quest to ensure that the people of Cyprus can build a prosperous future in a secure and stable environment.

GERALD R. FORD

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