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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

August 24, 2006

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

Dear Secretary Rice:

I am writing concerning the recent nomination of Richard Hoagland to serve as the United States Ambassador to Armenia. Ambassador Hoagland is a respected diplomat with a well-established record of public service. However, numerous developments during the course of his nomination have raised concerns about the conduct of American foreign policy toward Armenia and Ambassador Hoagland's understanding of the Armenian Genocide. As a result, I am writing to request your attention to several matters that are complicating Ambassador Hoagland's Senate confirmation.

First, prior to Ambassador Hoagland's appearance before the Committee, I wrote to you expressing my misgivings about the circumstances surrounding the recall of Ambassador John Evans, ostensibly due to his accurate characterization of the Armenian Genocide as genocide. In my letter, I asked whether "the government of Turkey" had been in contact with our government on this matter. Assistant Secretary of State Jeffrey Bergner wrote to me indicating that "the government of Turkey has not approached the Administration on this issue and the United States and Turkey engaged in no diplomatic exchanges on this matter." I subsequently learned that representatives of the Turkish Government in the United States had contacted the State Department regarding Ambassador Evans' statements. There are also reports in the Turkish press that Turkey's ambassador to the United States protested Ambassador Evans' remarks to the State Department. To clear up any confusion, I would appreciate a full accounting of any interested parties, including foreign agents or lobbyists, who were in communication with the State Department with regard to Ambassador Evans' remarks and the substance of their intervention. I would also like to know whether the Department of State counsels or instructs its employees not to use the word genocide in connection with the Armenian Genocide and what materials it uses to educate employees about the Armenian Genocide, such as course materials, books, and lectures.

Second, several of Ambassador Hoagland's responses to questions for the record submitted by members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee have rekindled longstanding concerns about the State Department's non-recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Specifically, some of the language employed by Ambassador Hoagland can be read as diverging even from prior Administration statements and echoing the words of those opposed to genocide recognition, particularly with regard to whether the perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide met the "intent"

standard. I would suggest that Ambassador Hoagland revisit his responses and clarify them accordingly.

At its core, I believe the State Department's flawed policy on the Armenian Genocide is a consequence of the Turkish Government's failure to accept an accurate history of the troubled period during and after 1915. As you know, the violence in question took place in a different era and was perpetrated by a now extinct empire. Recognizing the Armenian Genocide should not be construed as an indictment of the citizens of modern Turkey. Nonetheless, many Turks have been reluctant to recognize the enormity of the crimes Ottoman forces committed against ethnic Armenians.

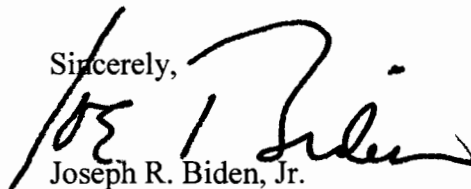
In the interest of addressing this problem, I would like to request that the State Department issue a report describing its efforts to end Turkey's denial of the Armenian Genocide as well as to forge a common Turkish-Armenian historical understanding of the period and the steps you plan to take in the future.

The United States is fortunate to be home to a strong, vibrant Armenian community. Should he be confirmed as an emissary of the United States, Ambassador Hoagland would have a particularly important responsibility to work with and on behalf of the many thousand Armenian-Americans who live throughout our country. If the Senate moves forward with Ambassador Hoagland's confirmation, I would like to request that the State Department make arrangements for him to devote considerable time to meeting with members of the Armenian-American community prior to his departure for Yerevan and to remain in contact with the community once he is in post.

Lastly, I believe that the U.S. Government should be doing more to end Turkey's destructive economic blockade of Armenia. To this end, I propose that you arrange for the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey and any future U.S. Ambassador to Armenia to exchange visits and focus on this issue. Increased American efforts to pursue a solution to this persistent obstacle to regional development could ultimately improve the lives of millions of Armenians and Turks and reaffirm the United States' leadership in the region.

Madam Secretary, I appreciate the challenges inherent in directing the United States' policies in Armenia and throughout the world. I am hopeful that your efforts to address these concerns will enable the State Department to manage our relationship with Armenia and other nations more effectively. I welcome any additional suggestions you may have related to this matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Ranking Member

cc: Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried
Assistant Secretary of State Jeffrey Bergner