

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

August 9, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken –

We are writing to express our concern over Turkey's armed unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) program, which has destabilized multiple regions of the globe and threatens U.S. interests, allies, and partners.

As a result of our long-standing alliance, Turkey has received favorable terms from the American defense industry, including co-production rights for weapons systems, advanced weapons sales, and technology transfers. Despite decades of close cooperation, Turkey chose to violate that relationship by purchasing the Russian S400 missile air defense system in violation of U.S. law – the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). So far, the Turkish government is undeterred, and it has been reported that Turkey is purchasing a second S400 system from Russia.<sup>1</sup>

Turkish actions have continued to run contrary to its responsibilities as a NATO member state, despite its ejection from the F35 joint strike fighter program and the imposition of sanctions. These actions include the proliferation of drones.

Over the last year, Turkish drones have been deployed by Azerbaijan against Armenian civilians in Artsakh, Syria; against Kurdish forces that have partnered with the U.S. in the war against ISIS; and in Libya's civil war. Turkey has entered into agreements to sell drones to Poland<sup>2</sup> and Pakistan<sup>3</sup> and is discussing the joint production<sup>4</sup> of armed UAVs and anti-drone defense systems with Russia and Pakistan. Turkey has also declared its intention to establish a permanent

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<sup>1</sup> "Turkey considers purchasing 2nd regiment of Russian-made S-400 air defense systems," TASS, March 3, 2021. Available at: <https://tass.com/world/1262247>

<sup>2</sup> "Poland to become first NATO country to buy Turkish drones," Reuters, May 22, 2021. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/poland-become-first-nato-country-buy-turkish-drones-2021-05-22/>

<sup>3</sup> "Pakistan Buying Mini Drones From Turkey To Bolster Its Border Offensive Against India – Reports," By: Younis Dar, Eurasian Times, November 29, 2020. Available at: <https://eurasianimes.com/pakistan-buying-mini-drones-from-turkey-to-bolster-its-border-offensive-against-india-reports/>

<sup>4</sup> "Erdogan's Armed Drone Maker Leads Military Push, Unsettling Allies," By: Sean Hacaoglu, Bloomberg, April 5, 2021. Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-04-05/armed-drones-in-turkey-erdogan-son-in-law-selcuk-bayraktar-tb2-planes-in-war>

drone base in occupied Cyprus,<sup>5</sup> which will deploy attack drones from its amphibious assault ships.<sup>6</sup>

The potential for these drones to further destabilize flashpoints in the Caucuses, South Asia, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East, and North Africa is too great to ignore. In a recent Wall Street Journal report on Turkey's program, retired U.S. Army Lieutenant General Mike Nagata said that Turkey's drones were "part of a much larger challenge regarding the future of the relationship between Turkey and the United States and NATO."<sup>7</sup>

We also wish to note that battlefield evidence from Artsakh confirms that Turkey's Bayraktar drones contain parts and technology from American firms and U.S.-based affiliates of foreign firms.<sup>8</sup> The continued transfer of such technology appears to violate arms export control laws and run afoul to CAATSA sanctions that Congress has imposed on Turkey, especially its Savunma Sanayii Başkanlığı (SSB) (Turkey's Presidency of Defense Industries).

We request a briefing from the Department of State that details potential ramifications of Turkish drone proliferation, employment, and sales; whether or not Turkey is developing UAVs with materials or technologies that would be in violation of currently imposed sanctions; and whether Turkey's actions constitute yet another violation of NATO rules and bylaws. We further urge an immediate suspension of any export permits for U.S. drone technology to Turkey pending a State Department review.

Yours sincerely –



David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress



Gus M. Bilirakis  
Member of Congress



Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress



Dina Titus  
Member of Congress

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<sup>5</sup> "Turkey's New Drone Base Is a Problem," By: Michael Rubin, The National Interest, May 30, 2021. Available at: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/turkey%E2%80%99s-new-drone-base-problem-186556>

<sup>6</sup> "Turkey plans to deploy attack drones from its amphibious assault ship," By: Tayfun Ozberk, Defense News, March 11, 2021. Available at: <https://www.defensenews.com/global/2021/03/11/turkey-plans-to-deploy-attack-drones-from-its-amphibious-assault-ship/>

<sup>7</sup> "Armed Low-Cost Drones, Made by Turkey, Reshape Battlefields and Geopolitics," By: James Marson and Brett Forrest, Wall Street Journal, June 3, 2021. Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/armed-low-cost-drones-made-by-turkey-reshape-battlefields-and-geopolitics-11622727370>

<sup>8</sup> "Evidence of U.S. Parts in Turkish Drones Deployed by Azerbaijan," Armenian National Committee of America. Available at: [www.anca.org/assets/pdf/BayraktarDrone\\_US\\_Nato\\_Technology.pdf](http://www.anca.org/assets/pdf/BayraktarDrone_US_Nato_Technology.pdf)

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