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Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey and an Exchange With Reporters in New York City

September 20, 2011

President Obama. Well, I want to welcome Prime Minister Erdogan and his delegation to New York City and to the United States. Turkey is a NATO ally, a great friend and partner on a whole host of issues. I want to thank him for all the work that we've done together: the cooperation in Afghanistan; the work that we most recently did in trying to provide freedom for Libya; and in addition, the NATO obligations that both of us carry out together, most recently symbolized by the agreement of Turkey to host a missile defense radar.

Prime Minister Erdogan has shown great leadership on a range of issues and promoting democracy. And we are very grateful to him for the work that we've done together.

I do want to stress my deepest condolences for the loss of life through the explosion that took place in Ankara. And I understand that the investigation is ongoing, but I think that this reminds us that terrorism exists in many parts of the world and that Turkey and the United States are going to be strong partners in preventing terrorism. And we look forward to working with you on these issues.

So, Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for your service, and thank you for your friendship.

Prime Minister Erdogan. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I'm very pleased that we have this occasion to meet during this week as we meet here for the 66th General Assembly of the United Nations.

And as you have described the relationship between Turkey and the United States, we have a model partnership. And this is a process which is ongoing in which we have taken some very important steps and we will continue to take some important steps. One of those issues that is very common to both of us is fighting against terrorism and fighting against terrorism based on a common platform. We have, unfortunately, lost three citizens today as a result of the blast in Ankara, but in the later hours there was another attack in Siirt, in a city in the eastern part of Turkey, where four young girls were killed as a result of an attack in a car, and these were civilian citizens. And so these are events which give us great sadness. And this is an area which we have to work on.

As for whether or not we can completely eradicate terrorism, I'm not very optimistic in thinking that perhaps we can completely eradicate it. But I think that we have a lot of room to work together to make sure that we minimize terrorism to the lowest possible extent. And to do that we have to keep working together on many areas of this effort, work together in planning, use technology so that we can continue to take joint steps in trying to fight against terrorism. And those are some of the issues that we all will talk about.

I have also recently visited Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, and we have also worked together in those countries, and Afghanistan as well, and also in Iraq. So these are many of the areas where we will continue to talk to each other so that Turkey and the United States continue with this model partnership to move into a better future.

And let me take this opportunity to—also to thank you for your hospitality today.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody.

Middle East

Q. [*Inaudible*]

Q. Was there any discussion of the Palestinian—[*inaudible*]?

President Obama. We're starting the meeting now.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:46 p.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Prime Minister Erdogan spoke in Turkish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges With Reporters :: New York City; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Turkey, Prime Minister Erdogan.

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