

President Johnson and Prime Minister Inonu: Correspondence between President Johnson and Prime Minister Inonu, June 1964, as Released by the White House, January 15, 1966

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PRESIDENT JOHNSON AND PRIME MINISTER INONU

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN PRESIDENT JOHNSON AND PRIME MINISTER INONU,
JUNE 1964, AS RELEASED BY THE WHITE HOUSE, JANUARY 15, 1966.

WHITE HOUSE STATEMENT

At the request of the Government of Turkey, the White House is today releasing the texts of letters exchanged on June 5, 1964, between President Johnson and the then Prime Minister of Turkey Ismet Inonu on the Cyprus crisis. Steps subsequent to this exchange of letters led to the visit of Prime Minister Inonu to Washington later in that month and constructive discussions by the President and the Prime Minister of the issues involved.

A joint communiqué released at the conclusion of those discussions welcomed the opportunity for a full exchange of views by the two leaders and the occasion to consider ways in which the two countries could strengthen the efforts of the United Nations with respect to the safety and security of Cyprus. The communiqué noted that "the cordial and candid conversations of the two leaders strengthened the broad understanding already existing between Turkey and the United States."

The United States continues to value highly the close and friendly relations we maintain with Turkey.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER INONU *June 5, 1964*

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

I am gravely concerned by the information which I have had through Ambassador Hare from you and your Foreign Minister that the Turkish Government is contemplating a deci-

sion to intervene by military force to occupy a portion of Cyprus. I wish to emphasize, in the fullest friendship and frankness, that I do not consider that such a course of action by Turkey, fraught with such far-reaching consequences, is consistent with the commitment of your Government to consult fully in advance with us. Ambassador Hare has indicated that you have postponed your decision for a few hours in order to obtain my views. I put to you personally whether you really believe that it is appropriate for your Government, in effect, to present a unilateral decision of such consequence to an ally who has demonstrated such staunch support over the years as has the United States for Turkey. I must, therefore, first urge you to accept the responsibility for complete consultation with the United States before any such action is taken.

It is my impression that you believe that such intervention by Turkey is permissible under the provisions of the Treaty of Guarantee of 1960. I must call your attention, however, to our understanding that the proposed intervention by Turkey would be for the purpose of effecting a form of partition of the Island, a solution which is specifically excluded by the Treaty of Guarantee. Further, that Treaty requires consultation among the Guarantor Powers. It is the view of the United States that the possibilities of such consultation have by no means been exhausted in this situation and that, therefore, the reservation of the right to take unilateral action is not yet applicable.

I must call to your attention, also, Mr. Prime

Minister, the obligations of NATO. There can be no question in your mind that a Turkish intervention in Cyprus would lead to a military engagement between Turkish and Greek forces. Secretary of State Rusk declared at the recent meeting of the Ministerial Council of NATO in The Hague that war between Turkey and Greece must be considered as "literally unthinkable." Adhesion to NATO, in its very essence, means that NATO countries will not wage war on each other. Germany and France have buried centuries of animosity and hostility in becoming NATO allies; nothing less can be expected from Greece and Turkey. Furthermore, a military intervention in Cyprus by Turkey could lead to a direct involvement by the Soviet Union. I hope you will understand that your NATO allies have not had a chance to consider whether they have an obligation to protect Turkey against the Soviet Union if Turkey takes a step which results in Soviet intervention without the full consent and understanding of its NATO Allies.

Further, Mr. Prime Minister, I am concerned about the obligations of Turkey as a member of the United Nations. The United Nations has provided forces on the Island to keep the peace. Their task has been difficult but, during the past several weeks, they have been progressively successful in reducing the incidents of violence on that Island. The United Nations Mediator has not yet completed his work. I have no doubt that the general membership of the United Nations would react in the strongest terms to unilateral action by Turkey which would defy the efforts of the United Nations and destroy any prospect that the United Nations could assist in obtaining a reasonable and peaceful settlement of this difficult problem.

I wish also, Mr. Prime Minister, to call your attention to the bilateral agreement between the United States and Turkey in the field of military assistance. Under Article IV of the Agreement with Turkey of July 1947, your Government is required to obtain United States consent for the use of military assistance for purposes other than those for which such assistance was furnished. Your Government has on several occasions acknowledged to the United States that you fully understand this condition. I must

tell you in all candor that the United States cannot agree to the use of any United States supplied military equipment for a Turkish intervention in Cyprus under present circumstances.

Moving to the practical results of the contemplated Turkish move, I feel obligated to call to your attention in the most friendly fashion the fact that such a Turkish move could lead to the slaughter of tens of thousands of Turkish Cypriots on the Island of Cyprus. Such an action on your part would unleash the furies and there is no way by which military action on your part could be sufficiently effective to prevent wholesale destruction of many of those whom you are trying to protect. The presence of United Nations forces could not prevent such a catastrophe.

You may consider that what I have said is much too severe and that we are disregardful of Turkish interests in the Cyprus situation. I should like to assure you that this is not the case. We have exerted ourselves both publicly and privately to assure the safety of Turkish Cypriots and to insist that a final solution of the Cyprus problem should rest upon the consent of the parties most directly concerned. It is possible that you feel in Ankara that the United States has not been sufficiently active in your behalf. But surely you know that our policy has caused the liveliest resentments in Athens (where demonstrations have been aimed against us) and has led to a basic alienation between the United States and Archbishop Makarios. As I said to your Foreign Minister in our conversation just a few weeks ago, we value very highly our relations with Turkey. We have considered you as a great ally with fundamental common interests. Your security and prosperity have been a deep concern of the American people and we have expressed that concern in the most practical terms. You and we have fought together to resist the ambitions of the Communist world revolution. This solidarity has meant a great deal to us and I would hope that it means a great deal to your Government and to your people. We have no intention of lending any support to any solution of Cyprus which endangers the Turkish Cypriot community. We have not been able to find a final solution because this is, admittedly, one of the

most complex problems on earth. But I wish to assure you that we have been deeply concerned about the interests of Turkey and of the Turkish Cypriots and will remain so.

Finally, Mr. Prime Minister I must tell you that you have posed the gravest issues of war and peace. These are issues which go far beyond the bilateral relations between Turkey and the United States. They not only will certainly involve war between Turkey and Greece but could involve wider hostilities because of the unpredictable consequences which a unilateral intervention in Cyprus could produce. You have your responsibilities as Chief of the Government of Turkey; I also have mine as President of the United States. I must, therefore, inform you in the deepest friendship that unless I can have your assurance that you will not take such action without further and fullest consultation I cannot accept your injunction to Ambassador Hare of secrecy and must immediately ask for emergency meetings of the NATO Council and of the United Nations Security Council.

I wish it were possible for us to have a personal discussion of this situation. Unfortunately, because of the special circumstances of our present Constitutional position, I am not able to leave the United States. If you could come here for a full discussion I would welcome it. I do feel that you and I carry a very heavy responsibility for the general peace and for the possibilities of a sane and peaceful resolution of the Cyprus problem. I ask you, therefore, to delay any decisions which you and your colleagues might have in mind until you and I have had the fullest and frankest consultation.

Sincerely,

LYNDON B. JOHNSON

PRIME MINISTER INONU'S RESPONSE TO THE PRESIDENT *June 13, 1964*

Dear Mr. President,

I have received your message of June 5, 1964 through Ambassador Hare. We have, upon your request, postponed our decision to exercise our right of unilateral action in Cyprus

conferred to us by the Treaty of Guarantee. With due regard to the spirit of candour and friendship in which your message is meant to be written, I will, in my reply, try also to explain to you in full frankness my views about the situation.

Mr. President,

Your message, both in wording and content, has been disappointing for an ally like Turkey who has always been giving the most serious attention to its relations of alliance with the United States and has brought to the fore substantial divergences of opinion in various fundamental matters pertaining to these relations.

It is my sincere hope that both these divergences and the general tone of your message are due to the haste in which a representation made in good-will was, under pressure of time, based on data hurriedly collected.

In the first place, it is being emphasized in your message that we have failed to consult with the United States when a military intervention in Cyprus was deemed indispensable by virtue of the Treaty of Guarantee. The necessity of a military intervention in Cyprus has been felt four times since the closing days of 1963. From the outset we have taken a special care to consult the United States on this matter. Soon after the outbreak of the crisis, on December 25, 1963, we have immediately informed the United States of our contacts with the other guaranteeing powers only to be answered that the United States was not a party to this issue. We then negotiated with the United Kingdom and Greece for intervention and, as you know, a tri-partite military administration under British command was set-up on December 26, 1963. Upon the failure of the London conference and of the joint Anglo-American proposals, due to the attitude of Makarios and in the face of continuing assaults in the island against the Turkish Cypriots, we lived through very critical days in February and taking advantage of the visit of Mr. George Ball to Ankara, we informed again the United States of the gravity of the situation. We tried to explain to you that the necessity of intervention to restore order in the island might arise in view

of the vacuum caused by the rejection of the Anglo-American proposals and we informed you that we might have to intervene at any time. We even requested guarantees from you on specific issues and your answers were in the affirmative. However, you asked us not to intervene and assured us that Makarios would get at the United Nations a severe lesson while all the Turkish rights and interests would be preserved.

We complied with your request without any satisfactory result being secured at the United Nations. Moreover the creation of the United Nations force, decided upon by the Security Council, became a problem. The necessity for intervention was felt for the third time to protect the Turkish community against the assaults of the terrorists in Cyprus who were encouraged by the doubts as to whether the United Nations forces would be set up immediately after the adoption of the Security Council resolution of March 4, 1964. But assuring us that the force would be set up very shortly, you insisted again that we refrain from intervening. Thereupon we postponed our intervention once again, awaiting the United Nations forces to assume their duty.

Dear Mr. President,

The era of terror in Cyprus has a particular character which rendered ineffective all measures taken so far. From the very outset, the negotiations held to restore security and the temporary set-ups have all helped only to increase the aggressiveness and the destructiveness of the Makarios administration. The Greek Cypriots have lately started to arm themselves overtly and considered the United Nations as an additional instrument to back up their ruthless and unconstitutional rule. It has become quite obvious that the United Nations have neither the authority nor the intent to intervene for the restoration of constitutional order and to put an end to aggression. You are well aware of the instigative attitude of the Greek Government towards the Greek Cypriots. During the talks held in your office, in the United States, we informed you that under the circumstances we would eventually be compelled to intervene

in order to put an end to the atrocities in Cyprus. We also asked your Secretary of State at The Hague whether the United States would support us in such an eventuality and we received no answer. I think, I have thus reminded you how many times and under what circumstances we informed you of the necessity for intervention in Cyprus. I do remember having emphasized to your high level officials our due appreciation of the special responsibilities incumbent upon the United States within the alliance and of the necessity to be particularly careful and helpful to enable her to maintain solidarity within the alliance. As you see, we never had the intention to confront you with a unilateral decision on our part. Our grievance stems from our inability to explain to you a problem which caused us for months utmost distress and from your refusal to take a frank and firm stand on the issue as to which party is on the right side in the dispute between two allies, namely, Turkey and Greece.

Mr. President,

In your message you further emphasize the obligation of Turkey, under the provisions of the Treaty, to consult with the other two guaranteeing powers, before taking any unilateral action. Turkey is fully aware of this obligation. For the past six months we have indeed complied with the requirements of this obligation. But Greece has, not only thwarted all the attempts made by Turkey to seek jointly the ways and means to stop Greek Cypriots from repudiating international treaties, but has also supported their unlawful and inhuman acts and has even encouraged them.

The Greek Government itself has not hesitated to declare publicly that the international agreements it signed with us were no longer in force. Various examples to that effect were, in due course, communicated in detail, orally and in writing, to your State Department.

We have likewise fulfilled our obligation of constant consultation with the Government of the United Kingdom, the other guaranteeing power.

In several instances we have, jointly with the Government of the United Kingdom, made

representations to the Greek Cypriots with a view to restoring constitutional order. But unfortunately, these representations were of no avail due to the negative attitude of the Greek Cypriot authorities.

As you see, Turkey has earnestly explored every avenue of consulting continuously and acting jointly with the other two guaranteeing powers. This being the fact, it can not be asserted that Turkey has failed to abide by her obligation of consulting with the other two guaranteeing powers before taking unilateral action.

I put it to you, Mr. President, whether the United States Government which has felt the need to draw the attention of Turkey to her obligation of consultation, yet earnestly and faithfully fulfilled by the latter, should not have reminded Greece, who repudiates treaties signed by herself, of the necessity to abide by the precept "pacta sunt servanda" which is the fundamental rule of international law. This precept which, only a fortnight ago, was most eloquently characterized as "the basis of survival" by your Secretary of State himself in his speech at the "American Law Institute," is now being completely and contemptuously ignored by Greece, our NATO ally and by the Greek Cypriots.

Dear Mr. President,

As implied in your message, by virtue of the provisions of Article 4 of the Treaty of Guarantee, the three guaranteeing powers have, in the event of a breach of the provisions of that Treaty, the right to take concerted action and, if that proves impossible, unilateral action with the sole aim of re-establishing the state of affairs created by the said Treaty. The Treaty of Guarantee was signed with this understanding being shared by all parties thereto. The "Gentleman's Agreement" signed on February 19, 1959 by the Foreign Ministers of Turkey and Greece, is an evidence of that common understanding.

On the other hand, at the time of the admission of the Republic of Cyprus to the United Nations, the members of the organization were fully acquainted with all the international com-

mitments and obligations of the said Republic and no objections were raised in this respect.

Furthermore, in the course of the discussions on Cyprus leading to the resolution adopted on March 4, 1964 by the Security Council, the United States Delegate, among others, explicitly declared that the United Nations had no power to annul or amend international treaties.

The understanding expressed in your message that the intervention by Turkey in Cyprus would be for the purposes of effecting the partition of the island has caused me great surprise and profound sorrow. My surprise stems from the fact that the data furnished to you about the intentions of Turkey could be so remote from the realities repeatedly proclaimed by us. The reason of my sorrow is that our ally, the Government of the United States, could think that Turkey might lay aside the principle constituting the foundation of her foreign policy, i.e., absolute loyalty to international law, commitments and obligations, as factually evidenced in many circumstances well known to the United States.

I would like to assure you most categorically and most sincerely that if ever Turkey finds herself forced to intervene militarily in Cyprus this will be done in full conformity with the provisions and aims of international agreements.

In this connection, allow me to stress, Mr. President, that the postponement of our decision does naturally, in no way affect the rights conferred to Turkey by Article 4 of the Treaty of Guarantee.

Mr. President,

Referring to NATO obligations, you state in your message that the very essence of NATO requires that allies should not wage war on each other and that a Turkish intervention in Cyprus would lead to a military engagement between Turkish and Greek forces.

I am in full agreement with the first part of your statement, but the obligation for the NATO allies to respect international agreements concluded among themselves as well as their mutual treaty rights and commitments is an equally vital requisite of the alliance. An alliance among states which ignore their mutual

contractual obligations and commitments is unthinkable.

As to the concern you expressed over the outbreak of a Turco-Greek war in case of Turkey's intervention in Cyprus in conformity with her rights and obligations stipulated in international agreements, I would like to stress that Turkey would undertake a "military operation" in Cyprus exclusively under the conditions and for the purpose set forth in the agreements. Therefore, a Turco-Greek war so properly described as "literally unthinkable" by the Honorable Dean Rusk could only occur in case of Greece's aggression against Turkey. Our view, in case of such an intervention, is to invite to an effective collaboration, with the aim of restoring the constitutional order in Cyprus, both Greece and the United Kingdom in their capacity as guaranteeing powers. If despite this invitation and its contractual obligations Greece were to attack Turkey, we could in no way be held responsible of the consequences of such an action. I would like to hope that you have already seriously drawn the Greek Government's attention on these matters.

The part of your message expressing doubts as to the obligation of the NATO allies to protect Turkey in case she becomes directly involved with the USSR as a result of an action initiated in Cyprus, gives me the impression that there are as between us wide divergence of views as to the nature and basic principles of the North Atlantic Alliance. I must confess that this has been to us the source of great sorrow and grave concern. Any aggression against a member of NATO will naturally call from the aggressor an effort of justification. If NATO's structure is so weak as to give credit to the aggressor's allegations, then it means that this defect of NATO needs really to be remedied. Our understanding is that the North Atlantic Treaty imposes upon all member states the obligation to come forthwith to the assistance of any member victim of an aggression. The only point left to the discretion of the member states is the nature and the scale of this assistance. If NATO members should start discussing the right and wrong of the situation of their fellow-member victim of a Soviet aggression, whether this aggression was provoked or not and if the

decision on whether they have an obligation to assist the member should be made to depend on the issue of such a discussion, the very foundations of the Alliance would be shaken and it would lose its meaning. An obligation of assistance, if it is to carry any weight, should come into being immediately upon the observance of aggression. That is why Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty considers an attack against one of the member states as an attack against them all and makes it imperative for them to assist the party so attacked by taking forthwith such action as they deem necessary. In this connection I would like to further point out that the agreements on Cyprus have met with the approval of the North Atlantic Council, as early as the stage of the United Nations debate on the problem, i.e., even prior to the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus, hence long before the occurrence of the events of December 1963.

As you will recall, at the meeting of the NATO Ministerial Council held three weeks ago at The Hague, it was acknowledged that the treaties continued to be the basis for legality as regards the situation in the island and the status of Cyprus. The fact that these agreements have been violated as a result of the flagrantly unlawful acts of one of the parties on the island should in no way mean that the said agreements are no longer in force and that the rights and obligations of Turkey by virtue of those agreements should be ignored. Such an understanding would mean that as long as no difficulties arise, the agreements are considered as valid and they are no longer in force when difficulties occur. I am sure you will agree with me that such an understanding of law cannot be accepted. I am equally convinced that there could be no shadow of doubt about the obligation to protect Turkey within the NATO Alliance in a situation that can, by no means, be attributed to an arbitrary act of Turkey. An opposite way of thinking would lead to the repudiation and denial of the concept of law and of Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

In your message, concern has been expressed about the commitments of Turkey as a member of the United Nations. I am sure, Mr. President, you will agree with me if I say that such

a concern, which I do not share, is groundless especially for the following reasons: Turkey has distinguished herself as one of the most loyal members of the United Nations ever since its foundation. The Turkish people has spared no effort to safeguard the principles of the United Nations Charter, and has even sacrificed her sons for this cause. Turkey has never failed in supporting this organization and, in order to secure its proper functioning, has borne great moral and material sacrifices even when she had most pressing financial difficulties. Despite the explicit rights conferred to Turkey by the Treaty of Guarantee, my Government's respect for and adherence to the United Nations have recently been demonstrated once more by its acceptance of the Security Council resolution of March 4, 1964 as well as by the priority it has given to the said resolution.

Should the United Nations have been progressively successful in carrying out their task as pointed out in your message, a situation which is of such grave concern for both you and I, would never have arisen. It is a fact that the United Nations operations in the island have proved unable to put an end to the oppression.

The relative calm which has apparently prevailed in the island for the past few weeks marks the beginning of preparations of the Greek Cypriots for further tyranny. Villages are still under siege. The United Nations forces, assuaging Turkish Cypriots, enable the Greeks to gather their crops; but they do not try to stop the Greeks when the crops of Turks are at stake and they act as mere spectators to Greek assaults. These vitally important details may not well reach you, whereas we live in the atmosphere created by the daily reports of such tragic events.

The report of the Secretary-General will be submitted to the United Nations on June 15, 1964. I am seriously concerned that we may face yet another defeat similar to the one we all suffered on March 4, 1964. The session of March 4th had further convinced Makarios that the Treaty of Guarantee did not exist for him and thereupon he took the liberty of actually placing the United Nations forces under his control and direction. From then on the assas-

sination of hostages and the besieging of villages have considerably increased.

Dear Mr. President,

Our allies who are in a position to arbitrate in the Cyprus issue and to orient it in the right direction have so far been unable to disentangle the problem from a substantial error. The Cyprus tragedy has been engendered by the deliberate policy of the Republic of Cyprus aimed at annulling the treaties and abrogating the constitution. Security can be established in the island only through the proper functioning of an authority above the Government of Cyprus. Yet only the measures acceptable to the Cypriot Government are being sought to restore security in Cyprus. The British administration set up following the December events, the Anglo-American proposals and finally the United Nations command have all been founded on this unsound basis and consequently every measure acceptable to Makarios has proved futile and has, in general, encouraged oppression and aggression.

Dear Mr. President,

You put forward in your message the resentment caused in Greece by the policy pursued by your Government. Within the content of the Cyprus issues, the nature of the Greek policy and the course of action undertaken by Greece indicate that she is apt to resort to every means within her power to secure the complete annulment of the existing treaties. We are at pains to make our allies understand the sufferings we bear in our rightful cause and the irretrievable plight in which the Turkish Cypriots are living. On the other hand, it is not the character of our nation to exploit demonstrations of resentment. I assure you that our distress is deeply rooted since we can not make you understand our rightful position and convince you of the necessity of spending every effort and making use of all your authority to avert the perils inherent in the Cyprus problem by attaching to it the importance it well deserves.

That France and Germany have buried their animosity is indeed a good example. However, our nation had already given such an example forty years ago by establishing friendly relations with Greece, right after the ruthless devastation of the whole Anatolia by the armies of that country.

Dear Mr. President,

As a member of the Alliance our nation is fully conscious of her duties and rights. We do not pursue any aim other than the settlement of the Cyprus problem in compliance with the provisions of the existing treaties. Such a settlement is likely to be reached if you lend your support and give effect with your supreme authority to the sense of justice inherent in the character of the American nation.

Mr. President,

I thank you for your statement emphasizing the value attached by the United States to the relations of alliance with Turkey and for your

kind words about the Turkish nation. I shall be happy to come to the United States to talk the Cyprus problem with you. The United Nations Security Council will meet on June the 17th. In the meantime, Mr. Dirk Stikker, Secretary General of NATO, will have paid a visit to Turkey. Furthermore, the United Nations mediator Mr. Tuomioja will have submitted his report to the Secretary-General. These developments may lead to the emergence of a new situation. It will be possible for me to go abroad to join you, at a date convenient for you, immediately after June 20th.

It will be most helpful for me if you would let me know of any defined views and designs you may have on the Cyprus question so that I may be able to study them thoroughly before my departure for Washington.

Finally, I would like to express my satisfaction for the frank, fruitful and promising talks we had with Mr. G. Ball in Ankara just before forwarding this message to you.

Sincerely,

ISMET INONU,
Prime Minister of Turkey.