

Some may not be aware that the buffer zone is patrolled now by U.N. peacekeeping forces. The U.S. must maintain its financial support for these forces that are keeping peace in Cyprus. It is an effective investment, especially now, and it is needed.

There are numerous examples of Turkish aggression in the Eastern Mediterranean. Violations of Greek airspace and territorial waters are commonplace. Turkey continues to intimidate and interfere with the companies operating in Cyprus' exclusive economic zone and violates Cyprus' sovereign claims to its territory.

Fortunately, there are near-term initiatives that Congress is pursuing right now to defend Cyprus' stability and sovereignty. The NDAA conference report released Monday includes a provision to study lifting the arms embargo on Cyprus that has been in place since 1987.

I think we need to go much further than that. I think the embargo should be lifted today, and I am proud to be an original cosponsor of Representative CICILLINE's bill to do just that. This study will hopefully be at least a step in the right direction.

The NDAA also prohibits the sale of F-35 fighter jets to Turkey. That provision is long overdue, and that is in the defense budget that we will be considering today and tomorrow.

Cyprus is a vital U.S. partner in global and regional security, economic cooperation, and energy development. I am proud to be a champion of this relationship in Congress through the Hellenic Caucus and to have the support of so many of my Hellenic American constituents in that effort.

Mr. Speaker, I see my colleague, Mr. CICILLINE, representing the great State of Rhode Island is here. He is an incredible leader in this caucus, the leader of our messaging unit, and, in so many other ways, an important leader in this Congress.

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Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. CICILLINE), a great advocate for Cyprus. We have cosponsored legislation together.

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York for her co-chairmanship of this caucus. Both Mr. BILIRAKIS and Mrs. MALONEY have been great champions on this issue, and I am honored and privileged to work with them.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to join both of my colleagues in celebrating the important relationship between the United States and Cyprus and in highlighting the critical role our partnership with Cyprus plays in advancing both of our nations' national security interests.

The Republic of Cyprus is a strategic partner to the United States in the eastern Mediterranean region and an

effective ally combating threats posed by terrorism and nuclear proliferation.

Through information sharing, training programs, counterterrorism activities, and increased cooperation on energy policy, our relationship with Cyprus allows us to advance our Nation's interests, defend against the rise of terrorism and regional actors who seek to take steps counter to American interests, and to promote the ongoing close cooperation between the United States and Europe.

The U.S. participates in a number of joint exercises with Cyprus, including annual multinational search and rescue and crisis management exercises, and we coordinate training programs for Cyprus in explosives management and disposal, cybersecurity, counterterrorism, and maritime safety and security.

We work closely with our Cypriot allies to combat the spread of weapons of mass destruction and foster an effective international nonproliferation regime.

In 2015, we joined Cyprus as members of the Proliferation Security Initiative in cohosting a regional nonproliferation workshop focusing on inspecting and identifying proliferation material. We are also joining Cyprus in providing more secure sources of domestic energy for Cyprus and all of Europe.

American companies are playing a valuable role in energy exploration activities in Cyprus' exclusive economic zone in order to help provide Europe with potential alternatives to Russian gas and oil. Yet, despite this critical partnership between our two countries, the United States has had in place an arms embargo against the island of Cyprus since 1987.

This policy was initially intended to prevent an arms race on the island with Turkey, following Turkey's 1974 invasion of Cyprus and its subsequent occupation of the northern territory, in order to provide space for reunification talks. However, more than 30 years since the embargo was first implemented, Turkey still has more than 30,000 troops occupying the northern territory of Cyprus, reunification talks have not produced intended results, and the U.S. is unable to maintain a full security relationship with a key partner in combating terrorism.

On top of this, Turkey continues to threaten Cyprus' energy exploration by continually harassing drilling vessels in the EEZ. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, Wess Mitchell, has said that this harassment cannot be tolerated.

We need to enact policies that strengthen our relationship with Cyprus and counteract dangerous elements in the region which threaten our national security interests and the interests of our allies in the eastern Mediterranean.

Last year, I introduced legislation to lift the three-decade-old embargo on Cyprus, which would allow us to strengthen the partnership that we

have built with the Republic of Cyprus. Our inability to provide Cyprus with necessary equipment needed to defend its sovereignty and its economic interests threatens our own national security.

Lifting the arms embargo will allow Cyprus to better establish itself as a frontline state for Western security interests, defend itself from external threats, and ensure Cyprus is no longer forced to seek assistance for its defense from countries like Russia. Cyprus is an invaluable partner, and we need to make sure that we are treating it as such.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for organizing this opportunity to highlight the importance of the U.S.-Cypriot relationship, and I look forward to working with them, with our State Department, and with the Cypriot Government to continue to partner in important ways.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Rhode Island for those remarks. He is a great advocate for Cyprus.

Cyprus is a great partner, a great strategic ally, and will continue to be. We wanted to highlight that this evening, and I think we have.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

SENATE BILL REFERRED

A bill of the Senate of the following titles was taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 2278. An act to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide grants to improve health care in rural areas; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

SENATE ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

The Speaker announced his signature to enrolled bills of the Senate of the following titles:

S. 2245. An act to include New Zealand in the list of foreign states whose nationals are eligible for admission into the United States as E-1 and E-2 nonimmigrants if United States nationals are treated similarly by the Government of New Zealand.

S. 2850. An act to amend the White Mountain Apache Tribe Water Rights Quantification Act of 2010 to clarify the use of amounts in the WMAT Settlement Fund.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 34 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, July 26, 2018, at 9 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows: