

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. STEVE COHEN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 9, 2016

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, on May 18, 2016, while I was in an office meeting, the legislative signal bells in my office malfunctioned due to a loose electrical connection, and neither I nor my staff accompanying me knew that a vote had been called. The Architect of the Capitol's Electrical Engineering Branch later repaired the signal bells.

If present, I would have voted "no" on H. Res. 735.

CONCERNS ABOUT TURKISH CIVIL SOCIETY

HON. DAVID SCOTT

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 9, 2016

Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today out of concern for the welfare of

one of our most important NATO allies; the Republic of Turkey. I need not remind this House that Turkey is an indispensable ally in the fight against ISIL, and the effort to restore stability in the Middle East. Nor do I need to remind the members of this body that Turkey bears a burden of biblical proportions as it struggles to safely host almost three million refugees while simultaneously defending against an unprecedented wave of terror attacks. The geopolitical vicissitudes in Turkey's vicinity present the most serious challenge to Turkish territorial integrity since the founding of the Republic.

However, history has consistently shown that great civilizations do not fall to outside forces unless they are rife with internal turmoil. Under its current leadership, Turkey has regrettably embarked in a troubling direction. Once considered the shining example of a vibrant democracy with the potential to mediate between the Middle East and West, crack-downs on civil society under President Erdogan have forced many of us to reassess the nature of our countries' partnership. Repressive policies against political opposition, journalists, and women rights advocates constitute just a few of these concerns. Questionable use of antiterrorism laws to molest finan-

cial institutions, corporations, and academics associated with political opposition such as the Gulen movement raise concerns about Turkey's continued commitment to democratic principles. In a robust republic, civic organizations such as the Gulen movement cannot and should not be designated as terrorist organizations without evidence for the sake of political expediency.

There can be no doubt about America's continued commitment to defend our NATO allies; nor can we forget the substantial military buildup in Armenia, where Putin has deployed advanced fighter aircraft and attack helicopters just 25 miles from the Turkish border. This is the same NATO border that Russian military aircraft have regularly violated, culminating in the downing of a Russian bomber by Turkish defense forces. However, we must not forget the prerequisite requirements to be a member of the NATO alliance; that each member of the alliance be "determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law." It is my hope that President Erdogan's administration will remember this commitment to democratic principles even in the face of regional instability.