

# Turkey warns US on Armenia genocide bill

By SUZAN FRASER, Associated Press Writer Tue Oct 9, 4:53 PM ET

Turkey's president warned the U.S. government Tuesday that their longtime ties will be harmed if Congress passes a resolution putting the genocide label on the mass killings of ethnic Armenians in Ottoman Turk lands during World War I.

President Abdullah Gul said in a letter there would be "serious troubles" if Congress adopted the measure, which is expected to be considered Wednesday by the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Armenians, backed by many historians, contend hundreds of thousands of Armenians died in an organized genocide. Turks say the killings came amid widespread chaos and governmental breakdown as the 600-year-old Ottoman Empire collapsed in the years before modern Turkey was born in 1923.

In recent years, Armenians have campaigned for international recognition of the killings as genocide, and France is among countries that officially adopted that view. Turkey, a member of NATO along with France, broke military ties with the French government after that.

Gul's complaint to President Bush came as the Turkish governing party decided to ask for parliamentary approval for a military attack into northern Iraq, seeking to wipe out bases used by guerrillas of a Turkish Kurd separatist movement.

U.S. officials fear an incursion into Iraq's Kurdish region could destabilize one of the few areas in the country that have remained relatively peaceful and have urged the Turkish government against sending troops across the border.

The Bush administration is pressing Congress to reject the Armenian resolution, which would have no binding effect on U.S. foreign policy. But its supporters appear to have enough votes to win approval from the full House.

Some analysts said passage could break the last constraints holding the Turkish government back from striking into Iraq, despite the rising anger of Turks over recent attacks by rebels in largely Kurdish southeastern Turkey.

"What was preventing an operation was the fear that Turkey-U.S. relations might reach a new low, and concerns not to harm relations any further," said Ihsan Dagi in the international

relations department of Middle East Technical University in Ankara.

"However, if the Armenian genocide resolution passes, that will be the moment when relations between Turkey and the United States collapse."

Polls say the United States already is unpopular in Turkey due to widespread opposition to the war in Iraq.

Many in the U.S. administration worry the Armenian resolution also could lead Turkey to restrict crucial supply routes to Iraq and Afghanistan and perhaps to close Incirlik, a strategic Turkish air base used by the United States.

In Ankara, the U.S. Embassy warned that the resolution could spark demonstrations and anti-American anger across Turkey and said that American citizens should be vigilant.