

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Ambassador-Designate Marie L. Yovanovitch by
Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr. (#1)
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
June 19, 2008**

Question:

What has the State Department done to end Turkey's denial of the Armenian Genocide?

Answer:

The Administration has worked to stimulate a candid exploration within Turkish society of these horrific events in an effort to help Turkey reconcile with the past. This is not easy. It was not easy for the United States to address its own historic dark spots.

The Administration has long pressed for expanding freedom of expression in Turkey, which has helped to expand the public debate surrounding the mass killings, forced exile, and ethnic cleansing that occurred during WWI at the end of the Ottoman Empire. After a long silence, Turkey is making progress addressing these issues. More than 100,000 Turkish citizens of all backgrounds demonstrated at the funeral of Hrant Dink, an Armenian-Turkish journalist murdered by a Turkish ultra-nationalist, and they demonstrated in support of tolerance and a candid exploration of Turkey's past.

The scope for free expression in Turkey, including on the Armenian issue, has expanded significantly in recent years, but clearly there is much more to be done. The Turkish government responded in May 2008 by amending Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, under which individuals have been prosecuted for “insulting Turkishness.” While the Administration would have preferred to have seen the repeal of Article 301, the amendments reduce the maximum possible sentence from three to two years and, most importantly, require the Minister of Justice to determine whether to accept the case for prosecution. The Minister’s role should help to reduce significantly the number of cases brought by zealous prosecutors. The Administration will continue to encourage the Turkish authorities to continue this progress and to end legal action against citizens for expressing their views.

Our Embassy in Ankara also is committed to working with the Government of Turkey on ways in which the terrible events of 1915 can be studied. As a recent example, the USG is currently laying the groundwork for an International Visitor Program that would bring archivists from the Turkish State Archives to the United States to look at the ways in which we do historical research. As a confidence building measure, the USG has contacted Armenian archivists to participate in the program, in the hope that,

upon return, the archivists from both countries could work together on a joint program that would study the issue.

In addition, our embassies take every opportunity in meetings with the Governments of Armenia and Turkey, and with civil society leaders from both countries, to encourage improved dialogue between them. Since 2006, the United States has provided over \$700,000 in support of initiatives to increase people-to-people connections between Armenia and Turkey, including research projects, conferences, documentary production, and exchange and partnership programs with the goal of increasing cross-border dialogue and cooperation. These programs are focused on bringing together Armenian and Turkish NGOs, think tank researchers, academics and business leaders at the grass roots level by creating opportunities for them to work together on common projects that will benefit both countries.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Ambassador-Designate Marie L. Yovanovitch by
Senator Joseph Biden (#2)
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
June 19, 2008**

Question:

What is the United States doing to end the destructive Turkish blockade of Armenia? Is it your intention to have the U.S. Ambassador in Ankara visit Yerevan in an effort to move this issue? Is it your intention to have the new Ambassador to Yerevan (if confirmed) travel to Ankara to advance an end to the blockade?

Answer:

Facilitating Armenia's regional integration by opening its land border with Turkey is a priority for the United States. If confirmed, I would give this important issue my utmost attention -- not only by supporting government-to-government discussions -- but by promoting people-to-people contacts and partnerships, and other cross-border and regional initiatives. I would certainly work closely with my counterpart in Ankara to advance this goal, including travel to each other's host country, as appropriate. Contact begins to build trust, and trust is the necessary first step to reconciliation and conflict resolution. I also look forward to working with my colleagues at our embassy in Ankara in this common effort. Clearly, the status quo is not helpful to anyone.

Fortunately, some progress has been achieved in recent years: there are regular charter flights between Yerevan and Istanbul and other flights to Antalya; bus connections via Georgia are numerous; and trade with Turkey through Georgia is common. However, both countries would benefit greatly from increased direct trade, connecting their electrical grids, and implementing other measures natural to neighbors. The U.S. also supports more cross-border dialogue and cooperation between the people of Armenia and Turkey through research initiatives, conferences, and exchange programs. Our Embassies take every opportunity in meetings with the Governments of Armenia and Turkey, and with civil society leaders from both countries, to encourage improved dialogue. Since 2006, the USG has provided over \$700,000 in support of initiatives to increase people-to-people connections between Armenia and Turkey, including research projects, conferences, documentary production, and exchange and partnership programs with the goal of increasing cross-border dialogue and cooperation. These programs are focused on bringing together Armenian and Turkish NGOs, think tank researchers, academics and business leaders at the grass roots level by creating opportunities for them to work together on common projects that will benefit both countries.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Ambassador-Designate Marie L. Yovanovitch by
Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr. (#3)
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
June 19, 2008**

Question:

Wouldn't the end of the blockade and the establishment of peaceful commerce and economic linkages between Armenia, Turkey, and among the states of the South Caucasus not promote the long-term stability and prosperity of the entire region? Doesn't the absence of these linkages undermine the region's peace and prosperity?

Answer:

I agree that improved commerce and economic linkages in the region would promote its stability and prosperity. Therefore, facilitating Armenia's regional integration is a priority for the United States. We work steadfastly to end Armenia's isolation both by promoting reconciliation between Armenia and Turkey to reopen their border, and by working to find a peaceful and lasting settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan. The Administration believes regional integration is in the economic interest of all three countries and certainly in our interest; for example, U.S. investment is hampered by regional divisions. With its borders to the east and west closed, Armenia relies more than we would like on its relations with Iran. In terms of Russia's influence, Armenia's history

and currently complicated relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey provide the impetus for a close relationship with Russia. The Administration is working with Armenia to help it diversify its sources of energy supply through electricity cooperation with Georgia, and eventually, by tying Armenia into Caspian oil and natural gas infrastructure. In looking at the region as a whole, the Administration's strategic interests are focused on several issues: the advance of freedom and democracy; security, including counterterrorism and peaceful resolution of separatist conflicts; and energy. The Administration believes that all would benefit greatly from good neighborly relations and regional integration of the South Caucasus.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Ambassador-Designate Marie L. Yovanovitch by
Senator Joseph Biden (#4)
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
June 19, 2008**

Question:

Azerbaijan's substantial revenue stream from its oil exports is facilitating increasingly aggressive military spending and dangerous rhetoric. What is the Administration doing bilaterally to prevent further de-stabilizing conflict in the South Caucasus? What is the Administration telling Baku?

Answer:

The Administration consistently stresses publicly and privately in Baku that there is no military solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. As a Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group mediating the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the United States has led the way in formulating a set of Basic Principles that offers the best hope for a negotiated and peaceful settlement, which is the only way ahead. The Administration consistently stresses to the authorities in Baku that any rhetoric intimating that war is an option is dangerous and undercuts our efforts to negotiate a just and lasting settlement, which is outlined by the Basic Principles. The Administration therefore encourages the Government of Azerbaijan to work with the Government of Armenia and within the Minsk Group to finalize the Basic Principles. The June 6 meeting in St. Petersburg between Azerbaijani

President Aliyev and Armenian President Sargsyan restored momentum in the Minsk Group talks and should clear the way for an invigorated effort to bridge remaining differences on the Basic Principles. The U.S. Government played an active role in de-escalating military tension in early March, during the most serious ceasefire violation along the Line of Contact in over a decade.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Ambassador-Designate Marie L. Yovanovitch by
Senator Joseph Biden (#5)
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
June 19, 2008**

Question:

Fourteen years passed since the end of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh without a permanent resolution and still people are dying along an unsettled border. What progress has the Minsk process achieved in that time and doesn't the lack of progress warrant a re-examination of this approach?

Answer:

During negotiations over the past two years, Armenia and Azerbaijan have moved closer than ever to a framework agreement based on the "Basic Principles" outlined by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs. The Minsk Group Co-Chairs -- the United States, France, and Russia -- are working with the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan to build on new momentum following the positive meeting of Presidents Sargsyan and Aliyev on June 6 in St. Petersburg, with the goal of narrowing the remaining differences on the Basic Principles between the sides in coming months. Ultimately, it is up to the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan to take the difficult decisions required to finalize the Basic Principles.

