

The Incirlik Question

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(Unofficial translation)

“Despite the exposure of stored U.S. nuclear weapons in the Incirlik military base during Greenpeace General Director Dr. Gerd Leipold’s visit to Turkey, the government continues its silence on the issue. Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni arrived in Ankara yesterday. Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Gul held a joint press conference with his Israeli counterpart to condemn the existence of nuclear weapons and to call for a complete elimination of nuclear weapons from the region, while the Israeli minister stressed the need for Iran to allow international inspectors to visit its facilities.

At a time when the U.S. pressure on Iran escalates, revealing the existence of 90 nuclear warheads within Turkey’s borders may jeopardize Turkey’s security, should the fragile balance in the Middle East wobble. The existence of the nuclear weapons in Incirlik was revealed in February 2005 by an expert named Hans Kristensen.

Greenpeace director Leipold mentioned the website this information can be found on during an interview with *Milliyet* and added that it is not difficult to obtain information on such issues in the United States. Difficulty lies with the Turkish government’s policy to keep such information from the public.

Last Thursday the Turkish Parliament witnessed a rather interesting incident: Members of the Parliament discussed a petition between Turkey and the U.S. titled “Approval of an Aid Agreement to Prevent Proliferation,” as well as a report prepared by the Foreign Affairs Commission. The title of the agreement was rather esoteric. What this mysterious provision actually entailed was a brand new agreement with the U.S. government to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, which was signed during former U.S. Ambassador to Turkey Edelman’s term.

Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul was not present at the session while this major issue was being discussed. Instead, Minister of Culture and Tourism Atilla Koc attended the Parliamentary session as his deputy. AKP MP from Balikesir, Turhan Comez, took the stand to say that scripts of the discussions pertaining to this issue had not been sent to other members of the Parliament. Comez drew attention to the timing of the agreement with the U.S., asking “Have we not been monitoring the traffic of nuclear and radioactive materials in and out of Turkey for years that such an agreement surfaced at a time when Iran’s nuclear activities are the hot topic?” As a result of the question Comez asked, all MPs became very agitated.

It was impossible for the Minister of Culture, who was present as the deputy foreign minister, to know the terms of this agreement, therefore he could neither respond to Comez's question, nor manage to calm down the implacable MPs.

Just as we did with the Incirlik issue, should we appeal to Greenpeace again?"

Turkish article available at <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2006/05/30/yazar/sazak.html>