

Factsheet: Turkey's Influence Operations in Washington

Under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey, as JINSA has laid out in a timeline of Turkish behavior, has been pursuing objectives that, at best, diverge, and, at worst, directly undermine, U.S. national security interests. In order to help provide political cover and deflect consequences for these policies, the Turkish Embassy in Washington, D.C. has been on a hiring spree. Their targets: top former U.S. national security officials with strong political networks who used to oversee Middle East and Europe policy in Congress and the Executive Branch. The Turkish government is paying top dollar for at least five former U.S. officials to officially act as their representatives in Washington, including in their employment contracts that they must promptly relay any information about pending legislation or government action regarding Turkey to the Turkish Embassy.

This practice is both legal and unfortunately too common in Washington. Deep-pocketed governments for years have hired former senior officials and members of Congress to advance their interests. This practice can be fairly benign when undertaken by governments friendly to the United States seeking help understanding and navigating the U.S. political system. However, policymakers need to be more wary when this hiring comes from nations working at cross purposes to American national security interests while seeking to whitewash or advance their own agendas. There is rightly an entrenched stigma for representing Chinese or Russian interests. Many Hill offices, for example, have rightly [blacklisted](#) lobbyists working to advance the interests of Chinese companies.

Congress should similarly cast a sharp eye on Turkey's lobbyists and their requests for meetings and avoidance of penalties. While a NATO ally, Ankara increasingly threatens the security of other NATO members, harbors Hamas leadership, and openly muses about attacking Israel. Turkey's military and affiliated companies Russian weapons systems like the S-400 while private sector companies help Iran and Russia evade U.S. sanctions. Turkey should not be able to aid U.S. adversaries and expect to remain in the United States' good graces.

Congress should also scrutinize Turkey's contributions to top U.S. universities. Ankara has bestowed more than \$214 million in gifts, in part to support antisemitic professors and influence programming at storied institutions such as Georgetown and Harvard University. Congress should require mandatory disclosure of foreign funding in any research publications designed to shape public opinion on contemporary political or historical issues

Turkey's Paid Representation

- **Representative Chris Stewart**

Rep. Chris Stewart represented Utah's 2nd congressional district from 2013 until his resignation in 2023. Stewart previously served in the U.S. Air Force for 14 years, and in Congress served as a member of the prestigious House Committee on Appropriations and the sensitive Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, responsible for providing oversight over the nation's closest guarded secrets. A year after Stewart resigned from Congress, the lobbying firm he started, Skyline Capitol, [received](#) \$200,000 from the Turkish government to advance Turkey's interests in the fall of 2024.



- » In February 2025, Representative Stewart signed a new [contract](#) with the Turkish government worth \$600,000 paid throughout 2025. Stewart's firm promised to propose and pursue "passage of legislation and other U.S. government action that promotes [sic] strengthening of the United States – Türkiye relationship, reinforcing mutual interest of the United States and Türkiye and a positive image of Türkiye and Turks...Educating members of Congress and the Administration of issues of importance to Türkiye...Promptly notifying Türkiye of any action in Congress or the Executive Branch on issues of importance to Türkiye...Forming new relationships with state and locally elected officials, including governors, state legislators, and majors..." The firm also agreed to advise the embassy on strategic communication as well as digital and social media campaigns.
- » The work appears to be co-led by Stewart's business partner, Clay White, who worked for Stewart as his Chief of Staff as well as former Utah Representative Jason Chaffetz. Congressional chiefs of staff often also receive and hold security clearances during their tenure in office. Liam Anderson, who formerly worked for Representatives Mike Gallagher, Mike Garcia, and Chris Stewart, also [registered](#) with the Department of Justice in Fall 2024 to lobby for Turkey through Stewart's firm and disclosed that he was working to help Turkey develop relationships with the incoming Trump Administration.

- **LB International Solutions**

One of Turkey's marquee lobbying partners is LB International Solutions, a small lobby shop run by Lydia Borland, who advertises on her [website](#) that she has been "a lobbyist with the Embassy of Turkey since 1989." Her website advertises that she "played an important role in establishing the Turkish American PACs" and "advocates on behalf of US-Turkish relations and Turkish companies. She assists in growing the Congressional Turkey Caucus and provides strategic direction for lobbying contract." Department of Justice documents [show](#) her firm is paid a monthly \$87,125 retainer by the Embassy of Turkey and a \$36,000 monthly retainer from the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' DC office. These funds were used in part to pay a constellation of lobbying groups and individuals to promote Turkey's interests in Congress.



- » Borland's firm pays \$13,000 a month to Aquila Strategies, associated with U.S.-Turkish citizen Cem Gursoy.
- » Borland's firm pays \$8,000 a month to U.S. political commentator Calvin Dark.

- » Borland's firm pays \$15,375 a month to the Van Aucker Group, associated with Robert Lewis Jr., a DC lobbyist.
- » In 2021, Borland's firm [paid](#) \$35,000 to Mark Murray, a former House Appropriations Committee staffer, for Turkey-related work.

- **Brian Forni, former Staff Director, House Foreign Affairs Europe Subcommittee**

Borland has also subcontracted Brian Forni through his firm Imperium Strategies. Forni worked as a senior staffer in Congress from 2002-2011, including as the Staff Director for the House Foreign Affairs Committee's Europe Subcommittee, which leads the House's oversight work on Turkey. According to Department of Justice [documents](#), Forni was registered to lobby on behalf of the Turkish government starting in December 2011. From 2016 until March 2025, Forni worked at the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) as the Managing Director for Congressional and Public Affairs. As soon as he left the MCC, Forni [registered as a foreign agent](#) with the Department of Justice to represent Turkey as a sub-



contractor for LB International Solutions, which nets him \$184,500 a year. Like Turkey's other lobbyists, he committed to services "proposing and pursuing passage of legislation and other U.S. government actions that promotes Türkiye's interests" and to "promptly notify Türkiye of any action in Congress or the Executive Branch on issues of importance to Türkiye" and work to bolster Turkey's image on Capitol Hill.

- **Patrick Garvey, former Senate Foreign Relations Committee Staff**

Patrick Garvey is a Republican national security staffer who previously worked for Senator Al D'Amato and Dick Lugar before serving two stints on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) from 2009-2012 and again in 2021. Less than three months after leaving SFRC in June 2021, he [registered as a foreign agent](#) with the Department of Justice to represent the Turkish Government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to interact with members of Congress and their staffs, as well as to advise the Embassy on legislative issues. A subsequent legal filing indicated he was being [paid](#) \$180,000 per year for his work on behalf of Turkey through another firm, LB International Solutions, that has a contract with the Turkish Embassy. Garvey pledged to notify Turkey of any action in Congress or the Executive Branch on issues of importance to Turkey and agreed to work to preserve and enlarge the Congressional Caucus on Turkey and Turkish Americans. Garvey appears to have worked for the Turkish Government until April 2025 and [reported](#) regular contact with Congressional leadership staff, and former Senate and House colleagues. One email [shows](#) Garvey providing Turkish Embassy talking points to senior Congressional staff praising Turkey's diplomatic leadership on the Russia-Ukraine grain deal for their consideration.



- **Robert Amsterdam**

Robert Amsterdam is a Canadian-American lawyer who represented and lobbied for Turkish interests from August 2015 through December 2022. His website [declared](#) in January 2016 that his law firm, Amsterdam & Partners, had been "retained by the [Turkish] Republic to expose allegedly unlawful conduct by the [Fethullah] Gulen network worldwide." The original [contract](#) between Amsterdam's law firm and the Turkish Embassy, which provided Amsterdam's firm \$50,000 per month, was focused on providing legal advice on extradition cases and international criminal law, with the eventual goal of having the United States extradite the Erdoğan critic, Fethullah Gulen, a controversial fugitive who died while in self-exile in Pennsylvania in October 2024.



- **Arnold & Porter**

Arnold & Porter is an American multinational law firm covering a wide range of regulatory and litigation work. In February 2021, they [signed](#) an initial \$750,000 contract for six months of work on behalf of Turkey's government-owned defense procurement agency, *President of Defense Industries*, to provide strategic and legal services in order to help Turkish contractors stay within the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter Program after they were kicked out due to Turkey's purchase of the Russian S-400 air defense system. The United States [imposed](#) CAATSA sanctions on the Turkish company in December 2020 for its role in procuring the Russian S-400 missile system. Arnold & Porter's first public hire on this contract was Stephen Williams, a West Point graduate, former official in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and a Lockheed Martin Regional President – roles which require high-level security clearances. Williams was [paid](#) \$110,000 between March and August 2021 for his services, and roughly an additional \$220,000 in the 12 months before his contract ended.



- **Saltzman & Evinch**

Paid: \$1,542,000 in 2025

In addition to these national security-related hirings, the Turkish Embassy [paid](#) a \$1,542,000 retainer in 2025 to DC-based law firm Saltzman & Evinch for all matters of legal and policy advice, legislation, litigation, and strategy – including on issues such as diplomatic privileges and immunities. The firm has provided legal services to the Turkish Embassy since 1994.

- **Ballard Partners**

From May 2017 until February 2021, Turkey hired lobbying firm Ballard Partners, led by a top fundraiser for President Trump, paying the firm \$125,000 a month for a broad range of issues involving the U.S.-Turkey relationship including trade, energy, military, and diplomatic issues. In 2019, Ballard Partners also represented Turkey's Halkbank for \$40,000 a month. Halkbank was indicted by the Department of Justice in 2019 for secretly transferring \$20 billion in frozen Iranian funds through a series of front companies in a bid to avoid U.S. sanctions.

Turkish Influence in Higher Education

According to [data](#) from the U.S. Department of Education, Turkey has provided over \$214 million in gifts and contracts to U.S. universities over the last few decades. These gifts include millions to provide scholarships to students from Turkey, ensuring certain admission numbers to prestigious universities.

However, many large gifts do not specify the purpose of the grant, including whether the Turkish government specified professors to be hired for certain programs. However, recent history suggests strong Turkish government interference in their funded programs to ensure faculty proffer views that align with Erdoğan's policies.

- The Turkish government has provided Harvard University \$29.3 million in gifts and \$5.5 million in contract work since 2014. These gifts included \$2 million annually to support a “research center” that may be tied to Harvard’s Turkish Studies program, which was run by Turkish historian Cemal Kafadar and his associate director, Rosie Bsheer. Kafadar was fired from Harvard’s Center for Middle Eastern Studies in 2025 while Bsheer was demoted to a faculty position amid accusations of antisemitism and anti-Israel bias. Turkey’s Education Minister [protested](#) the firings, calling them the “latest in an effort to surrender the independence of universities to the Zionist power mechanism.”
- The Turkish government [pulled](#) funding, that it had provided since 1982, from Georgetown University’s Institute of Turkish Studies in 2015 after scholars refused to conform to Ankara’s approved research agenda supporting Erdoğan’s policies. The Turkish decision to terminate funding in 2015 came after the Turkish Ambassador to the United States sought to have the Institute redirect programming to benefit the Turkish government and the Institute demurred.
- Other prominent gifts from Turkey include \$13.2 million to Columbia University since 2010, \$15.5 million to Cornell University since 2014, \$7 million in gifts and contracts to New York University since 2010, \$7 million in gifts and contracts to Pennsylvania State University since 2010, and \$4 million in gifts and contracts to Johns Hopkins University since 2015.

What Should the United States Do?

- Members of Congress and their staff should be wary of meeting with paid lobbyists for the Turkish government or associated military entities, or advancing their requests, while the Turkish government threatens Israel and NATO allies, harbors Hamas leadership, and supports Russia’s war machine.
- Congress should consider adding Turkey, alongside Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea to a list of countries that staff and members of Congress as well as all U.S. officials with security clearances are restricted from officially representing. A five-year cooling off period for officials holding security clearances before they are permitted to represent the Turkish government would be an appropriate measure.
- Congress should consider the [PAID OFF Act](#), [CLEAR Path Act](#), and [REVOKE Act](#) led by Senator Cornyn and Representative Pfluger to address the broad scope of foreign influence issues in the United States, ensuring that the Turkish government is considered for inclusion on these measures.
- Congress should work with the Department of Education to ensure American universities require scholars and centers paid for by foreign governments to prominently disclose the source of funding for all their research and public appearances when there is a relevant conflict of interest (e.g., covering politically relevant topics rather than medical research). As JINSA previously [recommended](#) in its paper on Qatari funding of U.S. higher education, Congress should adopt and expand the legislative approach reflected in the Defending American Research Act and the No Branch Campuses in Hostile Countries Act, and universities that receive funding from foreign governments should be required to certify the absence of foreign-state control, access, or preferential rights as a condition of receiving federal research and development awards.

- Congress and the Department of Education should bolster disclosure requirements for foreign gifts, so the American people have greater transparency on the purpose of all foreign government gifts to U.S. universities.