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## Turkey votes to renovate military bases for U.S. troops

By Louis Meixler  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey's parliament voted Thursday to allow U.S. troops to renovate Turkish bases for use in a possible war with Iraq, after Turkey's premier warned that his country may have no choice but to support Washington if there is a conflict.

Some 3,500 U.S. soldiers are expected to arrive in Turkey shortly to begin fixing up bases that U.S. troops could use to open a northern front against Iraq, effectively dividing the Iraqi army between its northern border with Turkey and the Persian Gulf in the south.

U.S. officials have maintained that a northern front would lead to a quicker war. Those officials have relentlessly pressed Turkish leaders to back the war plans.

The 308-193 parliamentary vote in the Turkish capital, Ankara, came after weeks of delays by leaders who said that options for peace should be exhausted before coming to war.

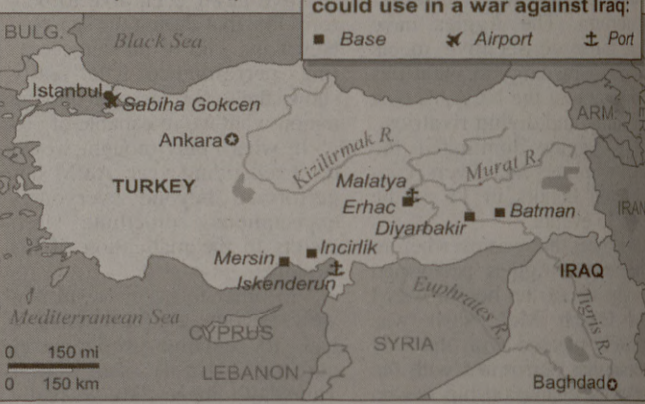
"Faced with a rising possibility of a war nearby, we are just taking measures to protect our national interests," Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the leader of the ruling Justice and Development Party said after the vote.

A second vote on whether to allow U.S. combat troops into Turkey is expected on Feb. 18, after a nine-day recess for the Muslim Eid al-Adha holiday. A senior party official said that he expected the measure to pass vote easily.

Prime Minister Abdullah Gul told party legislators before the vote that Turkey was trying to

### Turkey approves upgrade of military sites

Turkey's parliament voted Thursday to allow the United States to begin renovating military sites for a possible Iraq war.



SOURCES: Associated Press; ESRI

"gain time for peace" by delaying the approval of U.S. troops, NTV television reported.

Turks overwhelmingly oppose a U.S.-led war against Iraq and legislators from the newly elected party fear alienating the public by supporting the United States.

But they also fear that rebuffing the United States could be a disaster for Turkey, which counts on Washington for political and economic backing. Washington was key in helping Turkey gain international funding to rescue its economy from its financial crisis in 2001.

In Washington, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer welcomed the decision.

"Turkey is a stalwart friend and a staunch NATO ally," Fleischer said. "The Turkish government is facing up to difficult issues."

Turkish leaders are also worried that if they do not back

Washington in Iraq, they will lose any say in the future of the neighboring country.

Gul said Turkish soldiers would not fight in an Iraq war. "Turkey will not enter the war," he said.

Gul spoke to Turkish reporters Wednesday to explain his government's acceptance of the base renovations.

"We have to think about our national interests," the Hurriyet newspaper quoted him as saying. "Whatever Turkey's interests require is what we're going to do. From today on, I think we're going to have to act together with our strategic partner, the United States."

But in a sign of possible future opposition, Erdogan said U.S. actions must be approved by the United Nations. President Bush has repeatedly said that the United States will force Iraq to disarm whether or not the United Nations backs the action.

## Suicide attempts rise among terror suspects

By Paisley Dodds  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Suicide attempts among terror suspects held at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba are on the rise, the Pentagon said Thursday. A human rights group has already called for an investigation.

At least five detainees at the naval base have tried to hang themselves in the past three weeks, Pentagon spokeswoman Lt. Cmdr. Barbara Burfeind said Thursday in Washington.

The most serious attempt was made Jan. 16 by a man in his 20s who is now in stable but serious condition, Burfeind said. Authorities have notified his home country, but it is unknown whether his family has been contacted.

Human rights group Amnesty International urged U.S. authorities to investigate the suspect suicide attempts to determine whether the manner in which interrogations are conducted may have contributed.

"I think when multiple prisoners attempt to take their own lives, clearly there is an indication of the uncertainty that surrounds their incarceration," said Alistair Hodgett, a spokesman for the group in Washington.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Thousands mourn top Belfast terror chief, seek revenge

BELFAST, Northern Ireland (AP) — With a bagpipe's wail and revenge in the air, more than 5,000 Protestant extremists walked Thursday behind the coffin of a senior Belfast terrorist gunned down in an internal feud that threatens to claim more lives.

An "honor guard" of masked men in leather jackets fired a volley of shots over the casket of John Gregg, 45, a commander in the outlawed Ulster Defense Association, the major anti-Catholic paramilitary group responsible for hundreds of sectarian killings over the past three decades.

Two truckloads of floral tributes preceded the hearse carrying Gregg, a man of unusual brawn and bigotry who won fame by shooting an IRA leader in 1984.

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