Approved in S 4/7/70.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

(11)

Memorandum of Conversation

(1)

DATE: April 1, 1970
3:00 P.M.
The Secretary's Office

SUBJECT: Opium

PARTICIPANTS: The Secretary

His Excellency Melih Esenbel, Turkish Ambassador

S/NM - Mr. Harry Schwartz
NEA/TUR - Frank E. Cash, jr.

NOTE: Complete distribution made in CMS on 4/8/70.

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The Secretary began by expressing his regrets about the earthquakes in Turkey. Ambassador Esenbel said his Government was grateful for the assistance provided by Embassy Ankara. The Secretary said we would continue to do everything we could.

The Secretary then said that he, the President, and all Americans are seriously concerned about the narcotics problem in the United States. Its consequences are tragic. Any delay in control, efforts is destructive. Ambassador Handley wishes to discuss the illicit opium arriving in this country from Turkey further with Prime Minister Demirel just as soon as possible. We would like to move very fast on this. Public and Congressional pressure is building up. This is really the only problem existing between our two Governments. Everything else is going smoothly. We don't think money is a problem. We're prepared to compensate Turkish farmers.

In response to the Secretary's question as to whether Mr. Schwartz had anything to add, the latter said what we fear is the loss of a generation.

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June 22, 2004

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Ambassador Esenbel said the GOT has taken some control measures at its borders. A new security force is being equipped to cope with the illicit traffic. Turkey has cooperated for many years with the U.S., France, and Germany in this field. Poppy cultivation in Turkey has been gradually reduced from an initial forty-two provinces down to nine at present and will shortly be restricted even further. The Foreign Minister has been dealing with this matter very confidentially, and the Ambassador did not have precise information on the program. He did know, however, that a high-level decision has been made to eradicate poppy cultivation completely, but he did not know how rapidly this could be done. Turkish farmers have grown poppies for cooking oil for 800 years. It is, therefore, not so easy to uproot such a tradition. It will take time. It is not really a question of money.

The Secretary said that inasmuch as 80% of the illicit heroin coming into the U.S. is believed to originate in Turkey, we would be willing to cooperate in any kind of control system.

In response to the Ambassador's question, Mr. Schwartz said the UN machinery is not effective in producing the results the U.S. must have.

The Secretary said the only real solution is the cessation of poppy cultivation. We could compensate--or more than compensate--any loss. There is bound to be more and more public discussion of this issue, and Turkey's reputation in this country will suffer. This we would regret. We know the Turkish Government is trying to be helpful, and we are not unappreciative. But speed is essential. And, once again, we are willing to help in any way we can. Ambassador Handley will be discussing this further with the Prime Minister.

Ambassador Esenbel said he would report the Secretary's remarks. He believes his Government is fully aware of this problem.

The Ambassador said, that, at the request of the Robert College Board, he would like to mention the fact that the College needs about a million dollars more a year in AID funds in order not to be forced to cut back its operations, which would be a shame.

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Mr. Cash explained that we and the College are caught between spiralling cost of education and limited amounts of AID funds.

The Secretary told the Ambassador we would see what we could do.