

VZCZCXYZ0004
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHAK #2403 2671452
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 241452Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3825
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS PRIORITY 8385
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 002403

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/24/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: VETERAN DIPLOMAT FINALLY NAMED SECRETARY GENERAL
OF TURKEY'S NSC

REF: ANKARA 2365

Classified By: Acting Pol-Mil Counselor Christopher E. Rich,
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On September 22, the Government of Turkey announced the appointment of Turkish Ambassador to Greece Tahsin Burcuoglu as Secretary General of Turkey's National Security Council (MGK), a post that has been vacant for months because of the previous President's refusal to sign off on an appointment decree for Burcuoglu, after similarly nixing several other senior Turkish diplomats for the post. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Burcuoglu, a seasoned diplomat with more than 34 years of experience at the MFA, brings to his new post a wealth of experience in dealing with Middle East and Aegean issues. Burcuoglu has been described in the press as a workaholic who expects his staff to follow his lead. Burcuoglu's key accomplishment in Athens is arguably winning Greek support for commencing EU accession talks with Turkey. Prior to his assignment to Athens in 2002, Burcuoglu served as the Director General for Middle East Affairs at the MFA. As Turkey's Ambassador to Bulgaria from 1998 to 2001, Burcuoglu worked energetically to support Bulgaria's NATO membership bid, and was awarded Bulgaria's highest honors, the Stara Planina Medal, for his work. In the early 1990's Burcuoglu served in New York, first as counselor then as deputy permanent representative of Turkey's UN mission. Burcuoglu frequently found himself in diplomatic hotspots during the early part of his career. He was in Athens in 1974 on his first diplomatic assignment when Turkish military forces intervened in Cyprus. He then was assigned to Tehran, as the Iranian Revolution was taking place. From Tehran, Burcuoglu headed to Paris at a time when the Armenian terrorist organization ASALA actively targeted Turkish diplomats.

¶3. (C) Although press reporting suggests that Burcuoglu has close ties to the military, it is unclear to what extent he was the preferred choice of the military or the secular establishment. Burcuoglu was the fourth in a series of senior Turkish diplomats nominated for the post by then-FM Abdullah Gul. In each case, then-President Ahmet Necdet Sezer refused to sign the decree. The outgoing MGK SecGen, Ambassador Yigit Alpogan, delayed by six months his departure for his ambassadorial post in London to help cover the gap. Burcuoglu's earlier nomination was seen as a shoo-in; it came as a shock when Sezer refused to sign the decree. The new government recognized the need to fill this vacancy early on, and re-submitted the name of one of Turkey's most respected diplomats. It is a vote of confidence in Burcuoglu's ability to be effective in his new position. Burcuoglu is expected to attend the next MGK meeting on October 24 in his new capacity as secretary general.

14. (C) Comment: Burcuoglu is only the second civilian to serve as the Secretary General of the MGK since the reforms of 2003. He is also the second MGK SecGen to have served as Turkey's ambassador to Athens. Yigit Alpogan, his predecessor, had played a behind-the-scene role in shaping Turkey's national security and international relations priorities. He was also MGK SecGen at a time when the then-President largely abrogated his role in that institution. Burcuoglu will operate in a very different MGK, with President Gul, who has stated his intention of playing an active role in foreign policy, as its chairman. As civilian-military tensions continue to simmer (reftel), Burcuoglu will face both opportunities and challenges to further strengthen the ability of Turkey's civilian leadership to define how Turkey pursues its national security interests.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON