

Solidarity with US against terrorism

The Government on 4 October granted US military aircraft open-ended overflight and landing rights in Cyprus, as part of its contribution to the US-led campaign against international terrorism. It also acted to freeze the financial assets of suspected terrorists and to ratify the International Convention to Combat the Financing of Terrorism.

Spokesman Michalis Pappapetrou said that the granting of rights to the US Air Force was for an indefinite period and was in line with actions taken by European Union (EU) member states. He added that the decision demonstrated that Cyprus "is not neutral in the fight against terrorism", whilst stressing that the Government did not believe that it would result in Cyprus becoming a target for terrorists.

On the start of US-UK military action in Afghanistan on 7 October, Mr Pappapetrou welcomed statements by President Bush that Afghan civilians would not be targeted and that the action was not "a war against Islam". He expressed the Government's hope that terrorism would be uprooted and that Afghanistan would be "freed from the inhuman Taleban regime".

As announced by Finance Minister Takis Klerides on 3 October, the freezing of the assets of suspected terrorists from the previous day was implemented in accordance with UN Security Council 1373, which authorizes Governments to take specific steps to ensure that their financial institutions are not being abused by terrorists. Mr Klerides said that combating terrorism was "a top priority" for the Government and confirmed that investigations were in progress, on the basis of information received, into whether certain persons maintained bank accounts in Cyprus.

The bill providing for ratification of the International Convention to Combat the Financing of Terrorism was approved by the Council of Ministers on 10 October and was tabled the following day in the House of Representatives. As drawn up by Attorney



•Ports as well as airports... Security measures have been stepped up at all points of entry.

General Alecos Markides, the bill also provides for the establishment of a special unit to carry out investigations into suspected offences under the Convention.

Mr Markides said that the unit would exchange information with foreign agencies and would have the authority to issue court warrants for persons suspected of involvement in the financing of terrorism. He added that no evidence had been found so far of assets being held in Cyprus by Osama bin Laden or his associates, but stressed that if any were uncovered they would immediately be frozen.

●In a letter to President Glafcos Clerides delivered on 11 October, President Bush expressed gratitude to the people of Cyprus for their solidarity and stated that "the values and determination of our peoples are crucial to rooting out terrorism across the globe". He added that he looked forward to working with President Clerides to meet the challenge in a struggle which, he warned, "may be a long one". □

Hain anticipates early EU accession

The British Government's continued commitment to a Cyprus settlement and to the speedy accession of Cyprus to the European Union (EU) was stressed by Minister of State for Europe Peter Hain in a briefing to journalists in London on 25 October on the diplomatic ramifications of the US-UK military campaign against international terrorism.

Asked whether the Cyprus problem was still on the international agenda, Mr Hain responded that "the concerns of Cypriots, whether they are of Greek or Turkish origin, are very much on our minds". Asserting that the UN initiative should be supported, he appealed to Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash to join the process. He revealed that Foreign Secretary Jack Straw had conveyed this view to Turkey the previous week.

On Cyprus' EU accession course, Mr Hain noted that Cyprus was in the lead among the applicant countries negotiating for membership. It would be far better, he continued, if a settlement could be reached before accession, because a reunified Cyprus would be "a much healthier member" of the EU and would be able to take better advantage of membership. However, provided the negotiations were concluded successfully, Cyprus would be eligible to join "whether or

not there is an internal settlement".

●Addressing a fringe meeting at the Labour Party annual conference in Brighton on 2 October, Mr Hain expressed gratitude for the "very valuable" support which British Cypriots have given to Labour. He said that the Labour Government had taken the lead in refusing to accept delay in the process of EU enlargement, to include Cyprus in the first wave of new members expected to be admitted on 1 January 2004. □



•Britain's Minister of State for Europe Peter Hain.

Regional plans for oil and gas

Co-operation between Cyprus, Egypt and Syria on the exploitation of probable oil and gas reserves under the seabed of the Eastern Mediterranean was taken further at talks in Cairo on 19 October between Cyprus Commerce, Industry and Tourism Minister Nicos Rolandis and Egyptian and Syrian Ministers. Also discussed was the proposed supply of natural gas to Cyprus through a pipeline from Syria.

Mr Rolandis was accompanied to Cairo by a committee of experts and Ministry officials dealing with energy matters. Among them was Georgios Georgiades, Chairman of the Cyprus Electricity Authority (CEA), in connection with the intention that electricity generation in Cyprus will be fuelled by natural gas rather than oil in the years ahead.

Mr Rolandis said after his return from the talks that they had covered the delimitation of the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf between Cyprus and Egypt, on which a joint committee of experts would report. He confirmed that a further trilateral meeting would take place in Damascus before the end of the year, to be followed by another session in Cyprus early in 2002.

On the proposed natural gas pipeline from the Syrian coast, which would pump gas supplied by Egypt, Mr Rolandis said that an agreement needed to be signed by mid-2002. Construction of the pipeline would take three to four years, and Cyprus planned to start its switch to natural gas for electricity generation in 2005 or 2006. □

Turkish falsehoods

Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides on 17 October strongly refuted claims by Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash that the Greek Cypriot side had been solely responsible for the intercommunal strife of the early 1960s and the territorial separation of the Turkish Cypriot community.

Such allegations were being made by Mr Denktash and Turkey in a new initiative to secure recognition in the Islamic world of the "realities" of the division of Cyprus. Declared illegal by the United Nations, the regime headed by Mr Denktash in Turkish-occupied Cyprus is recognized only by Turkey, despite repeated attempts by the Turkish side to invoke Islamic solidarity in its support.

In a written statement, Mr Kasoulides said that it was time for Mr Denktash to stop making "false allegations", because it was well known that his policy since 1957 has been "to impose partition". He urged the Turkish Cypriot leader to read UN reports of the early 1960s showing that it was Mr Denktash himself and Turkish paramilitaries who had enforced the segregation of the Turkish Cypriots in territorial pockets, using "unfortunate acts by some Greek Cypriots" to whip up fears.

The arguments of Mr Denktash, said Mr Kasoulides, would "condemn this land to a permanent partition, bringing to the Turkish Cypriots self-seclusion and financial misery", and would therefore not succeed. He pointed out that the "realities" cited by the Turkish Cypriot leader had been imposed by force of arms in violation of international law and urged him, before speaking about Muslim solidarity, to explain why UN resolutions should be ignored in the case of Cyprus any more than for Palestine or Kuwait. □