

CYPRUS

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Atrocities in US concern Cyprus

Cypriots in the Government-controlled area of Cyprus on 14 September mourned the victims of the New York and Washington terrorist attacks by observing the three-minute silence declared by the European Union (EU), as additional security and surveillance measures were being put in place at airports and seaports. The Government also initiated urgent assessments of the broader implications of the outrage, in particular of the US Government's call for a global coalition to wage war against international terrorism.

Speaking on the day of mourning, Defence Minister Socrates Hasikos noted that "Cyprus is not a NATO member and therefore has no commitment to participating in this potential operation". He continued, however, that as a prospective EU member, which had pledged logistical and communications support to the new EU Rapid Deployment Force, Cyprus would give serious consideration to making this support available to any anti-terrorist operation backed by the EU.

The Government's stance was elaborated on 25 September by Spokesman Michalis Papapetrou, who said that Cyprus subscribed fully to the EU position, "which means that we believe that any general strike would lead nowhere" and that the targets of the US-led response should be specific. "What is needed", he added, "is not reprisals but such action as will uproot the scourge of terrorism".

Speaking after the National Council session on 28 September, Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides dismissed press reports that Cyprus would become the location of an Afghani Government-in-exile opposed to the Taliban regime. He said that there had been no recent requests for a meeting of Afghani exiles in Cyprus and made it clear that the Government would not encourage any initiatives on its soil which might signify involvement in Afghanistan's internal disputes.

●The only confirmed Cypriot victim of the atrocities in the US is United Airlines employee Michael Tarrou, who was on the second airliner flown into the World Trade Centre, together with his American fiancée.□

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*"Unjustified decision"... Security Council Chairman Jean-David Levitte (right) gives the unanimous view.

UN Security Council blames Turks

The Cyprus Government welcomed a statement by the Chairman of the UN Security Council on 26 September castigating the Turkish side's "unjustified decision" to reject an invitation from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to new talks on the Cyprus problem (see text on page 2). It was hoped that the statement would put the Cyprus deadlock back on the international agenda, following the drama of the terrorist atrocities in the USA on 11 September and the further postponement of UN talks, which Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş is still refusing to attend.

President Clerides said that the Security Council statement showed that the present Turkish intransigence "is not the end of the story", because the anti-terrorism coalition being formed by the USA (see adjoining report) "will have to solve disputes as well and give some priority to a Cyprus solution and to other disputes between Greece and Turkey".

Invitations to resumed UN talks had been conveyed to President Clerides and Mr Denktaş on 5 September by Mr Annan's Special Adviser on Cyprus, Alvaro de Soto, who had just completed a week of intensive shuttle diplomacy between the two sides in Cyprus. President Clerides accepted the invitation immediately, but it quickly became clear that Sr de Soto had no grounds for believing that Mr Denktaş would follow suit. Supported by the Ankara Government, the Turkish Cypriot leader declared that the "necessary foundations" had not been laid for him to attend further negotiations. By this he meant that his demand for the recognition of his illegal regime, the non-acceptance of which had caused him to abandon the UN talks in November 2000, remained completely unacceptable to the international community.

In consultation with UN officials, who hoped that Mr Denktaş would change his mind at the last moment, President Clerides and his aides set off for New York on 11 September, only to find their flight being diverted to Montreal, Canada, because of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. Although Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides had already arrived in New York, and later had talks with US State Department officials, the new circumstances meant that little could be done to focus attention on the Cyprus problem.

Subsequent Government assessments of the likely impact of the events of 11 September on Cyprus reached generally pessimistic conclusions, with Ministers recognizing that there was little immediate prospect of restoring the unresolved Cyprus problem to the forefront of the international agenda. It was also feared, as the US Government moved to build an international coalition to combat terrorism, that NATO member Turkey had gained greater leverage in Washington for its intransigence on Cyprus. The UN Security Council statement on 26 September was therefore seen as sending a clear message as to the responsibility for the Cyprus deadlock and showing its determination not to make concessions to the illegal regime.

●President Clerides on 28 September presided over a meeting of the National Council, his senior advisory body on the Cyprus problem, consisting of the leaders of the eight parliamentary parties and key Ministers. The session discussed the new international situation in the wake of the attacks on the USA, although the customary news blackout on proceedings was maintained.□