

## Bush backs Turkey's EU bid

*by UPI*

WASHINGTON -- U.S. President George Bush on Tuesday expressed strong support for Turkey's bid to join the European Union following a meeting with his Turkish counterpart. Bush and Turkish President Abdullah Gul met in the Oval Office and then spoke with reporters. "I strongly believe that Europe will benefit with Turkey as a member of the European Union," Bush said. He also said Turkey is an example to the world that democracy can coexist "with a great religion like Islam." He also called Turkey a bridge to the Islamic world. Through a translator, Gul praised Bush's Middle East peace efforts. "We believe that these are important efforts which can yield results," Gul said. Bush pledged support for Turkey's efforts to suppress Kurdish rebels, which he called a terror threat to both Turkey and Iraq.

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