

Gates urges quick end to Turkish incursion

by UPI

ANKARA, Turkey -- U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates urged Turkey to end its incursion into northern Iraq quickly but Turkish officials said they would take as long as needed. Turkish Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul, meeting with Gates Thursday in Ankara, said Turkey would remain in northern Iraq "as long as necessary" to complete its operation against the rebel Kurdistan Workers Party, Hurriyet reported. Gonul said Turkey had "no intention to occupy any area in the region." Turkish Chief of Staff Gen. Yasar Buyukanit said he and Gates discussed the two countries' fight against terrorism and how flexibility was needed about when fighting would end, The New Anatolian reported. "We have been fighting terrorism for 24 years. Our struggle against terrorism will continue," Buyukanit said, adding that Gates "understands" the Turkish position. The United States has been and will continue to supply Turkey with real-time intelligence, Gates said. But he reiterated the incursion "should be short and (as) precisely targeted as possible." "To put down a terrorist threat, Gates said a military component must be balanced with economic and political considerations." "This is the only way to isolate terrorists from the population and provide a long-term solution to the problem," Gates said.

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