

Turkey elects ex-Islamist Gul president

by UPI

ANKARA, Turkey - Turkey's parliament Tuesday elected Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul president giving the country its first former Islamist head of state. Gul, who heads the Justice & Development (AK) Party, won the first two rounds of voting but failed to win the presidency because the party didn't get a two-thirds majority in Parliament. He won 339 votes in the third round of voting on Tuesday -- more than the simple majority required in that round -- after months of political indecision threatened a constitutional crisis, The New Anatolian reported. Gul, whose wife wears a Muslim headscarf, pledged to respect Turkey's secular institutions before he was sworn in as Turkey's 11th president in the General Assembly. He is the first politician with an Islamist background to become president since the Turkish Republic was established as a Western-style republic in 1923, the BBC said. He broke with an Islamist party in 1999. "Our nation has been watching the behavior of those separatists who can't embrace Turkey's unitary nature and centers of evil that systematically try to corrode the secular nature of the Turkish Republic," Gen. Yasar Buyukanit, chief of the military, said Monday.

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