

# **U.S. Sen. Johnson: Leads bipartisan letter demanding investigation into Turkish security detail's involvement in attack on Washington, D.C. protesters**

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*Senators: "If their participation is confirmed, those responsible should be held accountable under applicable U.S. law."*

**WASHINGTON** – After protesters outside of the Turkish ambassador's residence in Washington, D.C. were violently attacked earlier this month, leaving nine hospitalized, **U.S. Senator Ron Johnson (R-Wis.)**, Chairman of U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Europe and Regional Security Cooperation, led a bipartisan group of 19 other senators on Friday in calling on the U.S. State Department to determine whether members of Turkey President Recep Erdogan and Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu's security detail were involved in the attack. In a letter to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, the senators highlighted that President Erdogan's security detail has an unacceptable history of violence toward protesters. They urged Tillerson to hold the Turkish security detail accountable under U.S. law if it is found that they were involved in the attack.

**"We write today to express our concern regarding the apparent involvement of members of the Turkish security detail accompanying President Recep Erdogan and Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu in a violent altercation outside the Turkish Ambassador's residence in**

**Washington, D.C. on May 16. If true, this is the second time in little more than a year that members of Turkish diplomatic security have intervened violently against protestors and members of the media in the United States. This is not acceptable,”** wrote the senators. **“We urge you to work expeditiously with the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department to identify the perpetrators of this assault and to determine whether members of President Erdogan and Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu’s security detail were involved. If their participation is confirmed, those responsible should be held accountable under applicable U.S. law.”**

In addition to Sen. Johnson, the following senators sent the letter: U.S. Senators Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), Marco Rubio (R-Fl.), Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Gary Peters (D-Mich.), Ed Markey (D-Mass.), Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), Cory Booker (D-N.J.), Jack Reed (D-R.I.), Patty Murray (D-Wash.), and Al Franken (D-Minn.).

Full text of the letter is below:

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

U.S. Department of State

2201 C Street NW

Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

We write today to express our concern regarding the apparent involvement of members of the Turkish security detail accompanying President Recep Erdogan and Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu in a violent altercation outside the Turkish Ambassador’s residence in Washington, D.C. on May 16. Nine people were hospitalized—one in serious condition—due to the violence. If true, this is the second time in little more than a year that members of Turkish diplomatic security

have intervened violently against protestors and members of the media in the United States. This is not acceptable.

Videos and witness accounts of the altercation indicate men dressed in dark suits and wearing earpieces assaulted political protestors gathered outside the Turkish Ambassador's residence. Press reports, including one by Turkey's official news agency, indicate that these men were members of President Erdogan's security detail who had accompanied him to the Ambassador's residence. If accurate, those individuals acted well outside of what is acceptable behavior by a professional security detail, especially that of a 65-year NATO ally.

If these were Turkish diplomatic security guards, their actions demonstrate a pattern of indefensible behavior. In March 2016, members of President Erdogan's detail behaved in a similarly heavy-handed fashion outside the Brookings Institution as Erdogan gave a speech. The Brookings Institution reported that, "Erdogan's security detail behaved unacceptably – they roughed up protestors outside the building and tried to drag away 'undesired' journalists."

We urge you to work expeditiously with the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department to identify the perpetrators of this assault and to determine whether members of President Erdogan and Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu's security detail were involved. If their participation is confirmed, those responsible should be held accountable under applicable U.S. law. We look forward to working with you to prevent the recurrence of such incidents in the future.