

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, July 19, 2011 1:03 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Turkey's Prime Minister says he wants to visit Gaza (Reuters)

Crap

From: OpsNewsTicker
Sent: Tuesday, July 19, 2011 12:59 PM
To: NEWS-EUR; NEWS-NEA; NEWS-Mahogany
Cc: SES-O
Subject: Turkey's Prime Minister says he wants to visit Gaza (Reuters)

ANKARA (Reuters) - Turkey's Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday he wants to visit the Palestinian enclave in Gaza after any future visit to Egypt.

Erdogan is a hero in the Arab world for denouncing Israel's offensive in Gaza in late 2008, and more recently Turkey has helped Egypt bring together Palestinian factions Fatah and Hamas for, as yet inconclusive, talks on forming a unity government.

He has called on Israel to end what he says is an illegal blockade of 1.5 million Palestinians living in Gaza, and is demanding an apology and compensation after Israeli marines killed nine Turks when they intercepted a Gaza-bound aid flotilla a year ago.

"The definite time of our visit to Egypt has not been set yet, but we have a desire to visit Gaza after the Egypt visit," he told a media conference before leaving for northern Cyprus.

Erdogan cancelled a visit to Egypt that was expected to take place later this week, but another date was being worked on and the Turkish prime minister said he would go to Gaza if conditions were right.

Since ousting president Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's new leaders have relaxed access to Gaza through the Rafah border gate.

Erdogan's talk of going to Gaza comes at a sensitive time, with Turkish and Israeli diplomats trying to find the basis for an agreement that will help mend relations that have been on the rocks since the flotilla incident.

Israel says that its marines acted in self defence after an initial boarding party was attacked by activists with clubs and knives. Israel also justifies the blockade saying it is aimed at stopping arms reaching Hamas, an Islamist militant party that controls Gaza.

NewsTickers alert senior Department officials to breaking news. This item appears as it did in its original publication and does not contain analysis or commentary by Department sources.