

COMMEMORATING MAY 19 AS ATATURK, YOUTH AND SPORTS DAY IN TURKEY -- (Extensions of Remarks - May 23, 2008)

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**SPEECH OF
HON. JEAN SCHMIDT
OF OHIO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THURSDAY, MAY 22, 2008**

- Mrs. SCHMIDT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commemorate May 19 as a very significant day in the history of our dear friend the Republic of Turkey. In Turkey, May 19 is celebrated as the commemoration of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the Founder of the Republic of Turkey. It was May 19 in the year 1919 when Mustafa Kemal landed in the Black Sea port of Samsun and the war of independence began. Under his leadership less than a year later the Turkish Grand National Assembly was established and a few years later the Republic of Turkey was born a new nation.
- Ataturk had a vision for Turkey and he set about reforming her. His vision of a pro-western, secular, and democratic state under the rule of law quickly became reality.
- President John F. Kennedy said, ``The name Ataturk reminds mankind of the historical accomplishments of one of the greatest men of this century. His leadership gave inspiration to the Turkish nation, farsightedness in the understanding of the modern world, and courage and power as a military leader."''
- It was in 1934 that Ataturk demonstrated his commitment to the rights of women by giving them full political rights. He understood that a country can only flourish when it's people are truly free.
- My hero, General Douglas MacArthur described Ataturk better than most could ever attempt. ``He was a soldier-statesman, one of the greatest leaders of our era. He ensured that Turkey got its rightful place among the most advanced nations of the world."''
- May 19 is a very important day when it all began. On this day a great leader began his journey, a vision became reality and a great nation was born. We should all learn a lesson from this man's life. A leader with a vision coupled with determination can lay the roots for a great future. Turkey's neighbors who today wrestle with their own beginnings should take note.

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