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## An Ex-Leader in Congress Is Now Turkey's Man in the Lobbies of Capitol Hill

By MARILYN W. THOMPSON

WASHINGTON, Oct. 16 — Since leaving Capitol Hill in 1999, former Representative [Robert L. Livingston](#) has been the main lobbyist for Turkey in blocking Congressional efforts to pass an [Armenian genocide](#) resolution.

After succeeding twice before — and collecting more than \$12 million in fees for his firm, the Livingston Group — he is pushing once again for his client.

In recent months, Mr. Livingston, a Louisiana Republican who was once speaker-designate of the House, has consulted with Vice President [Dick Cheney](#) and with [Karl Rove](#), when he was still the top White House political strategist. He escorted Turkish dignitaries to Capitol Hill to warn that the resolution threatened to destroy a strong Iraq war alliance.

He made a phone call that helped persuade a Louisiana member to change his position and got other Republicans to remove their names from a growing list of co-sponsors. And he courted a powerful Democrat, Representative [John P. Murtha](#) of Pennsylvania, who earlier this year asked Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#), a fellow Democrat, not to bring the measure up for a House vote.

Mr. Livingston has also showered money on House and Senate members, the National Republican Congressional Committee and other political causes. He and his firm gave more than \$200,000 in campaign donations in the last election cycle, records show.

Last week, the House Foreign Affairs Committee passed a nonbinding resolution condemning as genocide the killing of 1.5 million Armenians by Ottoman Turks beginning in 1915. Ms. Pelosi, a strong supporter, promised Sunday to bring the matter up for a floor vote before Congress recesses in mid-November.

But this week, a surge of defections by members who backed the resolution showed that Mr. Livingston's high-powered effort was gaining momentum.

As Turkey reacted angrily to the House committee action in the last few days, members began responding to arguments that the resolution posed a national security threat. Those arguments were put forth by the Bush administration, Mr. Livingston and another prominent lobbyist, [Richard A. Gephardt](#), of Missouri, the former House majority leader and a Democrat.

The issue has pitted Turkey's money and high-placed connections against a persistent and emotional campaign by Armenian-American citizens' groups.

"The Turks have done everything they possibly could," said former Representative Stephen J. Solarz, whose

firm got \$165,000 this summer lobbying for Turkey under an arrangement with Mr. Livingston. Representative Adam B. Schiff, Democrat of California, a resolution sponsor, called Turkey's lobbying "the most intense I've ever seen."

Both Mr. Livingston, who opposed a genocide resolution while in Congress, and Mr. Gephardt declined to discuss their work for Turkey, referring questions to the Turkish Embassy.

But records filed at the Justice Department show Turkish expenditures since August 2006 of about \$3.2 million for lobbyists and public relations firms. In Mr. Livingston's case, the reports offer details of his lobbying efforts.

Mr. Gephardt, a senior counsel at the law firm of DLA Piper who retired from Congress in 2005, began working for Turkey in March under a yearlong contract worth \$1.2 million. He has been criticized by Armenian-Americans because he previously supported Armenia and co-sponsored an earlier genocide resolution.

Mr. Gephardt now has concerns related to national security, said Michael Messman, a lobbying colleague of Mr. Gephardt.

Turkey has never mustered the intense grass-roots support in the United States that has been Armenia's strength, with constituents pressing lawmakers to back the measure. Records show that Armenia has spent far less money on lobbying. Its largest expenditure went to the public relations firm of Burson-Marsteller, which earned about \$300,000 from August 2006 to April 2007.

After Mr. Livingston resigned from the House in 1999 amid disclosures about an extramarital affair, Turkey retained the Livingston Group, his new bipartisan firm. It has built a large foreign practice, representing among others the governments of Azerbaijan, the Congo Republic and the Cayman Islands. More than a quarter of the firm's income, which has totaled more than \$71 million, has come from foreign clients, records show.

Mr. Livingston earned Turkey's gratitude by helping stop two resolutions in 2000 and 2004. When Democrats took control of the House last year, Turkey continued to rely on him as its principal lobbyist, though it eventually brought in Mr. Gephardt's firm. Reports on Mr. Gephardt's activities have not been filed.

Mr. Livingston contacted Mr. Rove on Nov. 28, 2006, just after a Livingston Group lobbyist attended a weekend retreat at the Greenbrier resort in West Virginia for key Congressional supporters of Turkey. In January, Mr. Livingston talked with a Cheney aide and prepared for Capitol Hill visits by Ambassador Nabi Sensoy of Turkey and other officials.

Mr. Schiff, the California Democrat, introduced the resolution on Jan. 30, with 160 co-sponsors.

The next day, the records show, Mr. Livingston called Representative Bobby Jindal, Republican of Louisiana, a backer. Mr. Jindal promptly withdrew his name.

In December 2006, Mr. Livingston and an associate contributed \$10,000 to Mr. Jindal's campaign for

governor of Louisiana. Mr. Jindal's office did not respond to requests for comment.

Mr. Livingston's courtship of Mr. Murtha began in February. After a meeting with Mr. Livingston and another lobbyist from the firm, Mr. Murtha was among a group of members who met with Mr. Livingston, Mr. Sensory and the Turkish foreign minister, [Abdullah Gul](#). Long opposed to a genocide resolution, Mr. Murtha wrote Ms. Pelosi on Feb. 8 asking her not to allow a floor vote.

Mr. Livingston contributed \$3,000 to Mr. Murtha's campaign in February. A Murtha aide said the contribution reflects support for his record on the issue.

On April 24, the annual observance of the Armenian genocide, President Bush made a brief tribute to the dead, avoiding the term genocide. In Congress, attention focused on the Iraq war.

The resolution soon rebounded. Mr. Livingston made a concerted, though unsuccessful, effort to win over Representative Tom Lantos, Democrat of California, a Holocaust survivor and chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Mr. Lantos had opposed a similar resolution in 2000.

Mr. Livingston took Turkish officials to meet Mr. Lantos, then met with him again on May 18. A Livingston associate gave \$500 to his campaign in March.

Mr. Livingston met with Mr. Cheney on May 4, and an associate consulted a Cheney aide four times from July 10 to July 20.

Mr. Livingston continued to push lawmakers to change their positions. Representative Roger Wicker, a Mississippi Republican, signed up as a co-sponsor on June 26, then changed his mind two days later after a call from the lobbyist.

Representative [Tom Tancredo](#), a Colorado Republican, withdrew his support on June 27 after meeting with Mr. Livingston, Mr. Jindal and a member of the Turkish Parliament.

Mr. Livingston's logs end at July 31. His firm will file another report detailing activities up to and including the House committee vote in favor of the resolution. Since then, a Republican and a group of Democrats have dropped their backing.

*Kitty Bennett contributed reporting.*

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