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## Turkish-US Business Group to Meet in June

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The American-Turkish Council (ATC), the largest Turkish-American business group, will hold its 31st annual meeting this year in Washington between June 10 and 13, the group has announced on its website. With more than 700 participants, the conference provides an opportunity to expand business relationships, showcase products, interact with senior government officials and military officers, exchange information and hear outstanding speakers from the United States and Turkey. This year's meetings will be held in the U.S. capital's Ritz-Carlton Hotel. The conference's speakers for this year have not yet been announced, but they are expected to include U.S. Ambassador to Ankara Frank Ricciardone and Turkish Ambassador to Washington Namık Tan.

Among last year's speaker list featured U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton; Defense Minister Ösmet Yılmaz; Richard Morningstar, special envoy of the U.S. secretary of state for Eurasian energy; Alexander Vershbow, assistant secretary of defense for international affairs; and Murad Bayar, Undersecretary for Defense Industries.

The ATC, whose members include top U.S. and Turkish companies that conduct business in both countries, aims to bolster U.S.-Turkish political and economic relations. Some of the ATC's major members include top U.S. defense companies. Some of the ATC meetings have occurred amid intense tension between the two countries; for example, the 2003 meeting followed a Turkish parliamentary decision not to permit U.S. forces to use Turkish soil during the Iraq War.

Turkey either sends the prime minister, the foreign minister or the defense minister, or a combination of these three officials, to the ATC meetings. This year's discussion topics include agribusiness and food industries; banking and finance; construction; culture and tourism; defense and security affairs; energy; government; information and communication technologies; pharmaceutical and health, as well as media.

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