

## Press Release

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### **WESLEY CLARK LINKS TURKISH UNREST CHARTER SCHOOLS WITH L.A. TIES Former 4-Star General's Remarks Follow Allegations Filed with California Schools Boss**

Retired U.S. four-star general Wesley Clark recently became the most prominent American to publicly voice concerns about a controversial Muslim religious leader's ties to a network of U.S. charter schools that includes 11 taxpayer-funded schools in California run by a former LA Unified School District board member.

Clark, who led NATO forces during the 1999 Kosovo War, called it "very strange" that U.S. taxpayers - including taxpayers in California - are subsidizing U.S. charter schools linked to Turkish imam Fetullah Gulen, now living in the U.S.

In an interview Tuesday (March 15) during [CNBC's "Power Lunch"](#) program, the highly-decorated Clark said the deteriorating domestic security situation in Turkey can partly be traced to Gulen, an outspoken critic of the Turkish government with a sizeable following in Turkey.

"Now there is an active risk, there are bombings in Turkey, they've got problems at home," Clark said. "We [the U.S.] are even part of that. One of the most wanted people in Turkey is a man named Gulen, a former ally of President [Recep Tayyip] Erdogan, who is in the United States, running a network of charter schools subsidized by the United States. Very strange."

In fact, the Republic of Turkey is seeking to have Gulen extradited to his homeland to stand trial on treason charges. The Turkish government contends Gulen's followers in Turkey are seeking to sabotage the Erdogan government and that its dissident activities – while non-violent so far - are being secretly funded with U.S. tax dollars earmarked to educate students in Gulen's U.S. charter school program.

Clark is not alone in weighing in on the Gulen controversy. On Friday (March 18) former Pentagon spokesman Jeffrey D. Gordon, a retired U.S. Navy commander, told the [Fox Business channel](#):

"Turkey is being destabilized from the United States right now because there's this imam named Fethullah Gülen living in the Pocanos [Pennsylvania]. He runs America's largest charter school network, and yet Turkey issued an arrest warrant for him because they say he's trying to topple the government and replace it with a theocracy like in Iran. America ought to deport him. We don't need him here in the United States."

"Gen. Clark and other respected security analysts are calling attention to a very real concern," said Robert Amsterdam, founding partner of the international law firm of [Amsterdam & Partners LLP](#). The Amsterdam firm, with offices in Washington, D.C. and London, has been hired by the Turkish government to challenge the legality of Gulen's charter school network in the U.S.

"There is growing evidence that a network of about 150 charter schools in the U.S. is being used as a cash-cow to secretly fund Imam Gulen's efforts to undermine the Turkish government – a U.S. ally and a member of the NATO alliance," said Amsterdam. "That's the big picture."

“But while the international implications of this situation are extremely troubling, it is equally troubling that [Magnolia Public Schools](#) [the Gulen-run charter school program in California] has repeatedly failed to adequately account for how it spends all of the tens of millions of tax dollars it receives yearly,” said Amsterdam. Charter schools are taxpayer funded.

On Feb. 27, the Amsterdam law firm joined veteran Santa Ana teacher Tina Andres and educator Dr. Jose Moreno of Anaheim to file a [complaint](#) urging California Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson to investigate Magnolia’s financial practices. The complaint was filed under the Uniform Complaint Procedure (UCP) that provides a way for private parties to blow the whistle on suspected wrong-doing involving California public schools.

“The record shows the Magnolia program is fraught with financial irregularities – beyond those identified by a rather tame [May 2015 California state audit](#),” said Amsterdam. “We are urging Superintendent Torlakson to use his office to get to the bottom of this disturbing situation.”

Irregular financial practices appear to be a hallmark of Gulen-related schools in the U.S., said Amsterdam. For example, a just-released (March 16) [Oklahoma audit](#) found four Gulen-related charter schools in that state were billed nearly \$2 million by their parent organization for “no legitimate purpose. “These findings should be investigated to see if financial crimes were committed,” said Amsterdam.

“It is also indisputable that the Magnolia program has highly irregular hiring practices,” Amsterdam added. “Magnolia routinely hires Turkish nationals under the H-1B visa program to work in its schools. And it is indisputable that tax dollars have been used to import these Turkish nationals. Why Magnolia can’t find sufficient qualified U.S. teachers and administrative staff for this work is puzzling.”

Since 2009 the Magnolia Educational & Research Foundation, the Westminster-based parent company of the Magnolia schools, has obtained H-1B visas for over 250 foreign nationals to work at its 11 schools in California (*see attached spread sheet compiled from U.S. Dept. of Labor public records*). While the CEO of Magnolia is Caprice Young, a former LA Unified School District board member, six of the nine members of [Magnolia’s board of directors](#) appear to be persons of Turkish extraction.

“You don’t have to care about Turkish internal politics to be concerned about the Magnolia program,” said complainant Moreno, an associate professor of Latino studies.

“We should all be concerned about how our California tax dollars are being spent – or misspent,” Moreno said. “We should be concerned that the state audit sampled 225 expenditures by Magnolia and found that 69 percent of them were not properly documented and/or not properly authorized. “

“And Californians should be concerned that the same 2014 audit found evidence of insider financial dealings involving a major Magnolia vendor and Magnolia management,” said Moreno. “And if that’s enough, Californians should be concerned that Magnolia only pays lip-service to one of the founding principles of the charter school philosophy - that parents should have significant say in the curriculum and management of these schools.

“When the parents don’t have any real control over these Magnolia schools then these are not *bona fide* charter schools and they should be disbanded and run as public schools,” added complainant Andres, a teacher in the Santa Ana Unified School District. “They are charter schools in-name-only. It’s a scam.”

“Magnolia’s misuse of public funds is intolerable,” said Andres. “They’re using our tax dollars to pay for visas to import Turkish teachers to California to teach in Magnolia’s schools. That’s crazy. There are plenty of highly-talented, highly-qualified California citizen-teachers to do these jobs. Why are they doing this?”

“Everything about the Magnolia program smells like a racket,” said Andres.

The 74-year-old Gulen has lived in self-imposed exile in the U.S. since 1999. He left his homeland after a falling out with his former ally, Erdogan, now the president of Turkey. He currently resides in a heavily-guarded compound in rural Pennsylvania.

*This material is distributed by John Schwada on behalf of Amsterdam & Partners LLP and the Republic of Turkey. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.*