

Foreign Ministry decree enters into force, key posts at UN reshuffled

Hurriyet Daily News, 16.08.2016



The Foreign Ministry's "summer decree" for 2016 has come into force after being published in the Official Gazette, confirming the appointments to some key ambassadorial posts, including the transfer of the ministry undersecretary to the United Nations.

The long-awaited governmental decree involving a significant reshuffle of key ambassadorial posts was originally released in the first half of June. The publication of the decree in the Official Gazette was relatively belated, mainly due to the July 15 coup attempt.

Feridun Sinirlio lu had been the undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry in Ankara since August 2009, assuming responsibilities on several key international and regional affairs, but will now act as Turkey's permanent representative to the U.N. in New York.

The appointments included in the June decree will be gradually published in the Official Gazette after the host states grant their agreement to the appointments. Deputy Undersecretary Ahmet Muhtar Gün and the outgoing envoy to Russia, Ümit Yardım, have been tipped to replace Sinirlio lu as undersecretary.

Ambassador Halit Çevik, who has served as the permanent representative of the Turkish mission to the U.N. since October 2012, has been reposted to headquarters in Ankara, as has Turkey's current ambassador in Athens, Kerim Uras, who assumed his current post in January 2012.

Ambassador Tunç Ü dül, director-general for research and security affairs at the headquarters, has been posted to Warsaw as Turkey's new ambassador to Poland, while Turkey's ambassador in Abu Dhabi, Mustafa Levent Bilgen, has been reposted to headquarters. Foreign Ministry Director-General for the Middle East and North Africa Can Dizdar will replace Bilgen, who assumed his duties in Abu Dhabi in December 2014.

Turkey submits Israel deal to parliament for approval

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The Prime Ministry submitted to parliament an agreement to normalize ties with Israel, which had been delayed by the failed July 15 military coup attempt, the state-run Anadolu Agency said.

The agreement has been forwarded to parliament for ratification before the legislative body goes into summer recess later this month. Turkey and Israel signed a deal to restore their ties, which hit an all-time low after the 2010 raid by Israeli commandos on a Gaza-bound Turkish aid ship that left 10 Turks dead. Attempts to mend ties were initiated in 2015 when delegations from two sides met for the first time.

Negotiations were conducted throughout 2016 until June 26, when the two sides met in Rome to agree on the latest draft of the agreement. The text of the agreement submitted to parliament with the signatures of the prime minister and several cabinet ministers reaffirms that Israel will pay Turkey \$20 million (17.8 million euros) in compensation within 25 days. The legal case targeting the Israeli commandos who staged the raid will also be dropped, the report said.

Individual Israeli nationals will also not be held criminally or financially liable for the incident. Israeli cabinet ministers in June approved the deal reached, leaving Ankara to take the final ratification step.

The Turkish government failed to send the deal to parliament because of time pressure created by the failed coup attempt by rogue elements in the military, which Turkey blames on U.S.-based preacher Fethullah Gülen. Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu during a televised interview vowed that the Turkey-Israel deal would be signed before September, finalized by the Turkish Parliament "as soon as possible."

Turkey is eager to contribute to the Palestinian issue and the Middle East peace process, Çavuşoğlu said at the time, speaking at a joint news conference after meeting Palestinian Foreign Affairs Minister Riyad al-Maliki in Ankara. He said Ankara had always advocated a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian issue and would "continue to contribute to permanent peace in the region."

"Now we have started a normalization process with Israel. According to our latest agreement, the two countries will mutually appoint ambassadors. After this step, we will continue to support the Palestinian issue and the Middle East peace process," Çavuşoğlu said. Once the normalization deal is ratified by parliament, Turkey and Israel will begin the process of exchanging ambassadors to fully restore their diplomatic ties.

Israel had already offered compensation and an apology over the raid, but with the agreement it also eased the naval blockade on the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, allowing Ankara to deliver humanitarian aid to Palestinians there.

Turkey also plans to build a hospital in Gaza and intensify efforts for an industrial zone project in Janin. The Israel-Turkey normalization was followed by Turkey's mending ties with Russia, following a jet-downing crisis in November last year, as part of a deliberate effort in Ankara to overcome its diplomatic isolation of recent years. Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım also said the time had come for Turkey to mend relations with Syria after taking steps for rapprochement with Israel and Russia, vowing that Ankara would bid to overcome the Syrian problem together with regional actors.

Turkish PM suggests three-step road map for Syria

Hurriyet Daily News, 15.08.2016



Turkish PM Yıldırım has suggested a three-pronged road map for a solution to the five-year-old war in Syria, which has not only affected neighboring countries but also many parts of the world with the flight of more than 4 million refugees.

Stating that he was optimistic that a solution was at hand due to the changing nature of Turkish foreign policy, in which Ankara aims to make more friends and decrease its number of enemies, Yıldırım said the time had come for Turkey to mend relations with Syria after taking steps for rapprochement with Israel and Russia, adding they would overcome the Syrian problem together with regional actors.

“It will be a solution that will absolutely preserve Syria’s territorial integrity,” Yıldırım told Turkish daily Karar in an interview. “Therefore, a state structure like the PYD [the Democratic Union Party] in this country [Syria] will be out of the question,” said Yıldırım, referring to Turkey’s objection to the PYD and its military wing, the People’s Protection Unit (YPG), which has created a federation for the peoples of northern Syria.

Turkey considers the PYD and YPG to be offshoots of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), which has been fighting the Turkish state since 1984. Turkey differs with the United States with regards to the PYD and YPG. The U.S. sees the two groups as its most reliable and effective partners in the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The U.S., on the other hand, designates the PKK as a terror organization.

Yıldırım said the new era would not feature a state structure in which any of Syria’s sectarian, ethnic or regional formations has supremacy over the others. “Namely, a structure will be formed that will eliminate the main defect of the current bloody problem in Syria,” he said.

“As there will be no sectarian structure, this also means that [Syrian President Bashar] al-Assad will not be there in the long-run.” Turkey opposes the rule of al-Assad and blames him for many of the 290,000 deaths in the civil war and the creation of 4 million refugees.

“When a solution is put in place, Syrians who had to flee and seek refuge in regional countries including Turkey, will return to their country within the scope of a plan,” said Yıldırım, defining this last stage as the most important step for Turkey, which hosts around 3 million refugees, most of whom are from Syria.

Turkish President Erdoğan slams EU’s ‘lack of solidarity’

Anadolu Agency, 13.08.2016



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has criticized European leaders for failing to show solidarity with Turkey during a recent coup attempt, while instead they raised concerns about the rule of law.

Erdoğan told Germany’s RTL television that German Chancellor Angela Merkel called him three days after the July 15 defeated coup to condemn the attempted overthrow but she also expressed fears regarding investigations into the overthrow attempt. “All these make us sad. Let them leave it to us to do what is necessary in line with our domestic rule of law.

We are doing nothing out of desire for revenge,” he said, emphasizing that all measures taken after the coup attempt comply with relevant laws. Erdoğan expressed regret that there has not yet been any high-level European visitor to Turkey since July 15, while the coup attempt, which was one of the greatest attacks to Turkish democracy, was defeated by the Turkish people.

Erdoğan renewed Turkish commitment to a EU-Turkey refugee deal signed earlier this year, but during the interview he also emphasized that the future of the agreement would depend on the EU’s concrete steps to fulfill its promises made to Ankara.

“Visa liberalization and readmission are very important, currently the process is ongoing. Of course these will be simultaneous steps. But unfortunately Europe has not yet delivered on its promises,” he said, in remarks translated to German from Turkish.

Erdoğan criticized the EU’s reluctance to make progress on visa liberalization for Turkish citizens, despite promises made as part of the deal. The EU-Turkey refugee deal aims to discourage irregular migration through the Aegean Sea by taking stricter measures against human traffickers and improving the conditions of nearly 3 million Syrian refugees in Turkey.

The deal also allows for the acceleration of Turkey's EU membership bid and visa-free travel for Turkish nationals within the Schengen area, on the condition that Ankara meets 72 requirements set by the EU. Ankara has met most of the requirements, but the EU's demands for change in Turkey's anti-terrorism law have led to a deadlock in negotiations.

Greece hears asylum claim of Turkish 'coup' officer

AFP, 16.08.2016



Greece began hearing the asylum claim of the first of eight Turkish military officers who fled after the failed July 15 coup attempt, the country's asylum service has stated.

Captain Feridun Çoban was driven to the headquarters of the asylum service in Athens, according to the group's lawyer Stavroula Tomara. His fellow officers - three other captains, two commanders and two sergeants, who along with Çoban are accused by Turkey of involvement in the coup - will have their cases heard from Aug. 22. No decision will be made in their cases for "two or three months," according to the asylum service.

Greece said that Turkey had formally requested the extradition of the men on suspicion of involvement in the failed coup. The men deny the accusations. The asylum service said the cases will "follow a totally normal procedure" despite demands from Ankara to hand the men over, with the issue threatening to strain ties between the uneasy NATO allies.

The men requested asylum in Greece after landing a military helicopter in the northern city of Alexandroupoli, four days after the attempted government takeover on July 15. In late July, the court of Alexandroupoli sentenced the eight to suspended two-month prison terms for illegal entry.

The eight claim they will not receive a fair trial in Turkey and one of their lawyers claimed that their lives could be "in danger" if sent home. Tomara said that if they were extradited there would be risks "for their security and their lives, as well as those of their families." Greece and Turkey's prime ministers spoke by phone to discuss "matters of judicial cooperation," Athens stated.

TOBB head: Turkish economy succeeded in hardest stress test possible

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The Turkish economy has succeeded in overcoming the hardest stress test possible, the head of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), the country's leading business organization, said in an address at a regional economy meeting in neighboring Iran.

“On the one hand we have continued hosting 3 million Syrian refugees while on the other hand we have been struggling against the PKK and ISIL,” said TOBB chairman Rifat Hisarcıklıo lu, referring to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

“The coup attempt on July 15 came on top of all this. But still the Turkish economy has not experienced any negativity. It has passed the hardest stress test that the world can face. Our economy has overcome the coup attempt and is even getting stronger,” Hisarcıklıo lu added.

He was speaking at an executive board meeting of the 10-country Economic Cooperation Organization's (ECO). The forces behind the coup attempt aim at destabilizing the region and blocking economic growth and development, Hisarcıklıo lu said, calling for “rapid economic enrichment” as a response to such a plot.

Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are the members of ECO, the Eurasian political and economic intergovernmental organization founded in 1985 in Tehran. Turkey, Iran and Pakistan are the leaders and founders of the group, while the other members joined after the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991.

The groups' secretariat and cultural department are located in Tehran, its economic bureau is in Turkey and its scientific bureau is in Pakistan. Some 3.5 million people, or around half of the world population, live in countries that are members or neighbors of the ECO, Hisarcıklıo lu noted.

“We have this extremely fertile soil. We have a large human capital and historic richness. However, despite all these advantages, our share in the world trade stands at a mere 2 percent,” he added. The TOBB chair also said Turkey does not ask for visas from citizens of any ECO members, but only a few these countries grant visa-free travel to Turkish citizens. “We should put an end to this wrongdoing. Brothers do not visit each other's homes with visas,” Hisarcıklıo lu added.

Thousands return to Manbij after ISIL militants flee city

Reuters, 12.08.2016



Thousands of displaced residents have streamed back into the northern Syrian town of Manbij after U.S.-backed fighters ousted the last ISIL militants from their former stronghold, residents and U.S. allies said.

The U.S.-backed SDF has announced they seized full control of the city after the departure of the last of the militants. Hundreds of vehicles carrying families flocked into the city from makeshift camps and villages in the countryside, where many of the city's residents took shelter during the two-month campaign, according to an SDF official.

"Thousands are coming back and shops are opening. Today is the first day life is returning to normal," said Sharfan Darwish, spokesman for the SDF-allied Manbij Military Council told Reuters from the city, adding they were working to restore basic services. Pro-SDF news sites showed jubilant families who had been trapped in the city during the fighting talking about how harsh life was under Islamic State and its imposition of strict dress codes in public.

Their footage showed men shaving their beards and veiled women setting fire to niqabs they were forced to wear in public that covered their entire face apart from the eyes. The militants were finally ousted after a deal was reached that secured their departure together with some 2,000 civilians, believed to have been their relatives, towards their stronghold of Jarablus near the border with Turkey, a Syrian from Manbij who is in touch with relatives there said.

It was not clear whether those leaving were hostages or had left voluntarily, a Kurdish source said. The SDF, formed last year by recruiting Arabs to join forces with the YPG Kurdish militia, launched an offensive with the support of U.S.-led strikes at the end of May to remove ISIL from areas it controls along the Turkish border.

The loss of Manbij, occupied by ISIL since early 2014, is a big blow to the militants as it is of strategic importance, serving as a conduit for the transit of foreign jihadists and provisions. The operation, in which U.S. special forces played a significant role on the ground, marks the most ambitious advance by a group allied to Washington in Syria since the United States launched its military campaign against Islamic State two years ago.

Darwish attributed the speedy return to life in the city to a military and aerial campaign that he said spared many neighborhoods where thousands of civilians had remained even at the height of fighting. Despite intensive U.S. bombing of bridges, several hospitals and a large silo in the course of the campaign, the city appears to have been spared the devastation of other cities in the Syrian conflict. The SDF, which had already cleared over 13,000 mines, was sweeping some neighborhoods in search of militant sleeper cells suspected to still be operating.

A former resident of the city said he had reports from family members that the Kurdish YPG, who are the dominant group within the SDF, had rounded up dozens of young men before screening them because of concerns that some of them belonged to sleeper cells.

Austria says EU does not need Turkey to cope with migrants

Hurriyet Daily News, 16.08.2016



The European Union does not need Turkey to cope with the migrant crisis, which paralyzed the bloc in 2015 after more than 1 million migrants flocked to the EU, Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz has said, adding that what the EU needed was a “real Plan A.”

“We must not give in to blackmail and therefore do not need a plan B. We at last need a proper plan A,” Kurz told Focus Online, adding that Turkey was trying to target the EU with an ultimatum for the visa liberalization process. “If we take the necessary action, we do not need a plan B, so no deal with Turkey,” he added.

Relations between Turkey and the EU have been strained since Brussels pressured Turkey to change its anti-terror law, one of the 72 criteria Turkey needs to fulfill in exchange for Turkish citizens to be granted visa-free travel inside the EU’s Schengen zone.

This exchange was reached within the scope of a migrant deal between the sides, in which Turkey would help curb the migrant influx into the bloc in exchange for accelerated membership talks, EU funding for Syrians in Turkey, and visa liberalization for Turkish citizens.

Strained relations have gotten even worse after failed coup attempt in Turkey on July 15. Turkey accuses the EU and the West of not giving enough support to the Turkish government after the coup attempt was overcome and being more concerned about the crackdown in the aftermath.

Kurz and Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu have been in a war of words since last week, when the former suggested that Ankara’s EU membership bid should not proceed and the latter responded that Turkey would halt the migrant deal if Turkey’s visa-free demand is not met.

“I do not know if the deal will be officially terminated. But what we are experiencing now are threats and the attempt by Turkey to provide us with an ultimatum for visa liberalization,” Kurz told Focus Online. He added said that the EU should learn from countries such as Spain and Australia, “which have managed to stem refugee flows.” He said the “essential point” was that people should be stopped at the external border and the rescue of the Mediterranean should no longer be associated with a ticket to Central Europe. “Europe is strong and independent enough to protect its external borders. If we take the necessary action, it does not need to have a plan B,” Kurz added.

Merkel support slips as attacks put spotlight on migrant policy

Reuters, 12.08.2016



Approval ratings for German Chancellor Angela Merkel fell sharply last month, a poll showed on Aug. 12, in the second sign of a voter backlash to her refugee policy since Islamist militant attacks in Germany last month.

With just over a year before a federal election, the poll for public broadcaster ZDF gave Merkel an approval rating of 1.0, down from 1.4 in July on a scale of 5.0 to -5.0. Three other politicians, including the Social Democrat Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and conservative Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble, were ahead of German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

The next electoral test for her conservatives comes in state elections next month in Berlin and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern that are expected to see a strong showing from the anti-immigrant AfD. Merkel's open-door migrant policy is under intense scrutiny after two attacks claimed by the jihadist militant group Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) last month.

The poll showed only 44 percent of Germans think her migrant policy is good and 52 percent view it as bad. Although Germany has been spared Islamist attacks on the scale of those in France and Belgium, attacks on a train near Würzburg and at a music festival in Ansbach have shaken Germans and prompted the government to propose a range of new security measures.

The poll also showed 54 percent of Germans think the EU's disputed migrant deal with Turkey will fail. Some 35 percent believe the European Union's talks with Ankara over Turkish membership in the bloc should be stopped due to the political situation in Turkey.

Germans are worried about the integration of more than a million migrants who arrived last year alone, many fleeing war in Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq. Only two weeks ago, Merkel repeated her mantra that Germany could manage the influx of refugees and said she would not change course. Under the refugee deal, Turkey has agreed to help stem the flow of migrants to Europe in exchange for financial aid and the promise of visa-free travel to much of the EU.

U.S. federal reserve: American economy shrugged off Brexit

Foreign Policy, 17.08.2016



Members of the U.S. Federal Open Market Committee have been dithering for months over whether the American economy is strong enough to withstand higher interest rates, which would raise the cost of borrowing.

Minutes from their July meeting, released Wednesday, show that this uncertainty continues, but concerns about the economic fallout from Brexit in the United States have apparently been quelled. According to the record of the Federal Reserve's July 26-27 policy meeting, members were split on whether or not the strength in the U.S. job market, which added jobs in both May and June, would continue.

They also said initial fears about Britain's decision to leave the European Union — the so-called Brexit — proved unfounded. Still, Fed members were split on whether or not strong jobs and resiliency after the United Kingdom's historic vote were enough to raise the cost of borrowing, something the Fed has done only once since 2006.

"Members generally agreed that, before taking another step in removing monetary accommodation, it was prudent to accumulate more data in order to gauge the underlying momentum in the labor market and economic activity," according to the minutes released on Wednesday.

"Some ... members anticipated that economic conditions would soon warrant taking another step in removing policy accommodation," the Fed added. In plain English, this means they're divided on whether to raise interest rates.

Last December, the Fed lifted borrowing costs from near zero to a benchmark range of .25 percent to .50 percent, meaning it was no longer free to borrow from the U.S. Central Bank — but still incredibly cheap. At that time, Fed officials indicated four interest rate hikes could come in 2016.

However, as concerns about the health of the U.S. economy lingered into the spring, and as Brexit loomed on the horizon, Fed officials decided not to change rates. This means it is still very cheap for businesses and consumers to borrow money, enabling continued U.S. economic growth.

Whether a rate hike will come before year's end remains to be seen. Interest rates across Europe and in Japan are still negative, meaning their central banks are essentially pushing people to borrow and encouraging them to spend in what so far has been a futile effort to stimulate growth. Slowdowns in both places have dampened the desire for foreign consumers to buy U.S. products. And the long-term impacts of the U.K. leaving Europe remain unknown, as the Fed notes. Data released this week paint a mixed picture.

The number of people claiming jobless benefits fell by 8,600 in July, the first decrease since February. The U.K. Office for National Statistics insisted Tuesday there is no immediate impact from Brexit.

But according to the research firm Markit, the picture is not so rosy. In July, the combined services and manufacturing activity in Britain slid to its lowest level in seven years. The firm also found “dramatic deterioration” in the economy since Britain’s vote to leave the EU. In addition, a weakened pound sterling and inflation concerns — the official inflation measure targeted by the Bank of England ticked up to 0.6 percent year-on-year in July from 0.5 percent in June, the highest level since November 2014 — are driving fears of a spike in food prices there.

For now, Brexit fallout has largely been limited to Britain. But the Fed’s reluctance to pull the trigger on a rate increase — which would have been a vote of confidence in the U.S. economy — shows not all the worries about the U.K.’s looming exit from the EU have gone away yet.

US criticizes Russian bombing raid from Iran, calls act ‘unfortunate’

Hurriyet Daily News, 17.08.2016



The United States bemoaned Russia’s use of an Iranian air base to launch a bombing raid in Syria, but credited Moscow for having given a brief advance warning.

The Russian Defense Ministry earlier in the day said long-range bombers and fighter jets took off from the Hamedan base in western Iran and “conducted a group air strike against targets of the Islamic State [the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, ISIL] and Jabhat al-Nusra terrorist groups” in the provinces of Aleppo, Deir Ezzor and Idlib. “It’s unfortunate, but not surprising or unexpected,” AFP quoted U.S. State Department spokesman Mark Toner as saying.

“Frankly, that only makes more difficult what is already a very contentious and complex and difficult situation. And it only pushes us further away from what we’re all ... trying to pursue, which is a credible nation-wide cessation of hostilities and a political process in Geneva that leads to a peaceful transition,” Toner said.

Earlier, Baghdad-based U.S. military spokesman Colonel Chris Garver said Russian authorities had notified the U.S.-led coalition fighting ISIL in Iraq and Syria shortly before launching the bombing mission from Iran. The coalition since last year has operated a “memorandum of understanding” with Russia, whereby the two military forces notify each other of flights during their separate bombing campaigns to avoid accidents in the skies over Syria. “The Russians did notify the coalition as per the memorandum of understanding for safety of flight,” Garver said.



“They informed us they were coming through and we ensured safety of flight as those bombers passed through the area and toward their target and then when they passed out again. They did not impact coalition operations in either Iraq or Syria during the time,” he added.

Garver noted that ISIL fighters are concentrated only in Deir Ezzor and not Aleppo or Idlib. Toner said Russia continues to “predominantly target moderate Syrian opposition forces.” Moscow had provided “not a lot” of warning but that it “was enough time to make sure that we could ensure safety of flight,” Garver said.

He did not comment when asked if Russia had sought overflight permission from the government of Iraq, whose airspace provides quickest access to Syria from Iran. Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry discussed by phone how to implement a Russian-U.S. deal on coordinating action in Syria and securing a cease-fire, the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement, according to Reuters.

It said the phone call had taken place at Washington’s initiative and was focused on the situation in Aleppo and on discussing how best to implement the deal which Moscow said had been reached during a visit by Kerry to Moscow in July.

Kerry said after those marathon talks last month that Washington and Moscow had reached a common understanding on the steps now needed to get Syria’s troubled peace process back on track. Russia said it and the United States were close to joining forces in some form around Aleppo, but U.S. officials have not confirmed this. “We continue to speak with Russia ... about ways that we can put in place a credible, nationwide cease-fire, full access to humanitarian assistance, and then again get negotiations restarted in Geneva,” Toner said.

In Iran, just one day after Moscow announced launching airstrikes on Syria from Iran, the speaker of the Iranian parliament stressed on Aug. 17 that Russia does not have a permanent military base within the Islamic Republic, the Associated Press reported.

The comments by the Iranian official, Ali Larijani, seem geared at easing domestic concerns over the strikes. Iran’s constitution, ratified after its 1979 Islamic Revolution, bars foreign militaries from having bases within the country.

In his remarks, reported by the state-run IRNA news agency, Larijani did not directly discuss the strikes, though he said Iran has “cooperated with Russia, as it is our ally on regional issues, especially on Syrian issues.” “We have good cooperation with Russia and we say it loud and clear,” Larijani said.

The fact that Iran allowed Russian warplanes to take off from its territory to bomb targets in Syria was an unprecedented move, underscoring the deepening cooperation between two powerhouses heavily invested in the Syrian civil war. It is virtually unheard in recent history for Iran to allow a foreign power to use one of its bases to stage attacks. Russia has also never used the territory of another country in the Middle East for its operations inside Syria, where it has been carrying out an aerial campaign in support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s government for nearly a year. Iran is also a major supporter of al-Assad.

Trump's 'ideology test' could bring back a hated Mccarthy-era law

Foreign Policy, 17.08.2016



Donald Trump's policy proposals share little in common with Republican Party orthodoxy, and seldom do his "facts" accord with the historical record. But at least one of his proposals — to resurrect a Cold War-era practice of banning foreigners who hold "incorrect" political beliefs — has somewhat of a basis in reality.

The billionaire rolled out the idea during a rambling foreign policy address, citing the decades-old test for how he'd keep Islamic radicals out of the U.S. "In the Cold War, we had an ideological screening test. The time is long overdue to develop a new screening test for the threats," he said.

It appears he was referencing the highly controversial McCarran-Walter Act, a McCarthy-era regulation that critics say violated American values without benefitting the country's security. The 1952 law, which took effect after lawmakers overrode a veto by President Harry Truman, codified the exclusion of foreigners on the basis of ideological belief even if they posed no direct threat to U.S. national security.

Before Congress repealed it in 1990, the government could ban any non-U.S. citizen who had ever expressed support for communism or anarchism or associated with known advocates of those causes. The law inevitably swept up thousands of people innocent of malicious intent, even turning such prominent figures as Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Charlie Chaplin, and Pierre Trudeau before he became prime minister of Canada into blacklisted public enemies.

It "excluded people not for what they did or for fear of what they might do but rather simply for what they said or with whom they associated," said David Cole, a Georgetown law professor who litigated the case that declared the act unconstitutional.

The government didn't "have to show you've done anything illegal or reason to believe you'd do anything illegal once arriving, it just had to say you're associated with a group that has politically incorrect views."

To tell if somebody fell on the wrong side of the political spectrum, Cole said the government didn't hand out tests, per se, but relied instead on intelligence gathering and an assumption that someone holding anti-U.S. beliefs would inexplicably choose to reveal them to American authorities.

This means that a Trump administration would have to drastically expand the job of intelligence agencies to collect intelligence not only on potential terrorists, but also on people who are simply expressing views that may sound vaguely sympathetic to those espoused by radicals.

Cole said that doing so is unnecessary, and worse yet, “flatly inconsistent with our commitment to the free exchange of ideas.” The appropriate national security question to ask, Cole said, is not “has this person said something that we’re afraid of,” but instead, “is this person likely to engage in terrorism, and has this person provided material support to a terrorist group?” That’s a standard Trump’s proposed test is unlikely to pass.

Report: US nuclear bombs at Turkey base at risk of seizure

AFP, 15.08.2016



Dozens of U.S. nuclear weapons stored at a Turkish air base near Syria are at risk of being captured by “terrorists or other hostile forces,” a Washington think tank claimed.

Critics have long been alarmed by the United States’ estimated stockpile of about 50 nuclear bombs at ncirlik in the southern province of Adana, just 110 kilometers from the border with war-torn Syria. The issue took on fresh urgency last month following the July 15 coup attempt in Turkey, in which the base’s Turkish commander was arrested on suspicion of being a member of the FETÖ, believed to have masterminded the failed takeover.

“Whether the U.S. could have maintained control of the weapons in the event of a protracted civil conflict in Turkey is an unanswerable question,” said the report from the Stimson Center, a nonpartisan think tank working to promote peace.

ncirlik is a vital base for the U.S.-led coalition fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq and Syria, with the strategically located facility affording drones and warplanes fast access to ISIL targets. But the Pentagon in March ordered families of U.S. troops and civilian personnel stationed in southern Turkey to quit the region due to security fears.

“From a security point of view, it’s a roll of the dice to continue to have approximately 50 of America’s nuclear weapons stationed at ncirlik Air Base in Turkey,” report co-author Laicie Heeley said. “There are significant safeguards in place. ...

But safeguards are just that, they don’t eliminate risk. In the event of a coup, we can’t say for certain that we would have been able to maintain control,” she told AFP. While the Pentagon does not discuss where it stores nuclear assets, the bombs are believed to be kept at ncirlik as a deterrent to Russia and to demonstrate the U.S.’ commitment to NATO, the 28-member military alliance that includes Turkey. The ncirlik nuclear issue has been the subject of renewed debate in the U.S. since the failed putsch attempt.



“While we’ve avoided disaster so far, we have ample evidence that the security of U.S. nuclear weapons stored in Turkey can change literally overnight,” Steve Andreasen, who was director for defense policy and arms control on the White House National Security Council staff from 1993 to 2001, wrote in an opinion piece in the Los Angeles Times last week.

Kori Schake, a fellow at the California-based Hoover Institution, noted in a written debate in the New York Times that “American nuclear forces cannot be used without codes, making the weapons impossible to set off without authorization.” “The fact that nuclear weapons are stationed in Turkey does not make them vulnerable to capture and use, even if the country were to turn hostile to the U.S.,” she said. The Pentagon declined to comment on questions arising from the Stimson study.

“We do not discuss the location of strategic assets. The [Department of Defense] has taken appropriate steps to maintain the safety and security of our personnel, their families, and our facilities, and we will continue to do so,” it said in a statement.

The ncirlik concerns were highlighted as part of a broader paper into the Pentagon’s nuclear modernization program, through which the U.S. would spend hundreds of billions of dollars to update its atomic arsenal. The authors argue that a particular type of bomb – the B61 gravity bomb – should be immediately removed from Europe, where 180 of the weapons are kept in Belgium, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and Turkey.



Announcements & Reports

Chinese Military Organization and Reform

Source : CSIS
Weblink : <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinese-military-organization-and-reform>

The Missile Defense Agency and the Color of Money

Source : CSIS
Weblink : <https://www.csis.org/analysis/missile-defense-agency-and-color-money>

Transatlantic Rifts: Averting a Turkey/Russia Conflict

Source : Chatham House
Weblink : <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/transatlantic-rifts-averting-turkey-russia-conflict>

Upcoming Events

Congo's Political Crisis: What is The Way Forward?

Date : 15 August 2016
Place : Washington DC, USA
Website : <https://www.brookings.edu/events/congos-political-crisis-what-is-the-way-forward/>

Competitive Gains in the Economic and Monetary Union

Date : 15 September 2016
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/534-competitive-gains-in-the-economic-and-monetary-union/>

The Future of Capitalist Democracy: UK-Japan Perspectives

Date : 16 September 2016
Place : London - UK
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/future-capitalist-democracy-uk-japan-perspectives>

13th Asia Europe Economic Forum (AEEF)

Date : 21 – 22 September 2016
Place : Beijing - China
Website : <http://bruegel.org/events/13th-asia-europe-economic-forum/>



Emerging Markets and Europe: Time for Different Relationships?

Date : 23 September 2016
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/524-emerging-markets-and-europe-time-for-different-relationships/>

What future for Europe's Social Models?

Date : 25 September 2016
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/526-what-future-for-europes-social-models/>

Challenges for Growth in Europe

Date : 26 September 2016
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/521-challenges-for-growth-in-europe/>

Global Governance of Public Goods: Asian and European Perspectives

Date : 28 September 2016
Place : Paris - France
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/529-global-governance-of-public-goods-asian-and-european-perspectives/>

The Future of the Welfare State

Date : 30 September 2016
Place : Berlin - Germany
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/541-the-future-of-the-welfare-state/>

Vision Europe Summit 2016

Date : 21 – 22 November 2016
Place : Lisbon - Portugal
Website : <http://bruegel.org/events/vision-europe-summit-2016/>