

Ankara and Arbil discuss jihadist threat

Hurriyet Daily News, 06.08.2014



Turkish officials and Iraqi Kurds discussed the threat posed by the Islamic State in Syria and the Levant (ISIL) in the neighboring country, as the jihadist group has extended control in northwestern Iraq, forcing thousands of Iraqi citizens to leave their homes.

The political and security repercussions of an attack on the Sinjar region and clashes between jihadists and the peshmarga, accompanied by Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) fighters from northern Syria, were discussed between Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) President Masoud Barzani.

Turkey is maintaining discussions with all parties to ensure the stability of Iraq, Davutoglu said. "With security and requirements of our Turkmen brothers at the forefront, we are making efforts for the well-being of all Iraqi people, including Kurds, Yezidis and Arabs," Davutoglu posted on his Twitter account yesterday. Barzani and Davutoglu discussed developments in Sinjar (also referred to as Şengal), Turkey's humanitarian assistance for Iraqi Turkmen and the political process of Iraq, according to Foreign Ministry officials. Turkey and KRG officials are in close dialogue over the threat posed by ISIL that has led to thousands of Iraqi citizens leaving their homes. Iraqi Kurds also offered to share intelligence with Ankara about 49 Turkish nationals taken hostage by the jihadist group.

Meanwhile, peshmarga forces opened a corridor into Sinjar so that fighters from the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) could arrive to battle ISIL, Doğan News Agency reported. On the humanitarian side, Turkey's disaster agency AFAD and KRG officials are coordinating to supply humanitarian assistance to displaced Iraqi Turkmen, who had to flee the city of Tal Afar when ISIL launched an offensive on June 9. The aid supplied by Turkey was eventually delivered by Iraqi Kurdish authorities. "Seventy percent of the humanitarian aid supplied by Turkey has reached Turkmen," a Turkish official told the Hürriyet Daily News when asked about claims that some of the aid had been seized by the KRG and not delivered to Turkmen groups. Ankara is also in close dialogue with the KRG about the urgent need to form a new Iraqi government in light of April's parliamentary elections.

Ankara on alert over jihadist advance in northern Iraq

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Growing concern over the state of security in northern Iraq that has affected hundreds of thousands of Iraqis in the face of the advance of extremist jihadist groups has put Turkey on alert, as well brought concerns that the unrest could be spread to its territory.

An unscheduled security meeting was held in Ankara on Aug. 7 under the leadership of Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and with the participation of Land Forces Commander Gen. Hulusi Akar, Gendarmerie Forces Commander Gen. Servet Yörük and National Intelligence Organization (MİT) chief Hakan Fidan.

The meeting came following the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) fighters marching toward northern Iraq and seizing control of some towns traditionally inhabited by Turkmens, Kurds and Yazidi (or Ezidi) groups. Davutoglu had said Turkey was taking all measures to secure its borders, as well as to provide humanitarian assistance to Iraqi Turkmens and Yazidi groups that had to flee their homes following the ISIL attacks. For his part, Culture Minister Ömer Çelik has announced that Yazidis who have fled to Turkey were settled in homes in the southeastern Şırnak province. Yazidis, who believe in an ancient religion linked with Zoroastrianism, have suffered years of oppression and are considered as “heretics” by radical Islamists.

Turkey says in talks with Israel, Egypt for Gaza aid

Reuters, 06.08.2014



Turkey is seeking Israeli and Egyptian agreement for an air corridor to provide humanitarian aid to Gaza and evacuate possibly thousands of injured Palestinians for treatment, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said.

Davutoglu also said Turkey was stepping up aid to an estimated 1.5 million people displaced in northern Iraq's Kurdish region after a rapid advance by Islamic State militants brought the violence closer to its borders. Turkey is already sheltering more than a million refugees from the war in Syria and is playing a major role in the development of Iraqi Kurdish.

Despite crumbling relations with Israel, it also hopes through its ties with the Palestinian authorities to play a part in brokering a long-term settlement in the Gaza Strip. A humanitarian truce in Gaza, where half a million people have been displaced by a month of bloodshed, held for a second day on Wednesday but could be sustained only if basic needs such as power, water and healthcare were provided, Davutoglu said. "Yesterday I spoke with (Palestinian) President Mahmoud Abbas and we want to get the injured people, thousands of them. They need urgent medical therapy, and we have already allocated places in our hospitals for them," he said.

We are talking with both Egypt and Israel to have an air bridge to send humanitarian assistance ... If permission is given, our air ambulances will be carrying these passengers," Davutoglu said, adding there was "no limit" to the numbers of injured Palestinians Turkey was ready to treat. Israel withdrew ground forces from the Gaza Strip on Aug. 5 morning and started a 72-hour Egyptian-brokered ceasefire with Hamas, which rules the coastal enclave. Efforts to turn the ceasefire into a lasting truce could prove difficult, with the sides far apart on their central demands, and each rejecting the other's legitimacy. Hamas rejects Israel's existence and vows to destroy it, while Israel denounces Hamas as a terrorist group and eschews any ties.

"We hope that the talks in Cairo will be successful to achieve a sustainable ceasefire and we hope that the rights of Palestinian people will be respected in the coming days, months and years ... The only way to achieve this is to have a Palestinian state," Davutoglu said. "(Peace) is achievable if the international community acts in an objective manner ... But if they give a signal that international law, rules and values should be respected by all but Israel is an exception ... then it is not achievable." Pro-Palestinian sentiment runs high in mostly Sunni Muslim Turkey, and protesters have repeatedly taken to the streets in recent weeks to demonstrate against Israel's offensive in Gaza. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, campaigning for a presidential election on Aug. 3, has likened Israel's actions to those of Hitler and warned it would "drown in the blood it sheds".



Davutoglu, seen as a possible successor to Erdoğan as prime minister after Sunday's election, said Turkey was concerned by the advances made by Islamic State fighters, who have seized large areas of Iraq and Syria and were also part of a Sunni militant incursion into Lebanon. He said the sectarian policies of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki were partly responsible for sowing the seeds of radicalisation. "The basic root of this development is sectarian policies adopted by previous Iraqi and Syrian administrations, today as well," Davutoglu said. "Sunni leaders have been excluded from the (Iraqi) political process in the last two or three years and there has been a radicalisation ... in certain Sunni-populated regions which were not happy because of the sectarian policies of Maliki. Similar things happened in Syria."

Iraq's Kurdish region has acted as a buffer for Turkey against violence further south, but Kurdish forces attacked Islamic State fighters near the regional capital of Arbil on Aug. 6 in response to a rapid advance by the militants. Davutoglu said Turkey had stepped up humanitarian assistance to an estimated 1.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq's Kurdish north, describing the stability of the region as "very important" for Turkey. "We have sent thousands of tents as well as more than 200 trucks already sent to the region... and there will be additional humanitarian assistance because in the Kurdish region, (Iraqi Kurdish President) Barzani told me they now have 1.5 million IDPs," he said. "So this turmoil is really a threat to regional stability, not only to Turkey," Davutoglu said, adding Turkey would take all necessary measures to maintain stability around its borders.

US silence against Israeli killings 'disappointing'

Anadolu Agency, 06.08.2014



Volkan Bozkir, Chair of Turkey-US Interparliamentary Friendship Caucus on Tuesday called US' ineffectiveness and silence against the Israeli atrocities in Gaza "disappointing" in his letter to his American counterparts as a response to their letter to Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan last week.

Co-Chairs of the Congressional Caucus on U.S.-Turkish Relations and Turkish Americans, Gerry E. Connolly, Ed Whitfield, Stephen Cohen and Virginia Foxx sent a letter to Turkish PM accusing him of "anti-Semitism" and criticizing his policies toward Israel. Ambassador Bozkir responded to American congressmen upon Erdogan's instruction.

Bozkir said in his letter that Israel has violated international law, human rights and UN resolutions killing more than 1,860 Palestinian civilians, including women and children; and injuring over 10,000 since July 7. Quoting UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon as he had denounced the attacks on UN schools in Gaza as "a moral outrage and a criminal act", Bozkir wrote that hundreds of academics and lawyers around the world have accused Israel of committing war crimes. "Yet, despite all these criticisms, Israel has continued bombing Gaza. Even children playing on the beaches; patients, those injured and medical staff in hospitals; journalists and even civilians in UN shelters have not been spared from these attack," he said.

In the letter Bozkir qualified Israeli Parliamentarian Ayelet Shaked's call for killing of Palestinian children and mothers "shameful" and condemned Israelis' joyfully singing and dancing when Gaza was relentlessly bombed. "What is even more shameful, is the fact that the countries which consider themselves as the leaders of the free and civilized world have remained largely silent against these massacres and inhumane actions, even defending and encouraging Israel under the "right of self-defense," Bozkir said. In his letter, Ambassador Bozkir rejected the accusations against Erdogan of being "anti-semitic" and expressed that Erdogan publicly declared anti-semitism as a crime against humanity.

Pinpointing the coincidence of anti-semitic incidences with Israeli attacks on Palestine he said "Each Israeli attack undermines the peace and tranquility of Jews living all around the world and turns them into targets of hate speech." He called for the congressmen to put pressure on Israel to stop occupation in Palestine; "This would be the best and the strongest response to anti-Semitism Bozkir, touching upon Turkey's effort to contribute to Middle East peace, said that Turkey is for the two state solution in Palestine and Israel conflict. "If the friends of Israel want to help it, they should call on Israel to respect international law and human rights, instead of trying to silence the criticisms of those Israeli policies that undermine the peace process and make a mockery of international law", he added. Presidential candidate and Prime Minister Erdogan has accused Israel of committing war crimes and state terror in several rallies for presidential election across Turkey.

Tumult not political action reduced Turkey's exports to Israel

Hurriyet Daily News, 06.08.2014



Turkey's exports to Israel declined by almost 10 percent in July due to the turmoil in the region, not because Turkish firms refused to sell goods to the country, the head of the country's top exporters association said, criticizing the "unconscious" boycott of Israeli goods in protest at the Gaza violence.

Turkish Exporters' Assembly (TİM) Chairman Mehmet Büyükeksi said goods sent to the country dropped by 9.4 percent in July. "The reason behind this, according to me, is related to the chaos that is currently occurring there rather than if the markets sell [goods] or not," he said.

"If there is no peace in a country, there won't be trade either", he added. He said the decline in exports should be regarded as a mutual responsibility, also expressing his wish for an end to the situation. "Hopefully, this situation will come to an end," he said. The exporters' representative also criticized the course of boycott of Israeli goods over the nation's ramped-up offensive against the Gaza Strip that has led to the death of over 1,800 Palestinians. "This issue went to the wrong place in Turkey. The products declared and the products boycotted don't match.

I don't want to name any brands but some of the goods that people said not to use are already being produced in Turkey, they are not imported," he said. "There should be more consciousness regarding these kinds of situations. Not using a product used in Turkey hurts the Turkish economy," he said, highlighting "a perception problem." He also said it was hard to determine the nationality or owner of many companies in today's globalized world, as many companies are traded on the stock exchange.

Turkish government heralds new purge in judiciary

Hurriyet Daily News, 06.08.2014



As Turkey witnessed a second wave of mass operation of detaining police officers as part of the “illegal wiretapping” probe, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) government’s plans for restructuring the country’s top judicial body have been revealed.

The government has drafted optional plans to avoid facing problems while electing new members of the Supreme Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK), in which it argues that followers of U.S.-based Islamic scholar Fethullah Gulen, The election will be held in October, when current members’ terms in office expire.

“To shape such plans, Justice Minister Bekir Bozdag gathered on Aug. 5 around 100 jurist deputies of the AKP. The plans include legal amendments before October in a bid to change the election system to the HSYK in a way that would break the dominance of Gulen’s followers. Another option is making a constitutional amendment regarding the structure of the HSYK after seeing the results of the election in October. Earlier on Aug. 5, remarks delivered by Deputy Prime Minister Beşir Atalay and Justice Minister Bekir Bozdag in response to Deputy Chief of the HSYK Ahmet Hamsici clearly displayed how both the government and the HSYK have been at sword’s point.

Cabinet members’ statements also displayed how they are determined to launch a purge within the top judiciary in order to eliminate Gulen’s followers. “Everybody, including members of the judiciary, needs to exert special efforts in order not to harm the reputation of the judiciary,” Hamsici said late on Aug. 4, warning that long-term damage would emerge otherwise. “In democratic states, neither Parliament, nor administrative bodies, including HSYK, should try to influence how investigations by prosecutors should be conducted or the decision to be made at the end the investigation,” Hamsici said in a written statement, which has widely been perceived as a criticism of a recent wave of detentions of over 100 people last month – of whom 31 were remanded in custody and charged – in the eavesdropping scandal linked to the dispute between Erdoğan and Gulen.

In his written statement, Hamsici referred to the Bordeaux Declaration by the Consultative Council of European Judges (CCJE) and the Consultative Council of European Prosecutors (CCPE). Hamsici’s statement was followed on the morning of Aug. 5 with a second wave of arrests of dozens of police officers. Ahead of his meeting with AKP deputies, when asked about Hamsici’s statement, Bozdag said it was a “private” statement that had no official attribution, noting he delivered similar “private” statements in the past, too. “When you look at the statement, it includes some messages; those reading the statement clearly understand to which segments these messages are addressed. Our objection is to this; the HSYK is not a council that gives message to one side and takes a stance against the other side. It is assurance of the judiciary’s functioning in line with requirements of an independent and impartial state based on rule of law,” Bozdag said.

As of late Aug. 4, while speaking in an interview with news channel A Haber, Bozdog particularly complained of the 3rd Chamber of the HSYK, claiming it was acting as a kind of “tutelary” for judges and prosecutors who acted unlawfully. Back in June, Bozdog took the initiative to launch an investigation into a prosecutor and three judges who issued court orders for the arrest and freezing of assets of graft suspects in the Dec. 17 and Dec. 25 investigations of 2013, involving governmental figures, overruling the 3rd Chamber that had dismissed the need for such an investigation. It is not the first time that the AKP government has made moves to reshuffle HSYK members. In February, a government-led law transferred significant powers from the HSYK to the Justice Ministry.

The bill was at the time criticized for increasing the government’s power over the justice system and is seen as part of the government’s efforts to cover up the corruption and graft probe launched in December. Although the Constitutional Court partly overturned the controversial judicial bill in April, demanding a redefinition of the justice minister’s increased competences, it also paved the way to some uncertainties, since a number of HSYK members were automatically dismissed after the law entered into force in February. New members were subsequently appointed with Bozdog’s final approval, one of the controversial extraordinary competences introduced with the new law.

China and Turkey suffer from same growth malaise

Hurriyet Daily News, 04.08.2014



By looking at the latest leading indicators on growth, it would be hard to argue that China and Turkey are suffering from the same growth problem. HSBC’s Purchasing Managers’ Index (PMI) for China, a composite indicator designed to provide a single-figure snapshot of operating conditions in manufacturing, reached an 18-month high in July.

In contrast, the Turkish PMI, which was also released on Aug. 1, hit a 63-month low. The two countries’ near-term growth outlooks are also different: The Chinese government accepted the markets’ bearish view on the Chinese economy in March by adopting a series of stimulus measures.

As a result, instead of falling from the first quarter’s 7.4 percent, growth rose to 7.5 percent in the second quarter. It is on track to attain the government’s target of “around 7.5 percent.” The Turkish economy started the year strong. Annual growth had been hovering in the 4.3-4.5 percent range since the second quarter of 2013, and at 4.3 percent, first quarter growth managed to keep that trend. However, leading indicators have been weakening since then, and Turkey will probably not attain the government’s 4 percent target for this year, despite the loose monetary and fiscal policy. Notwithstanding these differences, both countries are on unsustainable growth paths. Turkey has been relying on external financing and consumption for growth and it is not clear how it could grow enough to raise living standards and keep unemployment at bay in the absence of capital flows.

China has been depending too much on investment and credit and too little on consumption, with the real estate sector in the middle of a web of rising vulnerabilities, as I explained in my last column. Turkey needs to increase its savings rate and shift its economy from consumption to exports. China, on the other hand, needs to move away from investment toward consumption, which would mean a fall in the savings rate. But both countries need structural reforms for sustainable growth. I am not sure which country has it easier: China already announced a comprehensive reform blueprint last year. The IMF argues in its latest report on the Chinese economy, which was released on July 31, that its successful implementation would help economic rebalancing. The question is whether officials would be willing to accept a slower, but safer growth path during this transition.

Turkey will automatically end up with lower growth once capital flows to emerging markets subside. Although the government has not been eager to implement reforms until now, they may change their mind when the sh*t hits the fan. Chinese policymakers, on the other hand, may be affected by the maxim, “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”, allowing the vulnerabilities to rise. Politics may make a difference. The Chinese government does not have to worry about elections, whereas Supreme Leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan will want to get enough votes in the 2015 general elections to be able to change the Constitution – so that he can increase the powers of the presidency and legalize his rule. Pork-barrel spending and more pressure on the Central Bank to lower rates are more likely than reforms with that agenda. Chinese officials, on the other hand, have always shown the resolve to act when need be.

IS seizes Iraq’s largest Christian town

AFP, 07.08.2014



Residents are fleeing for Kurdish ahead of the Isis advance. Jihadists has taken over Iraq’s largest Christian town, Qaraqosh sending residents fleeing towards autonomous Kurdish. Islamic State (Isis) militants moved in overnight after the withdrawal of Kurdish peshmerga troops, who are stretched thin across several fronts in Iraq.

“I now know that the towns of Qaraqosh, Tal Kayf, Bartella and Karamlesh have been emptied of their original population and are now under the control of the militants,” Joseph Thomas, the Chaldean archbishop of Kirkuk and Sulaimaniyah, told AFP.

Qaraqosh is an entirely Christian town that lies between Mosul, the jihadists’ main hub in Iraq, and Arbil, the Kurdish region’s capital. It usually has a population of around 50,000. “It’s a catastrophe, a tragic situation. We call on the UN security council to immediately intervene. Tens of thousands of terrified people are being displaced as we speak, it cannot be described,” the archbishop said. Tal Kayf, home to a significant Christian community as well as members of the Shabak Shia minority, also emptied overnight. “Tal Kayf is now in the hands of the Islamic State. They faced no resistance and rolled in just after midnight,” said Boutros Sargon, a resident of Arbil.

Obama authorizes US airstrikes in Iraq

Anadolu Agency, 08.08.2014



The U.S. will launch air strikes on Islamic State convoys should they move on Erbil, the Iraqi Kurdish capital, Obama said. Washington's consulate in the city is home to both civilians and diplomats, as well as American military personnel that advise Iraqi forces.

“We intend to stay vigilant and take action if these terrorist forces threaten our personnel or facilities anywhere in Iraq.” In addition to targeted air strikes to thwart any potential advance on the Iraqi Kurdish capital, the U.S. has begun operations to help civilians holed up on Mount Sinjar at the request of the Iraqi government.

The Islamic State was formerly known as ISIL. The American President said that Islamic State militants have called for the “systematic destruction of the entire Ezidi people, which would constitute genocide,” and America must act to stop the potential slaughter. “When we have a mandate to help, in this case a request from the Iraqi government, and when we have the unique capabilities to help avert a massacre, then I believe the United States of America cannot turn a blind eye,” he said. “We can act carefully and responsibly to prevent a potential act of genocide.”

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said in a statement released to the press that the Islamic State's attacks on innocent civilians, including Ezidi and Christian minority groups “and its grotesque and targeted acts of violence bear all the warning signs and hallmarks of genocide.” “ISIL is offering nothing to anyone except chaos, nihilism, and ruthless thuggery. With a gut-wrenching humanitarian crisis unfolding, and the rolls of the starving and sick growing daily, there's not a minute to waste,” he added. American aircraft have already begun humanitarian airdrops of food and water, Obama announced during Thursday night's speech. He insisted that American combat troops will not be deployed to Iraq, “because there is no American military solution to the larger crisis in Iraq.”

Israel delegation arrives in Egypt for Gaza truce talks

Anadolu Agency, 05.08.2014



An Israeli delegation arrived in Cairo Tuesday evening for talks aimed at striking a durable ceasefire with Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip. The 3-strong delegation was accompanied by Egyptian intelligence agents upon arrival for the venue of talks with Egyptian officials, a security source told Anadolu Agency.

A delegation representing Palestinian factions is already in Cairo for talks about a durable ceasefire in the Gaza Strip with Israel. Delegation member Qais Abdel Karim told Anadolu Agency that the delegation will meet Egyptian intelligence chief Farid al-Tohami on Tuesday.

Palestinian factions and Israel have endorsed an Egyptian proposal for a three-day ceasefire in the Gaza Strip starting Tuesday. Israel has since completely withdrawn its forces from the besieged Palestinian territory. According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, at least 1867 Palestinians, mostly civilians, were killed and 9470 wounded in unrelenting Israeli attacks since July 7. The Israeli army, for its part, has confirmed the killing of 64 troops and the injury of 651 others in Gaza combat operations, while three civilians were killed in rocket attacks on Israeli cities.

Gazans return to shattered homes as negotiators prepare to discuss cease-fire

CNN, 06.08.2014



With negotiations for a longer-lasting cease-fire set to begin soon, many Gazans returned to their neighborhoods Tuesday while some remained at shelters not trusting the break in the violence. For now, a 72-hour humanitarian pause is in place, allowing delegations to gather in Cairo, Egypt, to talk about how to make the truce last.

For Gaza's 1.8 million residents it also offered a chance to go to a street market for food and goods, or to check on abandoned homes. For Israel, where more than 2,300 rockets have landed since early July, there was, for a change, no sirens blaring.

In Gaza City, one man told CNN he was happy the shooting had stopped, but his problems were just beginning. The man said he couldn't understand what he was seeing -- the home his family invested \$100,000 in, now destroyed. No insurance company will give him money to rebuild, he told CNN. There are no winners in this war, he said. But on Twitter, the Israel Defense Forces declared: "Mission accomplished." The IDF said it had destroyed 32 tunnels -- many of which ran under the border into Israel -- during the four-week conflict. Israel says Hamas militants used the tunnels to sneak into Israel for terror attacks. Nearly 1,900 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza during the conflict, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. It's unclear how many were militants. The United Nations estimates that about 70% of the dead were civilians. But the IDF says it estimates about 900 militants were killed. IDF spokesman Lt. Col. Peter Lerner said it was a preliminary figure based on field reports from troops returning from battle. Israeli officials have said 64 Israeli soldiers and three civilians in Israel died in violence.

After the cease-fire began, residents trickled into Shujaya, an area near Gaza City that experienced some of the most destructive violence of the conflict. They found craters and ruins where homes and shops once stood. People scaled crumbled concrete and twisted metal to rummage for any belongings left in the rubble. Nal Mohammed, a Ph.D. student whose family home was demolished, lamented the situation. "Peace? What peace? We have no home, no water, no power," he said. "There is no peace here." Residents were stunned as they returned to their neighborhoods for the first time since being displaced by the fighting. "After the cease-fire agreement took effect, the world will now see the level of destruction which should serve as an evidence of the level of crimes of the enemy," Ismail Haniyeh, a senior leader of Hamas, said in a statement aired on Hamas-run Al-Aqsa television, according to a CNN translation. The conflict has displaced more than 200,000 people across the densely populated territory. Residents are coming back to similar sights -- rubble, ruins, buildings pockmarked by shrapnel. A white-haired man, Hany Mahmoud el Harezen, stood on the roof of his collapsed two-story home.



I am a wedding photographer, I have nothing to do with this war," he said. "Maybe if we had gotten some concessions, it would be worth it. But we got nothing." For the first time Tuesday, the number of people packed into U.N. shelters decreased, said U.N. official Chris Gunness in Gaza. But not everyone left the U.N. facilities. Others were more pragmatic, thinking it best to wait and see."They said there was a truce before and we left," one man told CNN. "But five minutes after we got home, the airstrikes started." Israel released a map noting numerous sites it targeted in Shujaya, which it said " Hamas used for military purposes." The IDF said the map showed locations of tunnels, hideouts, rocket firings and launchings, and more.

"We have no forces within Gaza," IDF spokesman Lerner told CNN Tuesday. With its goal of demolishing the tunnels achieved, Israel announced the withdrawal of ground forces for what is supposed to be a three-day cease-fire with Hamas. Israel is implementing the Egyptian-brokered truce, which took effect Tuesday morning, while maintaining "defensive positions" outside Gaza, the IDF said. Officials from the United Nations and United States, who have been pushing for a cease-fire for weeks, hope that the 72-hour pause will allow negotiations to take place for a more lasting peace. Why are so many civilians dying in Hamas-Israel war? An Israeli delegation arrived Tuesday evening in Cairo for negotiations, two senior Egyptian government officials told CNN. The officials, who asked not to be named, said they expected indirect negotiations to begin Wednesday, with the Egyptian officials acting as intermediaries. The two sides are not expected to talk directly to each other.

Egyptian and Palestinian negotiators had arrived over the weekend. Key to any talks, Israeli government spokesman Mark Regev said, is that Hamas must disarm. Hamas leaders say that they want to negotiate an end to the Israeli blockade of Gaza, or at least a body other than the Israelis controlling the borders. Haniyeh, the senior Hamas leader, said his televised statement that Hamas members will work with the Palestinian delegation to end the blockade. Israel repeatedly accepted an Egyptian cease-fire proposal during the conflict, which Hamas rejected. Temporary humanitarian cease-fires repeatedly crumbled, with each side blaming the other. "The onus is on Hamas," Regev told CNN of the 72-hour truce. "We are entering this with our eyes open," he said. "We have been burnt more than once." The sentiment was similar from Hamas spokesman Osama Hamdan, who told CNN that as long as Israel honors the agreement, so will the Palestinians."We hope they can take it and be committed to a cease-fire," he said.

While Egypt has not released details of the truce, Regev suggested it was the same agreement that Israel has accepted all along. The United States urged both sides to honor the cease-fire agreement. "The United States has been steadfast in our insistence on an end to rocket and tunnel attacks against Israel and an end to the suffering of the people of Gaza," State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said. U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon "urges the parties to commence, as soon as possible, talks in Cairo on a durable ceasefire and the underlying issues," his office said in a statement. In the latest example of the ripples the conflict has sent around the globe, a British government minister said she was resigning over her country's policy on Gaza."With deep regret I have this morning written to the Prime Minister & tendered my resignation. I can no longer support Govt policy on Gaza," Sayeeda Warsi, senior minister of state at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, wrote on Twitter. Warsi, a member of the House of Lords and the first Muslim in a British Cabinet, posted a photo of her resignation letter on Twitter.

Gaza rescuers extract bodies; death toll rises to 1886

Anadolu Agency, 07.08.2014



The death toll from a paused Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip has risen to 1886 as rescue workers continue to extract bodies from under the rubble on the last day of a 72-hour truce, spokesman for the Palestinian Health Ministry said.

“Palestinian medical crews are still working on extracting bodies from districts in the eastern outskirts of the Gaza Strip along the border [with Israel] which have been intensely shelled by Israel,” Health Ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qodra told Anadolu Agency. He said that 9806 Palestinians have also been injured since the launch of Israel’s “Operation Protective Edge” on the late night of July 7.

He went on to say that 432 children, 243 women and 85 elderly Palestinians are among the fatalities and that 2979 children, 1903 women and 374 elderly Palestinians are among the injured. Israel and Palestinian factions are observing an Egyptian-brokered three-day ceasefire in the embattled Gaza Strip since Tuesday, following nearly a month of carnage as Israel relentlessly pounded the coastal enclave – home to some 1.8 million Palestinians – with aerial, naval and ground strikes.

Palestinian factions, for their part, have fired rockets at Israel during the offensive in retaliation. Many rockets, however, have been intercepted by Israel’s ‘Iron Dome’ anti-missile defense system. Israel has thus far confirmed that three of its citizens were killed by rocket fire. Israel has also confirmed that 64 soldiers had been killed in battles with Palestinian fighters in the Gaza Strip. Israel has since completely withdrawn its forces from the besieged Palestinian enclave prior to the ceasefire. The two sides are currently in Cairo for indirect talks aimed at reaching a long-term ceasefire agreement.

An isolated Gaza can't survive

Anadolu Agency, 07.08.2014



There has to be recognition that Gaza cannot survive being permanently closed off from the world, U.S. President Barack Obama said. Obama said the short term goal of a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas is to ensure that the rocket-launching into Israel would not resume and Gaza city would be reconstructed.

“For the long term, there has to be recognition that Gaza cannot sustain itself permanently closed off from the world, incapable of providing some opportunity for jobs and economic growth for the population who live there,” said Obama.

“We have to see the shift in opportunities for the people of Gaza”, he added. Reiterating that Israel has the right to defend itself against rocket attacks from Hamas, Obama also added that he had great sympathy for the Palestinians living in Gaza. Obama accused Hamas of acting irresponsibly during the conflict in which Israeli forces killed more than 1,800 people and around 10,000 wounded, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry. He also commended the Egyptian government and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas for their efforts to broker a ceasefire. Obama said that Abbas acted responsibly for he recognized Israel. On the other hand, he noted that the Palestinian Authority has also been weakened as a result of the ongoing conflict and the people may have lost confidence or hope of how to move forward.

Israeli strike kills Gaza child as conflict resumes

Agence France-Presse, 08.08.2014



Israeli warplanes struck targets across Gaza, killing a child on August 8 in retaliation to rocket fire after a 72-hour truce expired without an eventual breakthrough on a longer-term ceasefire.

Palestinian militants started the rocket salvos ahead of the truce expiry at 0500 GMT, and Gazans again fled homes in fear before Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned of a forceful response. The bloodshed ended a three-day lull that had followed a month of fighting between Israel and Hamas that killed at least 1,890 Palestinians and 67 people on the Israeli side, almost all soldiers.



A 10-year-old boy was the first person whom Palestinian emergency services reported killed in Friday's Israeli air strikes in the Sheikh Radwan in northern Gaza City with six others, including a woman, wounded. The interior ministry and witnesses said warplanes struck targets in Jabaliya in the north, Gaza City and in the centre of the Palestinian enclave. Witnesses also reported artillery shelling east and north of Gaza City. The Israeli army said it targeted "terror sites" and that Palestinian militants fired 33 rockets at the Jewish state, wounding a civilian and a soldier in the south. Netanyahu ordered the military to retaliate "forcefully to the Hamas breach of the ceasefire," an official said on condition of anonymity. But efforts to find a longer-term ceasefire in Cairo are ongoing.

The Palestinian delegation remains in Egypt, and although the Israeli delegates returned to Israel on Friday morning, the team has been shuttling back and forth repeatedly in recent days. Hamas has not claimed responsibility for any of Friday's rocket attacks. Claims instead came from rival armed factions. In Gaza, some families who had returned home during the truce trickled back to shelter at U.N.-run schools. At one school in Al-Tuffah in Gaza City, hundreds of refugees were seen living in classrooms, laundry hanging off balconies and a scrum of people queuing for U.N. food handouts. "Of course we're all scared, I'm scared, my children are scared, my wife is scared," Abdullah Abdullah, 33, told AFP at the school.

"I'm afraid because the schools were targeted, because young people died, women and children," he said, referring to U.N. schools that were hit before the truce. Israel launched an air campaign on July 8, followed by a ground offensive designed to destroy Hamas's arsenal of rockets and its network of tunnels stretching underground to Israel. "We will continue to strike Hamas, its infrastructure, its operatives and restore security for the State of Israel," said army spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Peter Lerner. Israel said two Palestinian rockets were fired towards Israel in the hours before the truce expired. In Cairo, Hamas said the Palestinians had refused to extend the ceasefire but confirmed negotiations were continuing Aug. 8.

According to U.N. figures, at least 1,354 Palestinian civilians were killed in the fighting, including 447 were children. Hamas has been determined to extract some significant concessions from Israel after such heavy losses. "All the Palestinian factions, including Hamas, have agreed not to renew the ceasefire because (Israel) is refusing to accommodate our demands, but negotiations continue in Cairo," Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhum told AFP. The official said members of the Palestinian delegation, which is led by a representative of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, would meet after noon to assess their stance. Israel said this week it was ready to "indefinitely" extend the ceasefire, but a senior Palestinian official accused Israel of procrastinating, warning it could lead to a resumption of fighting.

"The Israeli delegation is proposing extending the ceasefire while refusing a number of the Palestinian demands," he said, without elaborating. Hamas's armed wing, the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, had warned that fighting would resume if their demands were not met, first and foremost to open a sea port to the blockaded Palestinian enclave. Hamas and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) officials laid out a number of demands, starting with the lifting of Israel's eight-year blockade on Gaza. They also want the release of around 125 key prisoners held in Israeli jails. Despite the withdrawal of all its troops from Gaza by the time the truce began on Aug. 5, Israel has retained forces along the border who are ready to respond to any resumption of fighting.

Saudi Arabia funds Lebanon army fighting on border with Syria

ITAR-TASS, 06.08.2014



Saudi Arabia has allocated one billion dollars to back Lebanese army fighting with Islamic militants on the border with Syria. These allocations will be used to step up security on the border, said former Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri.

King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia “informed me about his benevolent decision to allocate one billion dollars to Lebanese army and security forces to build up their capabilities to ensure security of Lebanon,” said the high-ranking Lebanese politician believed to be the main representative of the Sunnite community in the country.

In his words, Lebanon has already received these funds. Lebanese army confronts militants from extremist Sunnite organization Islamic State which foiled the ceasefire in the Syria-bordering town of Ersal, 90 kilometers away from Lebanon’s capital, Beirut. Lebanese military forces have encircled the town. All other Syrian armed opposition groupings, including Jebhat al-Nusra, agreed to leave this town and free hostages. The situation in the town of Ersal started deteriorating and going out of control when Syrian troops had pushed militants to the border. Meanwhile, Lebanese authorities placed army block points along the border to bar armed gangs from infiltrating in the country.

Russian troop increase at Ukraine border raises concerns

CNN, 06.08.2014



A new buildup of Russian troops along the Ukraine border raised concerns that Moscow might consider another intervention. According to a NATO official, Russia has about 20,000 troops stationed “in an area along the entire border with eastern Ukraine.” The buildup nearly doubled the troop deployment by adding 8,000 more forces to 12,000.

It comes a week after the United States and the European Union increased economic sanctions on Russia for supporting pro-Russian separatists fighting Ukraine government forces in the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, along the border with Russia.



In addition, Russia's Defense Ministry is staging a week of military exercises involving air troops and anti-missile defense forces. The exercises are taking place in Russia's southern Astrakhan region, roughly 500 miles from the border with Ukraine. Similar military exercises in the region preceded Russia's annexation of Crimea in March, which escalated the Ukraine conflict following the ouster of pro-Moscow Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich a month earlier. Meanwhile, Ukraine government security officials said Monday they were preparing for a "massive assault" on Donetsk city, state media reported. Inside the city, a rebel stronghold for months, shelling has already pushed some residents underground into cellars and half-built basements. Russia's Foreign Ministry claimed in a statement Monday that the Ukrainian military was firing missiles and using multiple rocket systems in and around the city.

It accused Ukraine's government of wanting to continue the war and called for talks to find a political situation to the crisis. With escalated fighting and Ukrainian forces making gains, the Russian deployment at the border could portend an intervention under the banner of a peacekeeping operation. "On a human scale, the situation in the east -- particularly in Donetsk and Luhansk -- is disastrous. Today, with all certainty, there's a need to speak about a true war," Vitaly Churkin, Russia's ambassador to the United Nations, said Tuesday. The NATO official said Russian forces gathering at the Ukraine border included a "spectrum" of assets: infantry, mechanized divisions, armor, a lot of artillery, conventional and air defense, and special forces and logistics. "They are very capable Russian regular units and can move in a matter of hours and could significantly disrupt the situation" in eastern Ukraine, the official said.

The Ukrainian government and Western leaders accuse Russia of fomenting instability in its neighbor by arming and supporting the rebels there, which Russia denies. The downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 on July 17 exacerbated the situation. U.S. and Ukrainian officials allege that a Russian-made missile shot down the plane from rebel-held territory, killing all 298 people on board. Russia and the rebel fighters deny involvement. Earlier this year, Russia amassed about 40,000 troops on the Ukraine border and threatened to invade, NATO said in a fact sheet published last month. Putin then ordered most of the soldiers to return to their bases, leaving about 12,000 of July 11, NATO said.

On Tuesday, Ukraine's National Defense and Security Council said the Russian deployment now numbered as high as 45,000, and that there had been 26 clashes in the past 24 hours, including six attacks from Russian territory. Meanwhile, Russian combat aircraft crew will practice firing at air and ground targets in unfamiliar territory, the defense ministry said of the military exercises in the region. The maneuvers will involve 100 aircraft, including fighter jets, bombers and combat helicopters. In its fact sheet, NATO challenged Russian accusations that the alliance is escalating the crisis in Ukraine by bolstering its support for NATO members in Eastern Europe.

"Over the past months, Russia has also embarked on an unprecedented schedule of no-notice military exercises involving massive numbers of troops and heavy equipment," NATO said, adding: "Russia should explain what its military plans are before it starts accusing others of posing a threat." An official with knowledge of the MH17 investigation told CNN that a significant part of the crash site was between Ukrainian and separatist front lines, which constantly change. A 17-vehicle convoy of 110 experts accompanied by nine international monitors made it to the site on Tuesday, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe said via Twitter.



The experts, from the Netherlands, Australia and Malaysia, were hampered in their search efforts Monday by renewed fighting in the area. Monday's search focused in and around the village of Petropavlivka, in the western part of the huge debris field, but the team was unable to complete its mission after an initial delay. They did recover some personal belongings of those on the flight, including photo albums and passports, said Pieter-Jaap Aalbersberg, head of the Dutch recovery mission.

"Although some access to the crash site has been secured, we still don't have the unimpeded and complete access to the site -- all of it -- that is essential," Gary Quinlan, Australia's ambassador to the United Nations, said Tuesday. In addition, a team of about a dozen U.S. military specialists arrived Tuesday in Kiev to assist the recovery effort, Pentagon spokesman Rear Adm. John Kirby told reporters. "They are military; they will not leave Kiev," he said, adding that the team includes experts in communications, logistics and other areas that can aid the investigation. "Recovery operations is something, tragically and unfortunately, the U.S. military has to do and has to be good at," Kirby said. The ongoing fighting has killed close to 1,400 people -- civilians and combatants -- and more than 4,000 people have been wounded in eastern Ukraine since mid-April, according to U.N. officials.

The fighting has also forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes and seek shelter either elsewhere in Ukraine or across the border in Russia. The U.N. refugee agency, the UNHCR, said Tuesday that the Russian authorities estimate that around 730,000 Ukrainians have sought sanctuary in Russia this year under a visa-free travel program. This includes more than 168,000 who have reported to Russia's Federal Migration Service. UNHCR's European director Vincent Cochetel told journalists in Geneva that about 80% of the Ukrainians who have fled to Russia are staying in border areas, while others are with friends or family in other parts of the country. Many people in eastern Ukraine are Russian-speaking and have strong ties to Russia. At the same time, nearly 118,000 people are reported to be internally displaced, most of them from eastern Ukraine, based on information given to the UNHCR by Ukrainian authorities and local NGOs.

"In the past seven days more than 6,200 people have been forced from their homes," Cochetel said. Many have fled with limited possessions, some driven out by the destruction of homes and infrastructure, while others say they fear being caught in the crossfire or suffering persecution. John Ging, operations director of the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, called on all sides Tuesday to allow people to move freely and safely. "The humanitarian situation is deteriorating, and the worrying increase in violence in urban areas puts a greater number of people at risk. "Until violence is ended, we will continue to see an increase in human suffering, and in the number of people displaced. Immediate action is required to prevent this crisis from worsening," he said, according to prepared remarks.

Russia, Iran sign memorandum on closer trade and economic cooperation

ITAR-TASS, 05.08.2014



Russia and Iran have signed a memorandum of understanding expanding trade and economic cooperation in a number of areas, the Russian energy ministry said on Tuesday. The document was signed by Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak and Iran's Minister of Petroleum Bijan Namdar Zanganeh.

It provides for closer cooperation in a number of areas, including in the construction and overhaul of generating facilities, the development of electric grid infrastructure, in the oil and gas sector, and in the area of trade in machinery, equipment, consumer goods and farming products.

"The Russian-Iranian standing intergovernmental commission is expected to have its next regular meeting in Teheran on September 9 to 10 to look at concrete steps to implement trade expansion plans the two countries have. According to ITAR-TASS earlier reports, Russia's oil company Gazprom demonstrated its interest to the Iranian market as back as February 2014. Still earlier, the company showed interest in the Anaran project in Iran as an operator of the Azar and Shangule oil fields. Gazprom Neft and the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) signed a memorandum of understanding on the project in November 2009, but in 2011 NIOC broke the agreement.

In February 2013, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak spoke about the interest of Russian companies to a number of Iranian fields. He then said Russian companies wanted to join Iranian oil and gas projects. Iran, on its part, said it was ready to amend its legislation allowing Russian companies to hold stakes in Iranian projects. Shared participation allows foreign companies to add field reserves (in proportion to their share) to their balance sheets and add yields from these fields to their reports.

In September 2013, Zarubefneft was the first Russia oil company to be granted a permit to operate in Iran. In April, Zarubezhneft and NIOC signed a memorandum on the Khayyam project in Iran. The Russian company however refrained from providing details of its presence in Iran. Apart from Gazprom Neft, another Russian oil major - LUKoil - reportedly showed interest to Iranian project. LUKoil worked on the Anaran oil block from 2003 but was forced to withdraw from the project after economic sanctions were imposed on Iran. LUKoil was succeeded by Gaprom Neft, the contract with which was terminated in 2011.

Putin orders government to consider retaliation to western sanctions

ITAR-TASS, 05.08.2014



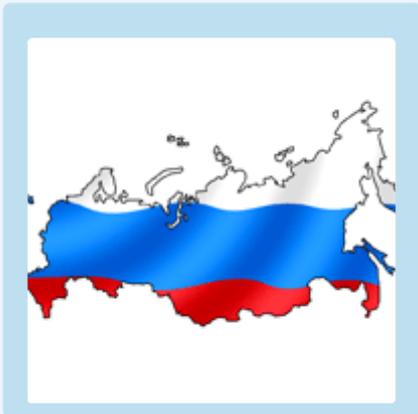
Russian President Vladimir Putin instructed the government to consider measures in retaliation to western sanctions against Russia. ‘I have formulated this instruction today,’ Putin said.

“Political instruments of pressure on the economy are unacceptable and contradict all norms and rules. In this connection, the Russian government has already proposed a number of measures in retaliation to the so-called sanctions by some countries. I believe we could quite think about it in the current conditions to secure the interests of domestic commodity producers”, Putin said.

The Russian president also said that Russia’s response to western sanctions should be “accurate.” “Naturally, this has to be done very accurately so as to support domestic producers and not harm consumers,” Putin said. The Russian president said that producers in various countries should operate in an equal competitive environment as this principle met the interests of national security and WTO rules.

Russia publishes list of banned western foods in sanctions response

The Guardian, 07.08.2014



Russia has banned fruit, vegetables, meat, fish, milk and dairy imports from the United States, the European Union, Australia, Canada and Norway, Russia's prime minister told a government meeting on Thursday. Dmitry Medvedev said the ban was effective immediately and would last for one year.

Russian officials were on Wednesday asked to come up with a list of western agricultural products and raw materials to be banned. The agriculture minister, Nikolai Fyodorov, said on Thursday that greater quantities of Brazilian meat and New Zealand cheese would be import to offset the newly prohibited items.

He added Moscow was in talks with Belarus and Kazakhstan to prevent the banned western foodstuffs being exported to Russia from the two countries. The Kremlin's move comes in response to the grounding of the budget airline subsidiary of Aeroflot as a result of EU sanctions over Moscow's support for rebels in Ukraine. Medvedev also said officials were considering a ban on European airlines flying to Asia over Siberia. Russia is Europe's second-largest market for food and drink and has been an important consumer of Polish pig meat and Dutch fruit and vegetables. Exports of food and raw materials to Russia were worth €12.2bn (£9.7bn) in 2013, following several years of double-digit growth. The UK is less likely to lose out; in 2013 its biggest food and drink export was £17m of frozen fish, followed by £5.7m of cheese and £5.3m of coffee. Food has already been caught up in political tensions between Russia and the west.

In recent days Russian food safety authorities have banned the import of Polish fruit and vegetables, while McDonald's cheeseburgers and milkshakes are being investigated by a regional branch of consumer protection agency Rospotrebnadzor. EU pork was banned at the start of the year as the Ukraine crisis escalated, cutting off 25% of all European pig meat exports in a move that the European Commission said exposed European farmers to significant losses. EU countries and the US last week stepped up punitive action against Russia in response to Moscow's support for eastern separatists in Ukraine, which has been unwavering despite the downing of Malaysian airliner MH17. Russia's state-owned banks have been cut off from Europe's capital markets, while Russian defence and energy firms will no longer be able to import hi-tech western equipment that could have been used for military purposes, fracking or Arctic oil exploration.

Senior UK minister resigns over Britain's Gaza stance

Anadolu Agency, 05.08.2014



Britain's first female Muslim cabinet minister resigned from the government over its policies on the Gaza Strip. Baroness Sayeeda Warsi announced: "With deep regret I have this morning written to the Prime Minister and tendered my resignation. I can no longer support the government policy on #Gaza."

She followed the tweet with a letter, describing Britain's policy as "morally indefensible." "[It] is not in Britain's national interest and will have a long term effect on our reputation internationally and domestically," she wrote, adding that the decision "has not been easy."

She claimed "great unease" existed in Britain's Foreign Office over "the way recent decisions are being made." Prime Minister David Cameron has been accused by the leader of the opposition of a failure of leadership on Israel's Gaza onslaught, while "remaining silent about the killing of innocent Palestinian civilians caused by Israel's military action." Cameron, meanwhile, has commended United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's for speaking out against an Israeli attack near a United Nations-run school in the Strip, but would not be drawn on whether he agreed if it had been "a moral outrage and a criminal act". Warsi wrote Tuesday "I must be able to live with myself for the decisions I took or the decisions I supported. By staying in government at this time I do not feel that I can be sure of that."

Warsi - who grew up the daughter of Pakistani immigrants in Dewsbury in northern England and worked as a solicitor before entering politics - was the Senior Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and also the minister for Faith and Communities. She was appointed to both posts in September 2012, had previously served as the chairwoman of the Conservative Party and has been a Conservative member of the House of Lords since 2007. She became the first Muslim female minister in the cabinet when Cameron took office in 2010. When asked for a response Tuesday, the Prime Minister's Office told the Anadolu Agency that it was still looking into the decision and could not yet confirm it.

US general killed and 15 injured in attack on Afghanistan military academy

The Guardian, 06.08.2014



An Afghan soldier opened fire at a British-run military academy outside Kabul on Tuesday August 5. As a result he killed a US major general and he caused the injury of at least fifteen other troops in the region including a German brigadier general.

The US two-star general was identified by a US official to the Associated Press as Maj Gen Harold Greene, who becomes the highest-ranking American officer killed in nearly 13 years of war in Afghanistan. The Pentagon's press secretary said he believed the officer was the highest ranking US military casualty since 9/11.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with Maj Gen Harold J Greene's family, and the families of our soldiers who were injured today in the tragic events that took place in Afghanistan. These soldiers were professionals, committed to the mission. It is their service and sacrifice that define us as an Army," said General Ray Odierno, the chief of staff of the US army. A spokesman for Hamas, the Islamist group dominant in Gaza, said all Palestinian factions would abide by the truce. "We urge all parties to act with restraint until this humanitarian ceasefire begins, and to fully abide by their commitments during the ceasefire," Kerry and Ban said. Early reports of the incident were fragmentary. A terse initial statement from Nato's command in Afghanistan, known as the International Security Assistance Force or Isaf, said that an "incident" at the Qargha academy, also known the Marshal Fahim National Defense University, killed an Isaf service member.

Afghan defence ministry spokesperson Zahir Azami said that a soldier wearing an Afghan national army uniform opened fire on a group of international and Afghan soldiers, killing one and wounding an unspecified number of others. A US official told the Associated Press that "about a dozen" American troops were wounded. The assailant was killed, although it is not clear whether a US or Afghan soldier killed him. The New York Times first identified the rank of the dead officer. The Pentagon press secretary, Rear Adm John Kirby, would only confirm that a "general officer" had been killed. "It's a terrible day, a terrible tragedy," Kirby said. Germany's military said 15 Nato soldiers were wounded, in an assault launched "probably by internal attackers".

Kirby said the daylight incident occurred during a "routine site visit" by US officers. The wounded included a German brigadier general, who the German military said was receiving medical treatment and was "not in a life-threatening condition." The Ministry of Defence in London said it was investigating. "We are aware of reports of an incident at Qargha. The incident is under investigation and it would be inappropriate to comment further at this time," a spokesman said. General Mohammed Afzal Aman, the chief of staff for operations at the Afghan defence ministry, said it was also investigating the reports. "We are investigating, but it appears that an Afghan army officer opened fire.



Three of our officers have been injured, some [Nato] troops have also suffered casualties.” The killing, known in Pentagon and Isaf parlance as a “green on blue” – for a sponsored force turning on its – represents a return to a vexing and wrenching problem faced by international forces in recent years. By 2012, assaults from Afghan forces had become one of the greatest dangers to US and allied troops in Afghanistan, rivalling homemade bombs, and military leaders said they were unsure about what was driving the attacks. The Long War Journal website chronicled 44 green-on-blue attacks that year.

Better screening and more thorough monitoring of Afghan recruits, coupled with senior-level attention, has typically been cited as a cause for a sharp drop in 2013 and 2014, which have seen 15 such attacks. The bloody day in Kabul is the first such attack since February, and it occurs amid persistent uncertainty surrounding an Afghan presidential election that will determine the future of the US and allied troop presence after this year. “The insider threat is a pernicious threat,” Kirby said, but he dismissed concerns it would undermine US-Afghan cooperation. “The Afghan national security forces continue to perform at a very strong level of competence and competence and warfare capability,” Kirby said. The officers’ training academy, dubbed “Sandhurst in the sand”, took its first cadets last October, and will be the only remaining British military presence in the country after operations end this year.

General and flag officers rarely die in combat zones, often a function of their placement in planning areas outside of the fiercest fighting. Even in the unconventional recent counterinsurgency conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, where battle fronts and rear areas can arise and change places with each embedded bomb, that pattern has held. In 2010, a suicide bomber assaulted a Kabul minibus convoy, killing four US and Canadian colonels and lieutenant colonels. A 2008 mortar attack on the secured Green Zone in Iraq made the US army’s Stephen Scott, who died while exercising on a treadmill, the ninth US colonel killed in that conflict.



Announcements & Reports

► *Business risks facing mining and metals 2014–2015*

Source : Ernst & Young

Weblink : [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-Business-risks-facing-mining-and-metals-2014–2015/\\$FILE/EY-Business-risks-facing-mining-and-metals-2014–2015.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-Business-risks-facing-mining-and-metals-2014–2015/$FILE/EY-Business-risks-facing-mining-and-metals-2014–2015.pdf)

► *Dynamics, bridging the gap*

Source : Ernst & Young

Weblink : [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-dynamics-bridging-the-gap-june-2014/\\$FILE/EY-dynamics-bridging-the-gap-june-2014.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-dynamics-bridging-the-gap-june-2014/$FILE/EY-dynamics-bridging-the-gap-june-2014.pdf)

► *Consumer products sector: Global tax rate benchmarking report*

Source : PwC

Weblink : http://www.pwc.com.tr/tr_TR/tr/tax/yayinlar/pdf/vergi-oranlarina-iliskin-kuresel-emsal-calismasi.pdf

► *Real estate 2020 Building the future*

Source : PwC

Weblink : <http://www.pwc.com.tr/tr/publications/industrial/real-estate/pdf/gayrimenkul-2020-gelecegi-insa-etmek.pdf>

► *Politicization of Salafism in Egypt*

Source : SETA

Weblink : http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20140626183955_politicization-of-salafism-in-egypt.pdf

► *The 2014 elections, ISIS operations and the future of Iraq*

Source : ORSAM

Weblink : http://www.orsam.org.tr/en/enUploads/Article/Files/2014715_190raping.pdf



Upcoming Events

▶ *RAND Public Policy Analysis Workshop*

Date : 05 – 06 August 2014
Place : Washington - USA
Website : <http://www.rand.org/events/2014/08/06.html>

▶ *Libya: what next?*

Date : 13 August 2014
Place : London – United Kingdom
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/libya-what-next>

▶ *Finance and Economics Conference 2014*

Date : 13 – 15 August 2014
Place : Munich, Bavaria, Germany
Website : <http://www.lcbr-fec.org/>

▶ *International Conference on Business Strategy and Social Sciences*

Date : 16 – 17 August 2014
Place : Kuala Lumpur - Malaysia
Website : <http://www.pakrdw.com/?ic=details&id=3>

▶ *Macroeconomic Effects of China's RMB Internationalization and Capital Account Liberalization*

Date : 28 August 2014
Place : Beijing - China
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/macroeconomic-effects-china%E2%80%99s-rmb-internationalization-and-capital-account-liberalization>

▶ *Japan's New Role in a Changing Asia*

Date : 31 August 2014
Place : Nagoya - Japan
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/japan%E2%80%99s-new-role-changing-asia>

▶ *Launch of the Memos to the new EU leadership*

Date : 04 September 2014
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/view/450/>



► *Annual Meeting - Europe: the way ahead | Read more at Bruegel*

Date : 05 September 2014
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/451-annual-meeting-europe-the-way-ahead/>

► *Business Opportunity and Political Risk in the Gulf and Middle East*

Date : 07 - 08 September 2014
Place : Manama - Bahrain
Website : <https://www.iiss.org/en/events/geo-economics%20seminars/geo-economics%20seminars/archive/2014-fea4/business-opportunity-8b49>

► *Fifth Annual Conference in Political Economy, “The Crisis: Scholarship, Policies, Conflicts and Alternatives”*

Date : 16 - 18 September 2014
Place : Naples – Italy
Website : http://iippe.org/wp/?page_id=1943

► *International Conference on Economics, Energy, Environment and Agricultural Sciences*

Date : 21 September 2014
Place : Kuala Lumpur - Malaysia
Website : <http://www.pakrdw.com/>

► *Europe’s strategic choices: building prosperity and security*

Date : 17 – 19 October 2014
Place : Berlin - Germany
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/Berlin2014>

► *The New Shape of Banking: Regulation, Reform and Resilience*

Date : 20 October 2014
Place : Berlin - Germany
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/Banking>

► *7th International Energy Congress Expo*

Date : 24 - 25 November 2014
Place : Ankara - Turkey
Website : <http://www.energy-congress.com>