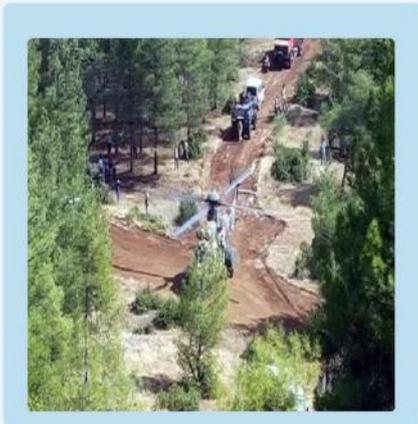


Turkey shoots down drone near Syria, US suspects Russian origin

Reuters, 16.10.2015



Turkish warplanes shot down an unidentified drone in Turkish air space near Syria and U.S. official said Washington believed it was of Russian origin. The Russian defence ministry said all of its planes in Syria had safely returned to base and that all its drones were operating “as planned”.

The downing of the drone highlights the risks to Turkey as Syrian, Russian and U.S. coalition aircraft fly combat missions so close to its borders. Turkish military said its jets had shot down the aircraft after it continued on its trajectory despite three warnings, in line with its rules of engagement. NTV said it had come 3 km into Turkish air space.

“It’s a drone. We are trying to identify its nationality,” a senior Turkish government official told Reuters. A U.S. official told Reuters that Washington suspected it was a Russian drone, but said the information was still preliminary and declined to give any more details. Russian jets violated Turkish air space on two occasions earlier this month and Turkey has warned it will respond if the incursions are repeated.

Russia’s air strikes in Syria mean that Russian and NATO planes are now flying combat missions in the same air space for the first time since World War Two, heightening concern that the Cold War enemies could fire on each other. The Russian air force officially informed the Turkish military about the violations by Russian jets earlier this month, and about steps it would take to prevent a repetition. Turkey has also reported unidentified aircraft and Syria-based missile air defence systems harassing its warplanes several times in recent months.

Ankara summons Russian, US envoys

Hurriyet Daily News, 14.10.2015



Turkey has summoned ambassadors from both Russia and the United States regarding ties with Kurdish forces in Syria, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has said, reacting to any probable arms support to groups which have ties with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

“As the ally countries would not excuse arms support to al-Qaeda-affiliated groups, Turkey cannot excuse any armed support to groups linked to the PKK; it certainly cannot allow any tolerance in this matter,” he said during an Istanbul joint press conference with his visiting Bulgarian counterpart, Boyko Borisov.

The prime minister said no one could guarantee that the arms sent to the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Syria would not be taken over by the PKK and used against Turkey. Davutoğlu's reactions came as the U.S. Department of Defense confirmed that a U.S. cargo plane had airdropped logistic material to the PYD in line with Washington's plans to reinforce the Syrian Kurds in their fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Syria.

Davutoğlu lashed out at both the United States and Russia for supplying weapons and support to the PYD in its bid to fight extremist jihadists. While talking to Ankara newspaper bureau chiefs, Davutoğlu called the United States' ambassador to Turkey, John Bass, to the Foreign Ministry to convey Ankara's strong reaction over the airdropping of ammunition.

Obama, Erdoğan vow to step up ISIL fight

AFP, 16.10.2015



US President Barack Obama and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan vowed to step up the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and strengthen Syria's moderate opposition.

Speaking by telephone in the wake of the Oct. 10 double bomb attack in Ankara that killed 99 people, and weeks before Obama travels to Turkey for a G20 summit, they discussed sometimes difficult cooperation on countering ISIL in Syria. Both countries have vowed to fight the extremists, but Turkish air strikes have largely focused on targeting militants of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Obama and Erdoğan stressed the “urgent need for an end to PKK attacks in Turkey,” the White House said, while Obama “offered condolences as well as US solidarity in the face of the security threats Turkey faces.” “The two leaders reaffirmed their shared goal of stepping up military pressure on ISIL and strengthening moderate opposition elements in Syria to create conditions for a negotiated solution to the conflict, including a political transition.” Those efforts in Syria have been complicated by Russia and Iran’s support for President Bashar al-Assad and Moscow’s aerial bombardments of his foes, many of whom are not linked to ISIL.

EU’s Tusk warns Turkey to cut refugee flow if it wants favours

Reuters, 14.10.2015



European Council President Tusk warned Turkey it will only win concessions from the EU, such as easier travel visas, if it successfully reduces the flow of refugees reaching Europe.

In a letter to EU leaders setting the agenda for a summit he will chair in Brussels, Tusk noted the start this month of negotiations on the migrant crisis with Turkey, which EU officials say wants more visa waivers, more EU funding and progress on its longstanding application to join the bloc. “An agreement with Turkey makes sense if it effectively reduces the inflow of refugees,” Tusk wrote on the eve of a visit by senior European Commission officials to Ankara.

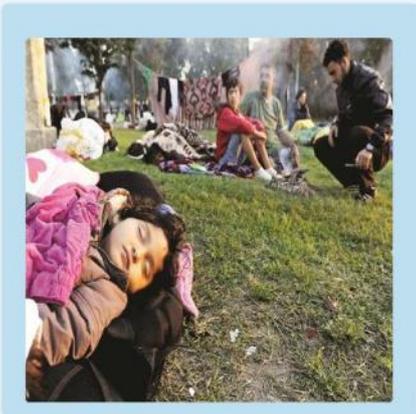
“Concessions will only be justified when this goal is achieved.” Tusk, a conservative former prime minister of Poland, is trying to steer the divided 28-nation Council toward consensus on proposals put forward by the executive Commission. He visited Turkey last month and hosted Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan on a visit to Brussels last week during which the Commission set out various ways in which Ankara could help control migration.

Tusk warned of a “long march” toward greater cooperation with countries in the Middle East that are hosting millions of Syrian refugees and highlighted how Russia’s new military action in Syria, at odds with Turkish calls for EU support to establish “safe zones” in the north, added to complexities in the region. “We must be ready for spring and the threat of bigger waves flowing to Europe,” he said, noting warnings from regional leaders that “millions” more could start heading for Europe.

“As exaggerated as this opinion may sound, it is our obligation to be prepared for all scenarios,” Tusk said. He said leaders should consider changes to the Dublin system, which makes frontier states responsible for asylum, and strengthen EU borders, possibly by creating a Union border guard force. Tusk, despite the crisis aims to end the summit, which begins at 4 p.m. (1400 GMT), without resuming for a second session, officials said. The meeting will also “take stock of the next steps” in negotiations with Britain on changes it wants before holding a referendum on membership by the end of 2017.

European Council, parliament at odds over Turkey

AFP, 08.10.2015



European Council President Tusk's warning to Turkey that it will only win concessions from the EU, such as travel visas, if it successfully reduces the flow of refugees reaching Europe has drawn reaction from European Parliament.

"Who do we think we are? If we are dealing with over 160,000 refugees for settlement, who are we to point fingers at Turkey that hosts 2 million refugees?" the Parliament's rapporteur for Turkey, Kati Piri, told. "I was shocked at Tusk's remarks. Threatening doesn't help. We need Turkey. We need to find a common way," she said, acknowledging that EU long time did not pay attention to the burden that Turkey was paying.

"I know that it is not comfortable for Europe to be on the demanding side when it comes to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. We need something from Turkey. Of course, Erdoğan, as he has always done, tries to use it in his own way by linking it to safe zones in Syria which I think will cause a bigger influx of refugees because nobody will want to go to these safe zones. Erdoğan is also trying to link it to ease enough conditions for accession," she said, but refused to link those issues to the refugee crisis as well.

"We cannot link enlargement to migration when we are discussing. That's very dangerous," Piri said, criticizing the European Commission's strategy on negotiations for a migration action plan. "But the European Commission is trying to link it. It says if Turkey is not a safe country, then it cannot be candidate. It's a dangerous [thing to] think, linking 1 billion euros and saying we are giving it to Turkey. It's not your money. This is money for accession. This is not a frank way to get into a dialogue with partners," she said. The commission is seeking to associate a migration action plan for the implementation of visa liberalization for Turkey, which would be accelerated if Ankara meets the EU's demands to block the flow of Syrian refugees into Europe.

EU officials deny a link between the postponement of its annual progress report on Turkey, which was planned for Oct. 14 but delayed until an unspecified future date, and the migration action plan that the commission is discussing with Turkey on curbing the flow of refugees to Europe. Some in Brussels have suggested the report was postponed as part of a softening of the tone of criticism against Ankara at a time when the EU expects Turkey to assist with the refugee crisis. The decision to postpone the progress report for the first time ever came as Erdoğan was visiting Brussels after almost two years, suggesting that the Turkish president did not want a critical report on Turkey ahead of the Nov. 1 elections. Moreover, British Prime Minister David Cameron has asked EU member states to postpone the report until after the Nov. 1 polls. But a decision has yet to be taken for the date of the release, according to commission officials.

The progress report was expected to broadly highlight problems in freedom of expression, the impartiality of the judiciary and the pressure on the media. Tonino Picula, a member of the center-left Social Democratic Party of Croatia (SDP) and a member of the foreign affairs committee, hinted at a mutual understanding between Turkey and the European Commission. Turkey is being tested by the EU on dealing with the refugee crisis, while Ankara is testing the EU as Erdoğan “does not want criticism” from the union, he said.

The freedom of press “has always been under pressure in Turkey, But now it’s at the lowest level,” Piri told the Daily News. “If one rates from one to five, Turkey now gets one. It cannot get much worse than it actually is right now,” she said. Elaborating on the Turkish government’s recent mounting pressure on the media, Piri said the EP was highly critical on Turkey. “A very slight majority in the parliament, in principle, are in favor of Turkish accession [to the EU]. The ones that are critical of Turkey are the ones that are genuinely worried about what’s happening in Turkey. I count myself in that group,” Piri said.

“If we stop negotiations with Turkey, we cannot open it and we come to a very dangerous point in relations with Turkey looking at the deteriorating situation,” she said. In issues such as refugee crises, the EU needs to talk to Turkey, she said. “There is no other way. Turkey plays a key part in the solution to at least managing the flows.” Piri also criticized Erdoğan for polarizing Turkey at a crucial time for the country.

“One of the problems is that Turkey is so polarized that it would need a president at this moment ... who will play the role of bringing groups together. I see a president who is very good in dividing groups. That’s a big problem,” she said, adding that Turkey was facing a critical juncture in its history.

Turkish FM: Stability in Syria under Assad ‘a dream’

Hurriyet Daily News, 16.10.2015



Turkish FM Feridun Sinirlioğlu has discredited any argument suggesting war-torn Syria could regain stability under Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, saying anyone defending such an argument was “in a dream,” while also asserting that Russia has made “a big mistake” in regards to its Syria policy.

“If there are those who believe that Bashar al-Assad could again rule over Syria, that he could rebuild his authority and that this way, Syria could regain stability again, then they are in a dream,” Sinirlioğlu said, at a press conference with his Saudi Arabian counterpart, Adel al-Jubeir, following their meeting.



“We are of the opinion that the only way to do this [provide stability] in Syria can be carried out through a transition period which would provide a political transformation,” Sinirlioğlu said, citing the principles of the Geneva I agreement signed at a peace conference in 2012, laying the groundwork for a transitional government, as an appropriate framework. The ongoing “chaos” in both Iraq and Syria was not in favor of Turkey, which has the ultimate goal of rebuilding a lasting stability between these two countries, particularly Syria, Sinirlioğlu added. Listing the fatal consequences of “the war declared by al-Assad against his own people in the last four years,” the career diplomat reiterated: “Assuming that such a person, who is currently able to control only 14 percent of the country, can exist in Syria’s future is nothing but a dream.”

He noted Turkey has been openly telling these views to all countries which have “intervened in the situation in Syria.” Sinirlioğlu’s comments on the role that Turkey’s Black Sea neighbor Russia has been playing in Syria were clear-cut. “Russia has made a big mistake. What it has been doing will not bring any good other than delaying Syria’s transition period and its possibility of getting out of this turmoil. We will continue our warnings on this issue,” he said.

Meanwhile, the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) announced on the very same day that a delegation from the Russian air force informed the Turkish military about air space violations that took place on Oct. 3 and 4 at a meeting in Ankara. The delegation, chaired by Russian Air Force Major General Sergey Dronov, also informed the Turkish army about measures taken to prevent a repetition of such violations, the statement said. In Moscow, earlier, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Moscow was ready for close cooperation with Turkey on fighting terrorism, in comments after a deadly blast that killed at least 99 people in Ankara last weekend.

“We are ready for very close cooperation and very close engagement with the Turkish authorities in the fight against the terrorist threat,” Lavrov said at a Russian-Turkish partnership conference in Moscow. Elsewhere, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov was quoted as saying by RIA news agency that Russia was expecting consultations to take place in the next few days with Turkish officials over Syria. Bogdanov said he hoped Turkey would support Russia’s efforts in Syria, the agency reported.

Warning PYD, Ankara says any violation against Turkey will be reciprocated

Hurriyet Daily News, 15.10.2015



In strongly-worded remarks, Turkey's Foreign Minister Feridun Sinirlioğlu has recommended Syria's Democratic Union Party (PYD) watch their step, making clear that any move aimed at Turkey would not remain unreciprocated.

"I call on [PYD leader] Salih Muslim to [use] good sense and to pull himself together. It would not be good for him if he doubts Turkey's will and determination. Turkey has been fighting against terror and nobody should attempt to test its determination in this fight against terror," Foreign Minister Feridun Sinirlioğlu said in response to reported remarks by Muslim.

Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu lashed out at both the United States and Russia for supplying weapons and support to the People's Protection Units (YPG), the military wing of PYD, in its bid to fight extremist jihadists, raising concerns that the arms could be used against Turkey by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an affiliate of the PYD. "At the moment, nobody can assure us that these weapons delivered to the PYD will not go to the PKK. If we find out that these weapons are taken into northern Iraq and used there, we will destroy them wherever they are," Davutoğlu said.

In remarks reported by Arbil-based BasNews agency, Muslim said that Syrian Kurds won't attack Turkey but they will strongly meet any Turkish assaults. "The message that we have given to the PYD is clear. If they resort to any move directed at Turkey, the required penalty will be given without hesitation," Sinirlioğlu said a joint press conference with Saudi Arabia's Al-Jubeir following their meeting.

In Washington, following Davutoğlu's warning, U.S. State Department Spokesperson John Kirby said the United States will continue its support for groups that are "proving effective against ISIL [the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant] in Syria." His remarks were delivered in response to a question regarding U.S. aid to the PYD, which underlined a contradiction between statements by State Department Deputy Spokesperson Mark Toner and Muslim on recipients of U.S. ammunition airdrops. While Toner argued that the ammunition was provided to Syrian Arabs, Muslim told the Turkish press that the PYD and its allies have been receiving U.S. airdrops. Sinirlioğlu, meanwhile, didn't touch upon any statements from Washington.

Turkey warns US, Russia over arms supply to Syrian Kurds

Reuters, 09.10.2015



Turkey's prime minister has lashed out at both the United States and Russia for supplying weapons and support to the Democratic Union Party (PYD) of Syria in its bid to fight extremist jihadists, raising concerns that the arms could be used against Turkey by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an affiliate of the PYD.

Turkey summoned the United States' ambassador to Turkey, John Bass, to the Foreign Ministry to convey Ankara's strong reaction over the airdropping of ammunition to the Democratic Union Party PYD. A similar message was scheduled to be conveyed to Russia.

"We have expressed this to the U.S. and Russia in the clearest way. This is an issue of national security for us. Everybody perfectly knows how we take action when it's about our national security, just like we did on the night of July 23, when we attacked the PKK and Daesh," Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu told Ankara bureau chiefs of newspapers. Davutoğlu used the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) as he recalled Turkey's launch of a comprehensive military operation against ISIL and the PKK.

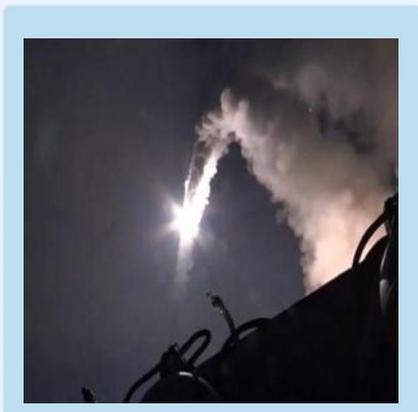
Davutoğlu's reaction came as the U.S. Department of Defense confirmed that a U.S. cargo plane airdropped some logistical material to the PYD in line with Washington's plans to reinforce the Syrian Kurds in their fight against ISIL in Syria. "The aircraft delivery includes small arms ammunition to resupply the local forces" to enable them to continue operations against ISIL, Pentagon spokeswoman Elissa Smith told Anadolu Agency. Smith said the "successful" airdrop was conducted by a "U.S. Air Force C-17 cargo aircraft flying from the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility" and added that all aircraft exited the drop area safely. Like the U.S., Russia is also in close contact with the PYD, but there are no confirmed reports about arms supplies from Moscow.

"I have instructed the foreign minister on this. Necessary diplomatic initiatives are being taken and our message is that 'We don't and never will approve of such a thing,'" he said. Recalling that ISIL was now using the sophisticated weapons Washington had supplied to the Iraqi army a year ago, Davutoğlu indirectly addressed the U.S., saying: "When you provide weapons to a group, you should also be able to foresee whose hands these weapons could go to later. At the moment, nobody can assure us that these weapons delivered to the PYD will not go to the PKK. If we find out that these weapons are taken into the northern Iraq and used there, we will destroy them wherever they are. Nobody should expect understanding on this issue. These weapons will harm our soldiers, police and civilian citizens," Davutoğlu said.

Turkish prime minister underlined that Turkey will take all necessary measures in the event of any infiltration from Syria into Turkey or the transportation of any ammunition “just like the Turkish army is doing in northern Iraq.” “I want to announce this with clarity.” Recalling that the situation in the region and in Turkey had changed as the PKK resumed its violent acts against the Turkish army, Davutoğlu said: “Five or six months ago when there were no PKK attacks against Turkey, allied countries’ intention to arm the PYD could be seen in a certain frame. It was not right but had a sort of a meaning. The crisis in Syria is a Syrian crisis until an attack targets Turkey. [If] the PYD or the al-Assad regime were to commit an act against Turkey, necessary actions would be taken. We have made clear that we will have no tolerance.”

Turkey to launch new telecommunications satellite

Hurriyet Daily News, 15.10.2015



Turkey will launch its TURKSAT 4B communications satellite from the Baikonur Space Center in Kazakhstan, according to a statement by the Transportation, Maritime Affairs and Communications Ministry. The TURKSAT 4B Communication Satellite is Turkey’s sixth to be put into orbit and will work in tandem with a similar one named Turksat 4A, which was launched on Feb. 25, 2015.

The Turksat 4B telecommunication satellite was jointly produced with Turkish and Japanese engineers at Mitsubishi Electric Corp. It is designed for mission durations of 15 years and beyond, according to the Communications Ministry.

“TURKSAT 4B will operate on the Eastern orbit of 50.0°. It will cover South Western Asia, including Turkey, Africa, Europe, Middle East and Central Asia in its coverage area,” said Communications Minister Feridun Bilgin. Bilgin said that with TURKSAT 4B Internet services provider fees will be reduced and Turkey residents will be able to access the Internet faster. The Baikonur center is managed by the private company International Launch Services.

UN Security Council to meet on Israeli-Palestinian violence

Reuters, 16.10.2015



The United Nations Security Council will hold a special meeting to discuss the recent spate of violence between Israel and the Palestinians in which 39 people have been killed over the past two weeks.

The meeting, which diplomats said was called at the request of council member Jordan, will include a briefing from the U.N. secretariat on the situation on the ground and will take place at 11 a.m. EDT, the UN said. Diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity, said no resolution was planned at the moment but there might be an attempt to get the council to issue a statement aimed at urging two sides to curb violence.

“All options are on the table,” a diplomat told Reuters. Thirty-two Palestinians and seven Israelis have been killed during two weeks of bloodshed. The Palestinian dead include 10 knife-wielding assailants, police said, as well as children and protesters shot in violent demonstrations. The unrest, the most serious in years, has been triggered in part by Palestinians’ anger over what they see as increased Jewish encroachment on Jerusalem’s al-Aqsa mosque compound, which is also revered by Jews as the location of two destroyed biblical Jewish temples.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon “would find that the apparent excessive use of force by Israeli security forces is also troubling and demands serious review, as it only serves to exacerbate the situation, leading to a vicious cycle of needless bloodshed.” The United States, Israel’s long-time ally and protector on the 15-nation Security Council, has traditionally balked at proposed council statements of condemnation of Israeli actions against Palestinians, even if they criticize both sides.

However, State Department spokesman John Kirby said this week that, while Israel has a right to protect itself, “we’ve certainly seen some reports of what many would consider excessive use of force.” Council statements must be approved unanimously.

Syria regime in new offensive as Putin blasts US

AFP, 16.10.2015



Russia said its warplanes had eased back on air strikes in Syria as regime forces press a widening ground offensive, while President Vladimir Putin criticised Washington for not cooperating over the conflict. As Moscow and Washington neared agreement on measures to avoid confrontation over Syria, Russia announced that a hotline had been set up with Israel to ensure there would be no clashes between their air forces.

Russia launched 32 attacks on “terrorist” targets over the past 24 hours, the defence ministry said on Oct. 15 afternoon, compared with some 86 the previous day.

“The intensity of the sorties... has slightly decreased in the past day,” because “the front line with the terrorist groups of ISIL (Islamic State group) is changing as a result of active offensives by the Syrian armed forces,” a statement said. The latest strikes targeted Damascus, Idlib, Hama, Deir Ezzor, and Aleppo provinces. “The militants are retreating, trying to set up new positions and change the logistic system providing them with ammunition, weaponry and materials,” the ministry said.

Syrian television, citing a military source, said the army had begun a operation in the north and northwest of Homs province “with the goal of restoring security and stability to the villages and towns in the area”. It said its forces had taken control of one village north of the city. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitor, reported at least 10 people, six of them rebels, had been killed in a barrage of Russian air strikes in the area. The Homs offensive is the latest joint operation since Moscow began its aerial campaign.

The fighting appears intended to secure the main highway that leads from Homs to neighbouring Hama’s provincial capital Hama city. The cities are almost totally controlled by the government, but moderates, Islamists and Al-Qaeda affiliate Al-Nusra Front hold territory in between. State television said loyalists had seized two small villages in northern Hama, extending their push towards Idlib, which is controlled by a rebel alliance known as the Army of Conquest.

The advances have come with the support of a Russian air campaign Moscow says is targeting ISIL and others it describes as “terrorists”. But rebels and their international backers say the intervention is intended to bolster President Bashar al-Assad and has targeted moderate and Islamist opposition forces rather than jihadists. French President Francois Hollande said Russian intervention would not save Bashar after an EU summit called for a political transition to a new leader. “Russia’s intervention from this point of view can bolster the regime but will not save Bashar,” Hollande told a press conference in Brussels.

Russia's entry into the conflict has raised fears of a potential confrontation with the US-led coalition that began air strikes against ISIL in Syria and Iraq more than a year ago. Washington this week rebuffed Moscow's suggestion of broader talks on Syria, prompting criticism from Putin. "I believe this is an unconstructive position," he said during a visit to Kazakhstan. "It looks like they have nothing to talk about."

However, the Russian defence ministry said an "information-sharing" mechanism had been established through a hotline between the Russian command centre in Syria and a command post of the Israeli air force. A US official said the Pentagon was poised to boost its supply runs to rebels who can prove they are fighting ISIL jihadists in northern Syria. "As they demonstrate results, the packages will get heavier and US strikes will occur in places that are advantageous to their operations," the official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP.

Meanwhile, a senior official in key regional Syrian ally Iran said Tehran would consider sending fighters to aid Damascus if they were requested. "If Syria makes a request, we will study the request and make a decision," said Alaedin Boroujerdi, chairman of parliament's national security and foreign policy committee. Turkey and Saudi Arabia, two of Assad's fiercest opponents, warned Russia of the consequences of its foray into the conflict. "Russia is making a big mistake," Turkish Foreign Minister Feridun Sinirlioğlu told reporters after talks in Ankara with Saudi counterpart Adel al-Jubeir.

"What it does will bring no meaning or benefit, other than delaying the transition process to help Syria out of the chaos," he added. Turkey said earlier this month that Russian aircraft operating in Syria twice violated the air space of the key NATO member. More than 245,000 people have been killed in Syria since March 2011, and more than four million have fled their country.

US to continue its support for the PYD

Dogan News Agency, 15.10.2015



The United States will continue its support for groups that are "proving effective against ISIL in Syria," State Department Spokesperson John Kirby has said in his answer to a question regarding U.S. aid to the PYD.

"The focus in Syria for the US and the other 60-plus members of the coalition is counter-ISIL. And we will continue to appropriately support those groups that are proving effective against ISIL inside Syria," Kirby stated. The question underlined a contradiction between statements by State Department Deputy Spokesperson Toner and PYD leader Salih Muslim on recipients of U.S. ammunition airdrops.

While Toner argued that the ammunition was provided to Syrian Arabs, Muslim told the Turkish press that the PYD and its allies have been receiving U.S. airdrops. Meanwhile, when asked about Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's statement that ambassadors from Russia and the U.S. have been summoned regarding their ties with Kurdish forces in Syria, Kirby refrained from an outright confirmation. "We continue to talk to the Turkish government about their concerns, specifically with respect to the Syrian Kurds," he stated.

A statement from the U.S. Department of Defense confirming airdropping material to the PYD had met with a harsh reaction from Turkey. "As the ally countries would not tolerate excuses for arms support to al-Qaeda-affiliated groups, Turkey cannot excuse any armed support to groups linked to the PKK. It certainly cannot allow any tolerance in this matter," Davutoğlu stated during a press conference.

Greece 'can't discuss' Aegean refugee patrols with Turkey

AFP, 13.10.2015



Greece dismissed a suggestion it should set up joint patrols in the Aegean Sea with regional rival Turkey, as Europe struggles to control its worst migrant crisis since World War II.

"We cannot discuss newfangled ideas that have recently come to light, such as joint Greek-Turkish patrols of maritime borders," the Greek foreign ministry said in a statement. Albeit NATO allies, Greece and Turkey have a fraught history going back centuries and remain at loggerheads over territorial and airspace rights in the Aegean.

German government spokesman Steffen Seibert said there was a pressing need for Greece and Turkey to cooperate to check trafficker networks that migrants are resorting to in their desperate bid to reach Europe. "We have at this time, especially in the Aegean between Greece and Turkey, a situation in which the borders are open in the sense that traffickers can act as they like there, and which leads many people to put their lives at immediate risk," Seibert said. "This is something that must change," he added.

Greek daily Kathimerini said Athens fears that Ankara could exploit the refugee issue to strengthen its presence in the Aegean, where it claims the waters and airspace surrounding many Greek islands near its coasts. The foreign ministry said the Greek government was keen to work with Turkey on stamping out people-smuggling networks. But this would entail Ankara agreeing to share information, it noted.

Greece says it also wants Turkey to apply a bilateral agreement on migrant readmission which is currently all but inactive. Over 710,000 refugees and migrants -- mainly from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq -- entered the European Union in the first nine months of this year according to EU border agency Frontex.

This includes over 400,000 people that have landed on Greek islands from Turkey, while dozens more have died trying to make the crossing. The crisis has exposed deep divisions within the 28-nation bloc over how to distribute the new arrivals and how to stem the flow. Greece and Turkey nearly went to war over a cluster of uninhabited Aegean Sea islets in 1996.

Official: US, Russia could sign Syria air-safety pact in 'coming days'

AFP, 15.10.2015



The United States and Russia could soon sign a pact establishing safety protocols in the skies above Syria as both powers carry out separate bombing campaigns, a US defense official said.

“We are nearing completion of a memorandum of agreement that would set up procedures to enhance air safety,” the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. “It could be signed and implemented in the coming days.” The official’s comments came shortly after Russia and the United States held a third round of video talks to decide rules so pilots don’t inadvertently fly into each other.

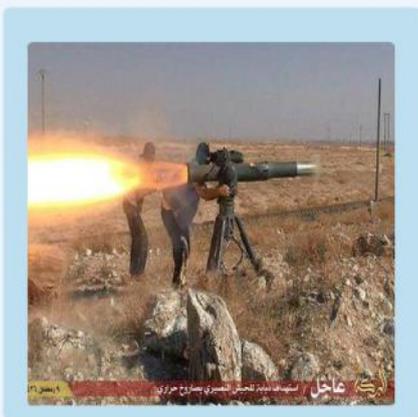
“Progress was made during the discussions, which were professional and focused narrowly on the implementation of specific safety procedures,” Pentagon spokesman Captain Jeff Davis said. The US-led coalition has for more than a year been conducting regular drone and plane strikes in Syria and Iraq, targeting the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). That mission got much more complex, when Russia launched its own military campaign to support President Bashar al-Assad. Moscow claims it is striking ISIL and other “terrorists.”

Further complicating matters, Russia last week fired cruise missiles into Syria from the Caspian Sea. The missiles typically fly at much lower altitudes than jets, but Pentagon officials were nonetheless distressed that Russian bombs were in the same air space as coalition planes. So far, there have been no major incidents in the Syrian skies, though Pentagon officials said coalition planes have had to change course to avoid being in the same space as Russian jets. And Colonel Steve Warren, the spokesman for the US-led coalition, told reporters that coalition and Russian planes came close enough to establish visual contact. “There’s always going to be some risk if there are uncoordinated actors in the battle space,” he said.

Officials say the so-called “deconfliction” talks come down to some basic operating procedures, including which language Russian and American pilots will use for communication, the choice of radio frequency for distress calls and the altitude at which warplanes will operate.

ISIL urges jihad on Russia, US as Syria strikes intensify

AFP, 15.10.2015



The ISIL called on Muslims to wage jihad on Russia and the United States, as Moscow announced it had intensified its air campaign against Islamic militants in Syria. The call came as Russian President Vladimir Putin criticised Washington for refusing to cooperate with Moscow in its Syrian campaign, which is having an increasingly dramatic effect.

“Russia will be defeated,” ISIL spokesman Mohamed al-Adnani said in a recording posted online, calling on “Muslims everywhere to launch jihad against Russians and Americans”, who it said were waging “a crusader war against Muslims”.

ISIL seeks not only to overthrow Syrian President Bashar al-Assad but is also vying with Al-Qaeda affiliate Al-Nusra Front for jihadist supremacy in the country. Al-Nusra chief Abu Mohamed al-Jolani also threatened Moscow, saying its air war would have dire consequences. “If the Russian army kills the people of Syria, then kill their people,” he said in a call to jihadists in the Caucasus. “And if they kill our soldiers, then kill their soldiers. An eye for an eye.”

“The war in Syria will make the Russians forget the horrors that they found in Afghanistan,” Jolani said, referring to the disastrous Soviet attempt to subdue the country in the 1980s. Russia said its air force had hit 86 “terrorist” targets in Syria in the past 24 hours -- the highest one-day tally since it launched its bombing campaign. Among them, it said, were several ISIL targets. Washington and its allies -- engaged in their own air war against ISIL in Syria and Iraq -- accuse Moscow of targeting moderate Western-backed rebels and seeking to prop up Assad, a longtime Russian ally.

US Defence Secretary Ash Carter said the two sides would hold another round of talks on how to stay out of each other’s way in the skies over Syria. “Even as we continue to disagree on Syria policy, we should be able to at least agree on making sure our airmen are as safe as possible,” Carter said in Boston. Putin meanwhile criticised Washington for refusing to share intelligence with Russia and accusing it of muddled thinking. “I think some of our partners simply have mush for brains; they do not have a clear understanding of what really happens in the country and what goals they are seeking to achieve,” he said. ISIL’s Adnani said the United States was weak and using Russia and Assad’s other ally Iran to strengthen its position in Syria, claiming Washington was willing “to forge an alliance with the devil”.



In Damascus, Russia's embassy was struck by two rockets, sparking panic among some 300 people waving Russian flags and pictures of Putin in support of Moscow's intervention. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the rockets were fired from the eastern edges of the capital, where Islamist rebels are entrenched. Russian news agency Interfax quoted an embassy official as saying the rockets hit "embassy territory" but that there were no casualties. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told reporters in Moscow it was an "act of terror". He met UN Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura for the first time since the Kremlin launched its campaign.

Efforts have repeatedly failed to end Syria's conflict, which has cost more than 240,000 lives and driven millions from their homes since it erupted in March 2011. The fighting has intensified in recent weeks, with regime forces making gains with Russian support. The Syrian Observatory said fighters from the Lebanese Shiite movement Hezbollah -- which also supports Assad -- arrived in the strategic Sahl al-Ghab plain to reinforce an offensive there. Sahl al-Ghab, at the intersection of Hama, Latakia and Idlib provinces, has been a major target for Russian air strikes.

Thousands of fighters and supplies from Iran had also reached Hmeimim airport in Latakia province, the Observatory said. A powerful rebel alliance that includes Al-Nusra -- the Army of Conquest -- announced the launch of a major offensive of its own to take the central Hama province. It called on fighters there "to light the fire on the fronts inside the regions, so that hordes of Muslims will meet in Hama as liberators". Fierce fighting in the key Hama village of Kafr Nabuda forced pro-regime forces to retreat and killed 25 of them, the Observatory said. Washington has been increasing support for rebel groups it backs in Syria, and one group said that US-made anti-tank missiles were turning the tide in a major battle in the country's centre and northwest.

Non-Islamist opposition factions say they are using the US-made TOW missiles to halt an army advance that is backed by Russian air strikes in Hama and Idlib provinces "These rockets have played an important role in stopping the fierce attack by the Syrian regime and its Russian ally," said Asaad Hanna, spokesman for the non-Islamist Division 101. US-led forces air-dropped ammunition to the Syrian Arab Coalition battling jihadists near ISIL's northern stronghold of Raqqa.

Japan considers pulling UNESCO funding over Nanjing row

AFP, 13.10.2015



Japan warned that it might pull funding for UNESCO to protest last week's decision to inscribe documents related to the Nanjing massacre in its Memory of the World register. The UN cultural and scientific body agreed to a request by Beijing to mark documents recording the mass murder and rape committed by Japanese troops after the fall of the Chinese city of Nanjing in 1937.

The massacre, often referred to as the "Rape of Nanjing", is an exceptionally sensitive issue in the often-tense relations between Japan and China, with Beijing charging that Tokyo has failed to atone for the atrocity.

Tokyo -- one of UNESCO's largest funders -- had called for the Nanjing documents not to be included and accused the body of being politicised. "I think it's a problem," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters, adding that Japan has "totally different opinions from those of China" when it comes to the siege of Nanjing. "We strongly demand transparency and fairness so that this education project is not used politically," the top government spokesman said.

"We want to consider reviewing every possible measure, including a suspension of paying our country's contributions," he said without elaboration. Tokyo's foreign ministry says it gave around \$31 million to UNESCO in 2014, or 10.8 percent of Japan's budget for the UN. Suga made the remarks as senior Beijing envoy Yang Jiechi arrived in Tokyo, the highest-ranking Chinese diplomat to make an official trip to Japan in several years. Yang, China's top foreign policymaker, is scheduled to meet Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

The Japanese military invaded China in the 1930s and the two countries fought a full-scale war from 1937 until Japan's defeat in World War II in 1945. China says 300,000 people died in a six-week spree of killing, rape and destruction after the Japanese military entered Nanjing. Some respected foreign academics put the number lower but there is very little mainstream scholarship doubting that a massacre took place.

Japan's official position is that "the killing of a large number of noncombatants, looting and other acts occurred", though adds "it is difficult to determine" the correct number of victims. However, some conservatives and nationalists deny that atrocities were committed, a source of regular regional friction. Beijing has rejected Japan's protest over the UNESCO move. "Japan's protest is unreasonable," said Guo Biqiang of the Second Historical Archives of China, according to the state-run Xinhua news agency.



Tokyo frequently clashes with its Asian neighbours over its war record, with many accusing the country of failing to atone for its atrocities or recognise the suffering that took place under the yoke of Japanese militarism. The Memory of the World register, set up in 1992, is aimed at preserving humanity's documentary heritage, and currently holds 348 documents and archives that come from countries all over the world.



Announcements & Reports

► *The Systemic Roots of Russia's Recession*

Source : Bruegel
Weblink : <http://bruegel.org/2015/10/the-systemic-roots-of-russias-recession/>

► *Southeast Asia from Scott Circle: Washington Debut: A Strategic Jokowi?*

Source : CSIS
Weblink : <http://csis.org/publication/southeast-asia-scott-circle-washington-debut-strategic-jokowi>

► *Foreign Loan Hangovers and Macro-Prudential Measures in Central Eastern Europe*

Source : Bruegel
Weblink : <http://bruegel.org/2015/10/foreign-loan-hangovers-and-macro-prudential-measures-in-central-eastern-europe/>

Upcoming Events

► *12th Asia Europe Economic Forum (AEEF)*

Date : 17 October 2015
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://bruegel.org/events/global-governance-of-public-goods-asian-and-european-perspectives/>

► *Secular Stagnation in Europe and Japan*

Date : 17 October 2015
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://bruegel.org/events/secular-stagnation-in-europe-and-japan/>

► *The Role of The Nordic Social Model in The Future*

Date : 18 October 2015
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://bruegel.org/events/the-role-of-the-nordic-social-model-in-the-future/>



► *Lebanon's Deepening Domestic Crisis*

Date : 19 October 2015
Place : Washington DC – The USA
Website : <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2015/10/12-lebanon-domestic-crisis>

► *The Politics of The Fed: Past, Present and Future*

Date : 22 October 2015
Place : Washington DC – The USA
Website : <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2015/10/22-politics-of-the-fed-past-present-and-future>

► *Supporting Military Families and Veterans, Sustaining The All-Volunteer Force*

Date : 29 October 2015
Place : Washington – The USA
Website : <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2015/10/29-military-families-veterans-lifestyle-survey>

► *Competitive Gains in the Economic and Monetary Union*

Date : 23 November 2015
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 : 24 November 2015
Place : London - UK
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/future-capitalist-democracy-uk-japan-perspectives>

► *Emerging Markets and Europe: Time for Different Relationships?*

Date : 26 November 2015
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 : 27 November 2015
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 : 28 November 2015
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 : 01 December 2015

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 : 17 December 2015

Place : Berlin - Germany

Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/541-the-future-of-the-welfare-state/>