

EU: Turkey faces a grave threat from PKK terrorism

Hurriyet Daily News, 09.06.2016



Both Ankara and Brussels have strongly condemned the recent terrorist attacks in both the EU and Turkey and reaffirmed their determination to jointly combat terrorism, as the bloc said after a high-level security meeting that it recognized the threat the outlawed (PKK) posed to its ally.

“The EU recognized that Turkey faces a grave threat from PKK terrorism,” said a statement by the EU, following a one-day summit in Brussels, after two deadly car bomb attacks hit Turkey this week. Tunç Üğdül, led the Turkish delegation in the meeting with EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator Gilles de Kerchove and his group in Brussels.

The meeting was focused on cooperation to block foreign fighters from pouring into Syria and Iraq through Turkey, as well as on the activities in Europe of terror organizations operating against Turkey, Turkish sources close to the meeting told Anadolu Agency.

“The EU and Turkey reiterated their commitment to urgently step up efforts to tackle the threat posed by Daesh and to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters,” the EU said, using an Arabic acronym for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

“The EU also welcomed the deployment of a Turkish liaison officer to Europol and agreed to build upon the cooperation established with CEPOL and Europol, possibly extending to counter-terrorism cooperation in training and exchanges of best practices and personnel,” the EU said. “Turkey and the EU will work together to drive forward international efforts in forums such as the Financial Action Task Force [FATF], the Global Counter Terrorism Forum [GCTF] and the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL,” it said.

The Turkish delegation also sought more cooperation in the fight against the PKK, Syria’s Democratic Union Party (PYD), its armed wing, the People’s Defense Units (YPG), the outlawed Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C), and the “parallel state terror organization,” which refers to followers of U.S.-based Islamic scholar Fethullah Gülen, the sources added.

Turkey wants the EU to end these terror organizations’ activities in the EU, to accelerate the extradition of those wanted by Ankara – many with red notices issued for them – as well as to effectively fight the organizations’ financial structures and resources in Europe. Turkey has accused the EU of not giving enough support in the fight against terror, with Ankara saying many PKK terrorist organization leaders and members are living in EU countries, while PKK-owned TV channels broadcast from Belgium. Turkish officials say even the European Commission fails to encourage member states to closely cooperate with Turkey in the fight against terror.

The EU has said Turkey must revise its “legislation and practices on terrorism in line with European standards” in order for visa liberalization for Turkish citizens to enter into force. But Ankara has firmly rejected any such change. Meanwhile, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden vowed to continue his country’s counterterrorism assistance for Turkey during a telephone call with Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım. The two leaders “pledged to continue the robust cooperation between the two countries on combatting terrorism,” according to the White House.

Turkey: Halting deal to readmit migrants from EU ‘not currently on agenda’

Hurriyet Daily News, 07.06.2016



Ankara is not considering cancelling an agreement with the European Union to readmit migrants who previously reached the bloc illegally from Turkish territory, Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmuş has said.

“It is now the EU’s turn to fulfill its responsibilities. I believe it will act in line with the deal, as Turkey has done so much for it. The issue of canceling the Readmission Agreement is not on our agenda at the present time,” Kurtulmuş, also the government spokesperson of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), told reporters after a cabinet meeting.

“Turkey is continuing the negotiation with determination. We want to reach a result. The drop in the number of refugees arriving in Europe is clear evidence that Turkey is taking the deal seriously,” he added, warning that the deal should not be an issue of domestic politics in EU countries.

The deal between Brussels and Ankara to stem the flow of illegal migrants into Europe has been hampered by disagreements over Turkey’s counter-terrorism law, which the European Union wants to see brought in line with EU standards.

Turkey has accused Europe of throwing up new hurdles to fully implementing the deal, which is meant to give Turks visa-free travel to the EU in return for curbing illegal migration. Turkey’s government says it has already met the EU’s criteria for visa-free travel and that it will not change its anti-terrorism laws any further.

UK's Osborne, campaigning against Brexit, says Turkey won't join EU

Reuters, 09.06.2016



British finance minister George Osborne said Turkey would not join the European Union, rebutting one of the arguments made by campaigners who want Britain to leave the EU and who are forecasting higher migration if Turkey joins the bloc.

“I don’t think it’s going to happen in my lifetime,” Osborne told BBC television, ahead of Britain’s EU membership referendum on June 23. “Is it going to be a member of the European Union? No, it’s not.” Campaigners seeking to get Britain out of the EU have put immigration at the centre of their push and have said Turkey joining the EU could add to the big flows of migrants already arriving in the country.

Fears among some voters that the numbers of people coming to Britain is out of control is seen as one of the main weaknesses of the “In” camp backed by Osborne and Prime Minister David Cameron. Opinion polls have shown the rival “In” and “Out” camps running almost neck and neck with just over two weeks to go until the referendum.

Osborne was questioned about Cameron’s previous support for Turkey to join the EU. In 2010, Cameron said he would be the “strongest advocate” for Turkish membership of the bloc. “Turkey has gone backwards. There are concerns about democracy and human rights there,” Osborne said. “British government policy is that it should not join the European Union today.”

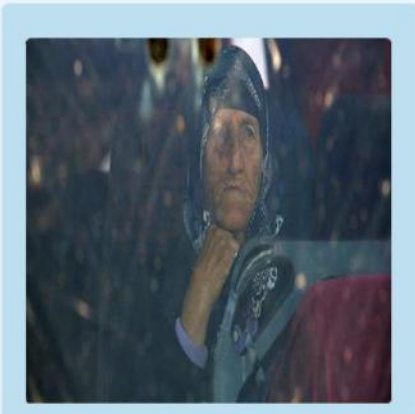
Last month, Cameron dismissed the assertion from “Out” campaigners that Turkey would join the EU soon, joking that its current progress towards accession meant it would not become a member until the year 3000. Turkey said in May that EU membership remains a strategic goal and a deal to liberalise visas for Turks visiting the bloc should accelerate the accession process.

Vote Leave, the main “Out” campaign ahead of the referendum, responded to Osborne’s comments by saying the British government’s position on Turkey was not clear. “The government must now urgently clarify whether its policy on Turkey has changed. Is it now promising to veto Turkish membership?” a spokeswoman for the group said.

Osborne also said in his interview with the BBC that the government was sticking to its target of bringing net migration into Britain to below 100,000, something it has missed by a wide margin in recent years. He said improving economies in other European countries would help dampen migration into Britain. “As both economies grow, the European economy and the British economy, you don’t have this exceptional situation you’ve had for the last couple of years where you’ve had very weak economies on the continent of Europe,” he said.

Migrants ask EU court to overturn Turkey deal

AFP, 08.06.2016



Two migrants have filed the first cases with the European Union's top court seeking to overturn the bloc's controversial migration crisis deal with Turkey, sources close to the matter said.

The European Union signed a deal with Ankara in March under which Turkey agreed to take back all migrants arriving from its shores onto the Greek islands, including Syrians fleeing the conflict in their homeland. In exchange, Syrian refugees would be taken in to Europe directly from Turkey. But rights groups have criticized the pact as failing to offer sufficient protection to refugees.

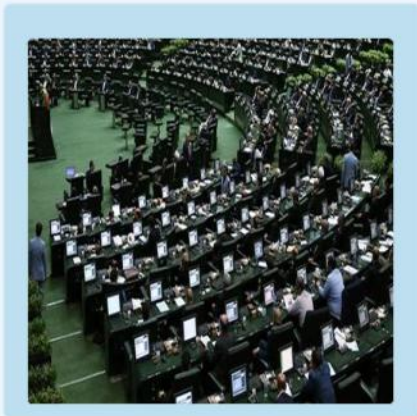
"It's the first," one source close to the cases said on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the record, adding however that there were likely to be "problems of admissibility." The arguments in the two applications were not disclosed.

But the EU has been anticipating legal challenges to the migrant deal, particularly over the asylum application processing system set up in the Greek islands to manage such applications quickly. Earlier this month the European Court of Human Rights -- which is not linked to the EU -- was asked by a gay Syrian man to block his deportation from Greece under the deal.

Migrant arrivals to Greece have fallen sharply since the deal took effect on March 20. But Ankara has threatened to abandon the deal if its citizens are not granted visa-free travel to most of the EU. Brussels has conditioned the visa waiver on Ankara narrowing its anti-terror laws -- a step Turkey has adamantly refused to take.

Turkish tourism players praise extension of public holiday for Eid al-Fitr to nine days

Hurriyet Daily News, 10.06.2016



Struggling tourism players have gotten some relief after Turkish authorities declared a nine-day public holiday starting from July 2 for Eid al-Fitr, hoping to lure more local tourists amid a significant drop in foreign arrivals.

The holiday was planned to officially start on July 5 and end on July 7. However, PM Yıldırım recently signed a circular declaring that July 4 and July 8 would also be a holiday, effectively creating a nine-day public holiday including the two weekends. Hoteliers Federation of Turkey head Osman Ayık said the extension of the public holiday to nine days would bring a significant rise in the number of local tourists.

“We hope that our tourism facilities will reach the desired occupancy rates over the nine-day public holiday, as local tourists will now have enough time to plan their vacations,” Ayık said, as quoted by Anadolu Agency. Sector representatives hope to earn around 500 million Turkish Liras over the course of the extended holiday.

“Although the public holiday for Eid al-Fitr was just four days last year, our sector earned revenue of around 200-250 million liras. While 180,000 people opted to take a vacation in Turkey, 20,000 went abroad.

With the extension of the public holiday this year to nine days, we expect around 500 million liras in revenue,” said Tourism Investors Association of Turkey (TYD) head Murat Ersoy in a written statement. The Turkish Travel Agencies Association (TÜRSAB) expects a total of 250,000 locals to holiday during the extended break this year.

During Eid al-Fitr last year, the most popular domestic destinations for airplanes that took off or landed at Istanbul’s Atatürk and Sabiha Gökçen airports were the Aegean province of İzmir, the Mediterranean coast of Antalya and the capital city of Ankara. They were followed by Bodrum and Dalaman on the west coast, Adana in the south and Trabzon in the Black Sea region. The most popular foreign destinations were London, Tel Aviv, Paris, North Cyprus, Frankfurt, Moscow, Munich and New York.

The change to this year’s holiday comes amid woes in Turkey’s tourism sector. The number of foreign tourists visiting Turkey saw a 17-year plunge in April with a 28 percent decrease compared to the same month of 2015, as rising security concerns and the jet crisis with Russia hit the country’s tourism sector. A total of 5.8 million foreigners visited Turkey in the first four months of the year, according to official data.

The losses in the sector are expected to have hit \$15 billion, according to sector players. Turkey lured the highest number of foreign people from Germany in the first four months of the year with around 730,000 visitors, taking a share of around 13 percent in total visitors. Germany was followed by Georgia with around 615,000 arrivals and a 10.5 percent share in the total, and Iran, which sent 561,560 people to Turkey, taking a 9.6 percent of share in the total.

Turkish economy grows 4.8 percent in first quarter

Reuters, 10.06.2016



Turkey's economy grew a larger-than-expected 4.8 percent in the first quarter of 2016, official data showed, outperforming major emerging markets peers, as wage hikes and spending by Syrian migrants fueled private consumption, according to analysts.

Domestic demand contributed 6 percent of the growth, data from the Turkish Statistics Institute (TÜİK) showed, but net external demand reduced the overall growth figure by 1.5 percent. "Its peers, Brazil, Russia and South Africa are mired in recession, or with feeble growth drivers," Nomura strategist Tim Ash said, but added:

"The structure of growth was less impressive, with private consumption and government spending leading the way, over investment and net exports." The year-on-year growth in gross domestic product came in slightly above a Reuters poll forecast of 4.5 percent, prompting the finance and development ministers to say Turkey was clearly on track to meet its goal of 4.5 percent growth this year. Output grew 0.8 percent in the period on a seasonally and calendar-adjusted basis, TÜİK said.

Finance analyst Haluk Bürümcekçi said the highest contribution to growth came from domestic and government consumption expenditures. "The contribution of private investment fell to negative territory again, and external demand became the main issue limiting growth. Early indicators have suggested that second-quarter growth performance will be weaker than first-quarter growth," he added, as quoted by Anadolu Agency.

Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Şimşek said the figures showed the economy was on a strong path and that the government would push ahead with structural reforms in the coming period. Şimşek said the Turkish economy was one of the fastest-growing economies in Europe and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

"This success was achieved despite geopolitical tensions in our region, problems in our trade partners and weak trend in the global economy," he said in a statement. Finance Minister Naci Ağbal said in a statement that those reforms, as well as closer integration with the EU, would help Turkey outperform other emerging markets.

Development Minister Lütfi Elvan said the strong first-quarter growth data showed the government would reach its target of 4.5 percent in annual growth as part of its Medium-Term Program. “We will do whatever it takes to reach our target. We will speed up the reform process and focus on measures to boost private investment and exports,” he added.

According to economists, public sector salary increases and a 30 percent hike in the minimum wage, a pledge made ahead of elections last November and introduced by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) at the start of the year, contributed to the strong first-quarter growth figures.

The more than 2.7 million Syrian refugees sheltering in Turkey also bolstered the numbers, economists said. The migrants, fleeing a civil war that has raged for five years, have bought goods such as refrigerators and cookers, as well as cooking oil, bread, flour and building materials.

“Among the factors triggering domestic demand are the general impact of Syrian migrants on the economy and the AKP’s pre-election promises [on wages],” Oyak Securities chief economist Mehmet Besimoğlu told Reuters. Turkey raised the minimum wage by 30 percent to 1,300 Turkish Liras (\$430) for over 5 million workers at the beginning of the year.

Turkey appoints state bank executive as deputy central bank governor

Reuters, 10.06.2016



Turkey has appointed Murat Uysal, a former senior executive at Halkbank with a background in financial markets, as a deputy governor of the central bank, bringing the formation of a new monetary policy team near to its conclusion.

The appointment of Uysal who worked his way up through its treasury department and oversaw its trading operations, was announced in the Official Gazette. Financial markets have been watching the central bank closely since its new governor Murat Çetinkaya, a relatively unknown quantity for investors, took over two months ago, with other senior officials also being reshuffled.

The bank has four deputy governors, who are members of the rate-setting monetary policy committee (MPC). The terms of two other members of the seven-person MPC will end by November.

Uysal is expected to work closely with both Çetinkaya and Erkan Kilimci, another new deputy governor appointed in April who had previously been head of markets at the central bank. Under Çetinkaya, the bank cut the upper band of its interest rate corridor by a total of 100 basis points in April and May, bringing it to 9.5 percent. Analysts expect another cut in the upper band this month.

Turkey's central bank uses a complex system of multiple rates - known as an interest rate "corridor" - to set policy, which has at times confused financial markets. Çetinkaya has said he wants to simplify the system over time. The central bank has missed its 5 percent inflation target for the last five years. It estimates year-end inflation at 7.5 percent, while annual inflation in May stood at 6.58 percent.

The Iran deal, one year in: Economic, nuclear, and regional implications

Foreign Policy, 08.06.2016



The Iran nuclear deal posed a simple trade: In exchange for Tehran agreeing to limit its nuclear capabilities, economic sanctions would be lifted. But the devil is in the details concerning, for example, a role for missiles on the nuclear side of the equation and state sponsorship of terrorism on the sanctions relief side.

Signed in Geneva July 14, 2015, the deal's first anniversary is coming up — a good opportunity to reflect on the economic, nuclear, and regional implications of the accord, as the debate rages on in Washington between the executive and legislative branches.

In Washington, support is growing for the notion that the Barack Obama administration has failed to hold Tehran accountable for nuclear violations, downplayed Iran's economic windfall from sanctions relief, and ignored the deal's negative regional implications for state sponsorship of terrorism.

Critics hoped in vain that the nuclear deal would place explicit limits on ballistic missiles. The burden, however, was left to the United Nations rather than the parties to the deal. The third paragraph of Annex B of resolution 2231 (2015) calls upon Iran not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology. Because the nuclear deal did nothing to address the full range of Iran's ballistic missile development, weak missile language in this resolution compounded the problem.

On March 31, 2016, GOP Representatives Mike Pompeo of Kansas, Peter Roskam of Illinois, and Lee Zeldin of New York reminded Secretary of State John Kerry that in selling the nuclear deal he assured Congress that the administration would provide a robust diplomatic response to Tehran's missile launches. Sadly, such was not the case.

Before the July 2015 nuclear deal, Iran was expressly prohibited by U.N. resolutions from launching ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons. Security Council Resolution 1929 stated that the Council "decides that Iran shall not undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons." The term "decides" placed a strict legal obligation on all states to comply.



In exchange for Tehran's agreement to the nuclear deal, the Obama administration unwisely granted Iran flexibility for ballistic missile testing. Security Council Resolution 2231 certified the deal, replacing the prohibition with accommodating language: "Iran is called upon not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons."

As Foreign Policy's Colum Lynch wrote on March 16: "The updated measures are neither legally binding nor as restrictive as the measures in place at the time of the nuclear pact. In essence, resolution 2231 provides Iran with a loophole big enough to develop medium- and long-range missiles without the risk of running afoul of Security Council dictates. It also complicates efforts to define what kinds of missiles are capable of carrying a nuclear warhead."

Lynch was spot on. The Obama administration failed to hold Tehran accountable for nuclear violations. But the appeasement of Iran is also tied to state sponsorship of terrorism. In selling the nuclear deal, the administration expressed a hope and implied an expectation that Tehran would moderate its participation in terrorism, for which it has quite a history.

The U.S. State Department's 2013 Country Report on Terrorism called Iran the top state sponsor of terrorist activities. The report released in 2014 said the same thing, as did the report for 2015, released on June 2, 2016. Tehran supported conflicts in Syria and Iraq, and was implicated in violent Shia opposition raids in Bahrain. So Iran continues as a state sponsor of terror, irrespective of the nuclear deal.

In an interview with NPR's Steve Inskeep, Obama said it was possible that as a consequence of the United States engaging Iran via the nuclear deal, Iran would start "making different decisions that are less offensive to its neighbors." And the Atlantic's Jeffrey Goldberg mused: "[Obama] has bet global security and his own legacy that one of the world's leading state sponsors of terrorism will adhere to an agreement to curtail its nuclear program."

More to the point, Obama told Goldberg: "Iran, since 1979, has been an enemy of the United States, and has engaged in state-sponsored terrorism, is a genuine threat to Israel and many of our allies, and engages in all kinds of destructive behavior." That acknowledgement is insufficient to absolve Obama of his tolerance for Tehran's business-as-usual practice of terrorism, while accepting Tehran as a suitable partner with which to cut the deal.

The NPR and Atlantic interviews laid bare the president's faith that Iran's terrorism can be moderated, which has not been borne out by the facts. In summarizing the arguments of critics of the Iran deal's sanctions relief provisions, Robert Einhorn, a former high-level negotiator for the Obama administration who helped to develop what became the 2015 deal, described concerns that a "windfall" of released funds would "enable Iran to devote substantial additional resources to destabilizing its neighbors and expanding its regional influence."

Einhorn detailed efforts to "minimize the potential adverse effects of the released funds." Nonetheless, the money has likely helped Tehran to increase its assistance to proxies and allies in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Bahrain, Gaza, and Yemen. In addition, Iran has continued to strengthen the military capabilities of the Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force, which operates in many of these countries.



Even more troubling is the Obama administration's continued support for sanctions relief, irrespective of Iran's behavior, as described by John Hannah, a senior counselor at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, in his testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

Mark Dubowitz, executive director of FDD and also a critic of sanctions relief divorced from Iran's behavior, told the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs: "Iran is engaged in a robust effort to legitimize its financial sector despite a decades-long rap sheet of... illicit financial activities that it shows no sign of curbing."

In other words, since the conclusion of the nuclear deal, the Obama administration missed several opportunities to push back against Iran's successful efforts to gain sanctions relief and legitimize its financial sector to the international community, despite state sponsorship of terrorism.

Regardless of who is in the Oval Office, she or he could work with our partners to counter Tehran's provocations. Such actions might include the interdiction of illicit arms shipments and sanctioning terrorism financing by the Iranian regime. There also is a need to fix the gap in the nuclear deal — which offers no agreed-upon penalties for Iranian violations of the deal's terms, short of the last-resort punishment of a "snapback" of U.N. sanctions against Iran — as Rob Satloff, executive director of the Washington Institute, proposed in August of 2015.

Also, members of Congress from both parties have called for renewal of the Iran Sanctions Act (ISA). Two Democratic senators, Tim Kaine of Virginia and Chris Murphy Connecticut, both of whom supported the nuclear deal with Iran, introduced legislation to extend the ISA, which is set to expire at the end of 2016.

A spokeswoman for Senator Kaine said, "This is to prevent a non-compliant Iran having a sanctions expiration date in its sights." The ISA imposed sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program and support for terrorism. When the nuclear deal was implemented on January 16, 2016, the Treasury announced that the United States was lifting nuclear-related sanctions on Iran because it had met verifiably its nuclear commitments.

As reported by the Hill, Senators Robert Menendez, Democrat of New Jersey, and Mark Kirk, Republican of Illinois, introduced legislation in 2015 that would extend the sanctions law for 10 years. Senator Kelly Ayotte, Republican of New Hampshire, backed by 18 other GOP senators, introduced a separate bill to extend the law through 2031 and require new sanctions tied to Iran's ballistic missile program.

As the anniversary of the Iran deal approaches in mid-July, the above steps would address holes in the missile technology side of the nuclear deal equation, and on the sanctions side, they would prohibit relief in the event of Iran's continued participation in state-sponsored terrorism.

Syria's Assad hardens position in address to parliament

AFP, 07.06.2016



Syrian President Assad hardened his position on U.N.-sponsored peace talks in his first address to the newly elected parliament broadcast. “We will not agree to any topic outside the statement of principles we presented to the U.N.

We just won’t accept it,” Assad told lawmakers. The document submitted by the government delegation stresses that Syria will be ruled by a “unity government” - not a “transitional governing body” without Assad as called for by the opposition. Assad said he had received no response from the U.N. regarding this paper and that in the government’s eyes, “the negotiations have not actually started.”

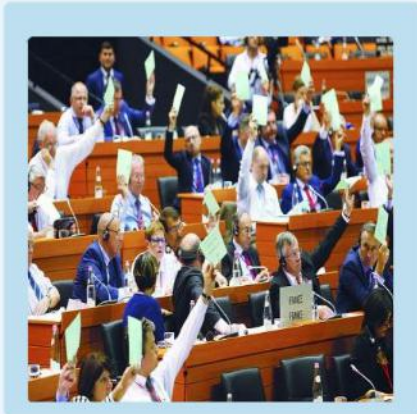
He was addressing lawmakers for the first time since an April general election in government-controlled areas that was dismissed internationally as a sham. “The Syrian people surprised the world yet again with an unprecedented voter turnout... and an unprecedented number of candidates,” Assad said.

Syria’s conflict began in 2011 with protests calling for Assad to step down, and several rounds of U.N.-backed peace talks have failed to bring an end to what has become a complex civil war. In February, the United States and regime ally Russia brokered a cease-fire between government forces and non-jihadist rebels in an effort to bolster the peace negotiations.

The ceasefire has allowed Syria’s armed forces to focus on key fronts, Assad said, including the historic city of Palmyra - where regime forces backed by Russia defeated the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in March. “As we liberated Palmyra, so shall we liberate every inch of Syria... we have no choice but victory,” he said to applause from lawmakers. It was unclear if the speech was broadcast live or pre-recorded earlier this week. Assad’s last address to parliament was in June 2012, just after general elections in May of that year.

NATO troops in massive airborne exercise in Poland irks Russia

AP, 08.06.2016



About 2,000 NATO troops conducted an airborne training operation as part of the biggest exercise performed in Poland since the 1989 end amid concerns over Russia.

Scores of U.S. troops and then military vehicles parachuted into training area on the outskirts of the central city of Torun. The force's mission was to secure a bridge on the Vistula River as part of the Polish-led Anakonda-16 exercise that involves about 31,000 troops and runs through mid-June. Nineteen NATO member nations, , and five partner nations are contributing troops to the exercise that will train and test their swift joint reaction to threats on land, sea and in the air.

Anakonda involves troops from 24 states, including 14,000 from the US, as well as ex-Soviet "Partnership for Peace" states like Ukraine. In a complex operation that was precisely planned and timed, troops of the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division flew directly from their U.S. base in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. U.S. generals in Torun said it took just 24 hours for 500 rapid "Global Response" paratroopers to deploy 7,200 kilometers from the world's largest military base in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Their Boeing C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft were refueled in midair. The British troops flew from a NATO base in Ramstein, Germany, while the Poles arrived from their base in Krakow, in southern Poland.

The exercise "confirmed that we can count on our friends who are capable of flying over the Atlantic to be here with us in a matter of hours," said Polish Gen. Miroslaw Rozanski, deputy commander of the exercise. "We can look into the future with calm. We have good allies and good partners." Russia considers NATO troops' presence close to its border as a security threat. The Kremlin reacted angrily to the start of the maneuvers, NATO's biggest since the Trident drills last year involving 36,000 troops in Italy, Spain and Portugal.

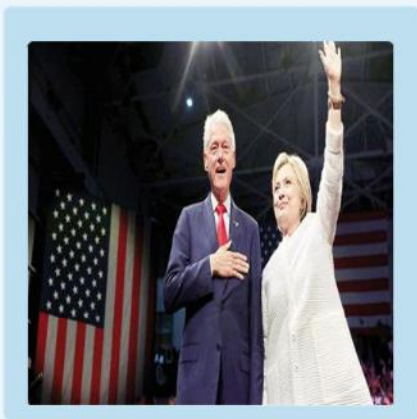
Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said in Moscow that the military exercise in Poland "does not contribute to the atmosphere of trust and security on the continent." "Unfortunately we are still witnessing a deficit in mutual trust," he added.

Poland and other nations in the region, as well as NATO leaders, say that any military presence or exercises are purely defensive and deterrent measures. "There's no reason to be nervous," Ben Hodges, Commanding General, US Army Europe, told r, insisting the exercises were purely "defensive,". The drill is being held just weeks before NATO holds a crucial summit in Warsaw expected to decide that significant numbers of NATO troops and equipment will be based in Poland and in the Baltic states. Russia has long protested at NATO's expansion in its Soviet-era backyard and in 1997 NATO formally agreed not to install permanent bases in former Warsaw Pact states.

Since the Ukraine conflict erupted in 2014, however, NATO has established a high-speed “spearhead” response force, complete with forward command and logistic centers in eastern states. The Pentagon said in March it would deploy an additional armored brigade of about 4,200 troops in Eastern Europe from early 2017 on a rotational basis. While NATO cut all practical cooperation with Moscow over the Ukraine crisis, the alliance plans formal talks with the Russians before the July 8-9 summit. “The Cold War is history and we want it to stay that way,” NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said last week.

Clinton seizes historic primary win

AP, 08.06.2016



Powered by a solid triumph in California, presidential candidate Hillary Clinton declared victory in her yearlong battle for the heart of the Democratic Party, seizing her place in history and setting out on the difficult task of fusing a fractured party to confront Donald Trump.

Clinton cruised to easy victories in four of the six state contests. With each win she further solidified Bernie Sanders’ defeat and dashed his already slim chances of using the state contests to refuel his flagging bid. The victories allowed Clinton to celebrate long-sought “milestone” the first woman poised to lead a major political party’s presidential ticket.

Standing before a flag-waving crowd in Brooklyn, the former secretary of state soaked up the cheers and beamed. “Barriers can come down. Justice and equality can win,” she said. “This campaign is about making sure there are no ceilings, no limits on any of us. This is our moment to come together.”

Clinton had already secured the delegates needed for the nomination before the contests, according to an Associated Press tally. Still, Sanders had hoped to use a victory in California to persuade party insiders to switch their allegiances. Sanders picked up wins in Montana and North Dakota, but Clinton won substantially in California. Sanders nonetheless vowed to continue to his campaign to the last contest in the District of Columbia on June 14.

“The struggle continues,” he said. Clinton’s victory in California assured her a majority of pledged delegates - those chosen in primaries and caucuses. That’s notable because Sanders has argued that his White House bid remained viable as long as he stood a chance of winning a majority of those delegates. He would have needed a landslide to reach that goal.

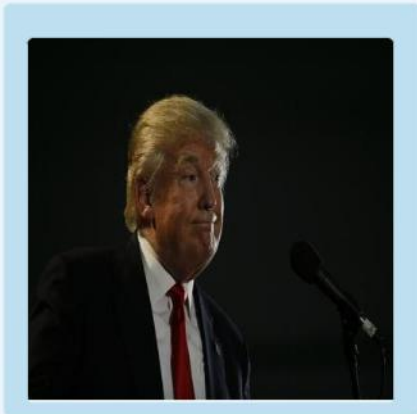
Despite the pledge to soldier on, there were signs Sanders was listening. In his typically passionate remarks, the socialist firebrand repeatedly noted “we are in this together” and argued that a tenet of his campaign was that “we will not allow right-wing Republicans to control our government.” Sanders said he called Clinton to congratulate her on the victories. U.S. President Barack Obama called both Sanders and Clinton, congratulating both on their campaigns.

The White House said Sanders and Obama would meet June 9, at Sanders' request, to discuss "how to build on the extraordinary work he has done to engage millions of Democratic voters, and to build on that enthusiasm."

Clinton and Sanders are also expected to connect in the coming days, Clinton's spokesman said. Their campaign managers spoke earlier in the day, signaling that conversations were underway about the road ahead.

Clinton says Trump dangerous, unfit to be commander in chief

AFP, 03.06.2016



US presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton tore into her likely election rival Donald Trump as never before, saying his foreign policy is dangerously incoherent and labeling him unfit for office. "He is temperamentally unfit to hold an office that requires knowledge, stability and immense responsibility," Clinton said, cranking up the rhetoric in what is already a deeply acrimonious election season.

"This is not someone who should ever have the nuclear codes." Americans will go to the polls on November 8 to elect a new president, replacing Barack Obama who steps down after eight years in office.

Clinton and Trump are all but assured to be the Democratic and Republican party nominees. Clinton, who formerly served as secretary of state, first lady and US senator, is vying to become the first female president in America's 239-year history. Trump, speaking at a rally in San Jose, California, ridiculed the Democrat's speech.

"It was pathetic. It was so sad to watch. She was up there, supposed to be a foreign policy speech, it was a political speech, had nothing to do with foreign policy." Earlier, the businessman took to his favorite social media platform Twitter as Clinton was speaking: "Bad performance by Crooked Hillary Clinton! Reading poorly from the teleprompter! She doesn't even look presidential!"

The 69-year-old celebrity real estate mogul burst onto the political scene last year, leveraging his fame to garner media coverage and dispatching much more experienced Republican rivals. But in the process Trump has rejected many of the central tenets of foreign policy endorsed by both major parties.

He has questioned the utility of NATO, expressed admiration for Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un and appeared cavalier about the prospect of nuclear weapons proliferation. Clinton ridiculed her foe -- painting him as a thin-skinned neophyte -- and voiced incredulity at his views.



“I will leave it to the psychiatrists to explain his affection for tyrants,” she said, while trying to showcase her own grasp of world affairs. “Even if I weren’t in this race, I’d be doing everything I could to make sure Donald Trump never becomes president because I believe he will take our country down a truly dangerous path,” she told an audience in San Diego, California.

Clinton’s fiery speech foreshadows what is certain to be one of the most vitriolic US elections in living memory. With the two major parties deeply divided after rancorous primary campaigns, both leaders are likely to use a common enemy to unify supporters.

By taking on Trump on national security, Clinton is trying to move the battle to favorable terrain, according to Geoffrey Skelley of the University of Virginia Center for Politics. “She definitely does best against Trump on issues of security, foreign policy,” he said.

“It’s something that she thinks is going to be a key driver in the end to her winning, that people are going to decide that -- even if they are uncertain about Clinton -- that she is the safer choice.” Trump got some succor, winning the endorsement of Republican Paul Ryan, speaker of the House of Representatives.

But even as Trump wins the backing of Republicans in Congress, many party acolytes who take pride in Republicans’ traditionally strong national security credentials are hostile to Trump leading the party. Clinton will hope her message resonates with military families and establishment Republicans -- prominent in vital battleground states like Virginia and North Carolina. Some of her message appeared tailored to them.

“Imagine Donald Trump sitting in the situation room making life or death decisions on behalf of the United States,” Clinton said. “Imagine him deciding whether to send your spouses or children into battle.”

“Imagine if he had not just his Twitter account at his disposal when he’s angry but America’s entire arsenal. Do we want him making those calls? Someone thin-skinned and quick to anger who lashes out at the smallest criticism? Do we want his finger anywhere near the button?”



Announcements & Reports

► *Turkey in a Reconnecting Eurasia*

Source : CSIS
Weblink : <https://www.csis.org/analysis/turkey-reconnecting-eurasia>

► *European Banking Supervision: The First Eighteen Months*

Source : Bruegel
Weblink : <http://bruegel.org/2016/06/blueprint-european-banking-supervision-the-first-eighteen-months/>

► *Project on Nuclear Issues*

Source : CSIS
Weblink : <https://www.csis.org/analysis/project-nuclear-issues-2>

Upcoming Events

► *The Search for Europe*

Date : 12 June 2016
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://bruegel.org/events/the-search-for-europe/>

► *The UK and the EU: Managing the Euro and the Single Market*

Date : 12 June 2016
Place : London - UK
Website : <https://www.chathamhouse.org/event/uk-and-eu-managing-euro-and-single-market>

► *Competitive Gains in the Economic and Monetary Union*

Date : 13 June 2016
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/534-competitive-gains-in-the-economic-and-monetary-union/>

► *The Future of Capitalist Democracy: UK-Japan Perspectives*

Date : 14 June 2016
Place : London - UK
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/future-capitalist-democracy-uk-japan-perspectives>



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

Date : 14 June 2016
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/524-emerging-markets-and-europe-time-for-different-relationships/>

► *What future for Europe's Social Models?*

Date : 16 June 2016
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/526-what-future-for-europes-social-models/>

► *Challenges for Growth in Europe*

Date : 17 June 2016
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/521-challenges-for-growth-in-europe/>

► *Global Governance of Public Goods: Asian and European Perspectives*

Date : 18 June 2016
Place : Paris - France
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/529-global-governance-of-public-goods-asian-and-european-perspectives/>

► *The Future of the Welfare State*

Date : 19 June 2016
Place : Berlin - Germany
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/541-the-future-of-the-welfare-state/>