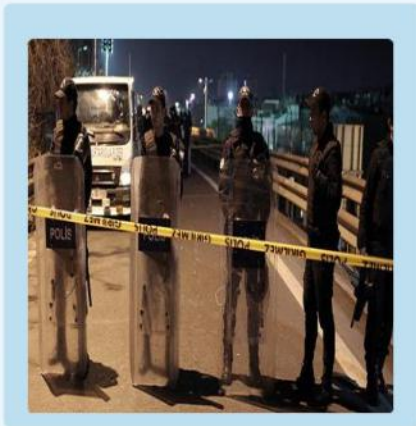


## Turkey on alert after CIA Intel on ISIL attack threat

Hurriyet Daily News, 11.12.2015



Turkey has received notice of serious terrorism threats as both the Turkish and U.S. intelligence agencies warned of a possible terrorist attack on U.S. interests in the country by the ISIL, daily Hürriyet has reported.

ISIL is reported to be targeting U.S. interests in Turkey, such as consulates, embassies, residences and military bases, according to intelligence gathered by the U.S. CIA and the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MİT), the country's spy agency. According to intelligence, two separate written warnings were issued, respectively, with the names of five ISIL militants who had allegedly infiltrated the country.

The Turkish Police Department sent police departments in all 81 provinces a written warning following the joint intelligence work by the CIA and MİT that three Palestinians, who recently entered the country, would carry out a terrorist attack. ISIL militants were also alleged to be targeting areas mostly populated primarily by Russian tourists and tourists from other nationalities.

In the written warning issued, authorities said vigilance should be paid to ISIL-linked suspects who had infiltrated Turkey and planned to carry out terrorist attacks targeting U.S. interests in Turkey. Turkey has been under pressure to step up security against suspected ISIL militants operating in the country, after initial criticism that it acted too slowly to recognize the threat.

The country, however, has long been conducting counterterrorism activities against ISIL after militants from the group were implicated both in the Suruç bombing and the twin Ankara suicide blasts. The perpetrator of the suicide bombing attack in Suruç, a district in the southeastern province of Şanlıurfa, was identified to be an ISIL militant, who detonated himself and left dozens of civilians dead and more than 100 injured on July 20.

The suicide bombers in the Ankara twin blasts were also identified to be ISIL militants, as they killed more than 100 and wounded hundreds of others outside a train station in the Turkish capital on Oct. 10. The attack in Ankara was the deadliest act of terrorism in Turkey's history. Turkey has captured more than 2,627 members of ISIL, including 837 foreign nationals, over the past three years, the state-run Anadolu Agency has reported.

# Turkish foreign minister: Negative rhetoric from Russia declining

Hurriyet Daily News, 11.12.2015



The negative rhetoric in the war of words between Turkey and Russia is on the decline amid heightened tensions in the wake of Turkey's downing of a Russian warplane, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said.

“One should not sow discord among people. They make hate accusations. But there is a decrease in this rhetoric at the moment,” the foreign minister said, while speaking in a televised interview. Çavuşoğlu cited his meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Belgrade, where his counterpart also expressed Moscow's willingness to not escalate tension with Ankara.

“We asked to keep dialogue channels open with Russia and Lavrov did not object,” he said. Russian officials had “sentimental feelings” after the downing of their warplane by Turkey and they had been making accusations against Turkey, Çavuşoğlu said.

“Russia wants to utilize all opportunities against Turkey. But our patience is not endless,” he said, calling on Moscow to reexamine the decision to impose sanctions against Ankara. No political leader is mediating with Russia on behalf of Turkey, but there are some leaders, such as Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who wanted to help diffuse the tension between Ankara and Moscow, he added.

Asked if a planned joint operation between Turkey and the U.S. on Jarabulus in Syria, aimed to clear the region from Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) militants, was halted after Turkey shot down the Russian warplane, Çavuşoğlu said the plan was still on the agenda. “[The] Jarabulus [operation] has not been put aside. Talks continue,” he said.

# No return to 1960s for Turkish Cypriots: UN envoy

Hurriyet Daily News, 11.12.2015



The U.N.'s top official on the Cyprus issue has vowed that a final deal to reunite the divided east Mediterranean island will avoid any repeat of the sufferings of Turkish Cypriots in the 1960s, saying a "solid conclusion on governance" will guarantee the security of both Turkish and Greek Cypriots.

The U.N. Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Cyprus, Espen Barth Eide, was in Ankara for talks with PM Davutoğlu, FM Çavuşoğlu and Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Sinirlioğlu. In a Twitter message posted after his meeting with Davutoğlu late, Eide said he had "a substantive meeting with Davutoğlu on Cyprus and region, security and guarantees."

Taking pains not to directly comment on the wish of Ankara and the Turkish Cypriots to maintain Turkey's guarantor status in any final U.N. led-deal, Eide said "a solid conclusion on governance" would guarantee the security of both the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots.

"Security should not be reduced just to a question of troops and military issues. Security is first and foremost living together in peace in a successful federal construction. Sometimes I feel that the security questions are too narrow. Guarantees or troops are a part of it, but we have to see the complexity of the situation," Eide told the Hürriyet Daily News, after wrapping up his talks with the Turkish officials.

"Maybe a solid conclusion on governance that provides for the safety of the Turkish Cypriots, so that that there is no way that the events of the 1960s can happen again, may also be the key to any kind of adaptation of a security regime," he added.

The half-century-old Cyprus problem erupted after the island was granted independence from Britain in 1960, soon followed by an outbreak of inter-communal clashes in 1963. The island was ethnically divided between a Greek south and a Turkish north when the Turkish military intervened in 1974 under the terms of the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee after diplomacy failed to end unrest on the island. In addition to the Turkish Cypriot Peace Forces Command (KTBK), made up of 4,500 Turkish Cypriots, there are around 35,000 Turkish troops stationed on the island.

"We have to involve the guarantor states in the negotiations: Turkey, the U.K., and Greece. The official positions are well known, Turkey wants guarantees to go on and Greece wants them to go. We are looking for ways to make sure that everybody in Cyprus feels secure, but in such a way that their security is not undermining the security of somebody else," Eide said. "This is what we call 'cooperative security,' in the sense that Turkish Cypriots need to be safe as the smaller community and they need to be safe not only in the physical or military sense but also in the political construct.

There must be good space for them to preserve their political and cultural identity in the constituent state. At the same time, we want the Greek Cypriots to feel themselves confident and safe in the construct too," he added.

In a statement, Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akıncı stressed the importance of Turkey's guarantor status in making the Turkish Cypriots feel secure. "Turkish Cypriots see their security in the continuation of Turkey's guarantor status," Akıncı said. Eide described these as "sensitive issues" that will be "discussed later on."

"What I'm now doing is spending time with the leaders of the guarantor powers and the leaders in Cyprus, to see what kind of mutual accommodation can be found. The key goal that we all now agree on is that both communities need to feel security not only today but in the long run, in such a way that enhances the other's security. If one has security to the detriment of another, then it is not producing security overall," he added.

## Diplomatic efforts over MidEast ramp up

Hurriyet Daily News, 09.12.2015



Regional officials including the foreign ministers of Ankara, Washington and Doha have held talks amid continuing regional tension over attempts to end Syria's civil war and the deployment of Turkish troops to Iraq.

Turkish FM Çavuşoğlu conducted phone conversations with U.S. Secretary State Kerry and Qatari FM al-Attiyah to discuss regional developments, particularly Iraq, according to official sources. The phone conversations of Çavuşoğlu with Turkey's two best allies in the region occurred amid reports of preparations for a massive military operation to liberate the strategic Iraqi city of Mosul from the ISIL.

Diplomatic sources said Çavuşoğlu was in Pakistan to attend a regional conference when he spoke with his counterparts over the phone. Meanwhile, Kerry said that he would travel to Moscow next week for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin on a political settlement in Syria and Ukraine, according to Reuters.

Speaking during an event on the sidelines of the Paris climate talks, Kerry said Russia "has been constructive" in trying to find a political solution to the Syrian conflict. "I will be traveling to Moscow in a week and will be meeting with him [Putin] and [Russian Foreign Minister Sergei] Lavrov on Syria and on Ukraine," Kerry said.

"If we can join interests sufficiently to understand there is a positive outcome for all of us in saving Syria and getting a political settlement ... it'll be absolutely enormous. And that is why I'm going," Kerry said.

# Foreign Ministry: Turkey urges citizens to leave Iraq, excluding Iraqi Kurdistan

AFP, 10.12.2015



Turkey called on its citizens to leave all areas of Iraq, excluding Iraqi Kurdistan, due to increased security risks, the foreign ministry said.

The Foreign Ministry warned against non-essential travel to several provinces in Iraq including Basra, Najaf, Anbar and Kirkuk and said: “We strongly advise those whose stay is not essential to leave those provinces as soon as possible.” “The scope of our travel warning to Iraq has expanded to include all provinces except for Dohuk, Arbil and Sulaymaniyah,” all of which are in the northern region of Iraqi Kurdistan, the ministry said in a statement posted on its website.

Ankara cited increasing threats targeting Turkish companies recently, as well as declarations encouraging violence, abduction and attacks. The Foreign Ministry also called on citizens living in the Iraqi Kurdish region to stay away from areas where operations are taking place against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and to obey warnings and guidance from the Iraqi Kurdish administration.

The warning comes amid growing strains between Ankara and the central Baghdad government over the deployment by Turkey of up to 300 soldiers to train local Iraqi forces to retake the Iraqi city of Mosul from ISIL jihadists.

# Barzani gets warm welcome in Ankara amid Turkey-Iraq tensions

Hurriyet Daily News, 09.12.2015



Masoud Barzani, the leader of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq's north, received a warm welcome in Ankara for key talks as Turkish jets bombed outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) targets in the neighboring country.

Barzani's first stop in Ankara was the headquarters of the National Intelligence Organization (MİT). Feridun Sinirlioğlu, the undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry, welcomed the Kurdish leader at Esenboğa Airport. A KRG flag was on the table during the meeting, along with the Turkish and the Iraqi flags, a rare implementation in the mutual meetings.

However, the three flags were observed in previous visits by the Turkish authorities to the KRG capital of Arbil. Former Turkish Agriculture Minister Mehdi Eker welcomed KRG Agriculture Minister Abdulsitar Macid earlier this year, with the media reporting that this was the first time that a KRG flag had been used in an official visit to Turkey.

Barzani was also scheduled to meet with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. Before moving to Turkey, Barzani hosted the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) commander Lloyd Austin near Arbil.

The Turkish Armed Forces, meanwhile, staged a cross-border aerial campaign in northern Iraq to hit PKK targets in the Kandil Mountains amid tensions with the central government in Baghdad over Turkey's deployment of troops near Mosul. According to a statement by the Turkish General Staff, 10 F16 fighter jets launched an attack between 10 p.m. and 10:50 p.m..

PKK targets in the Kandil, Hakurk, Zap and Avaşîn-Basyan regions in northern Iraq were destroyed in an aerial campaign," the statement said. Tensions have recently escalated between Turkey and Iraq, as the central Iraqi government has slammed the recent of additional Turkish troops to the camp, vowing to take its case to the United Nations if Turkey did not withdraw.

A much-anticipated counter-offensive by Iraqi forces to retake Mosul from ISIL has been repeatedly postponed because they are tied down in fighting elsewhere. Iraq has urged the international community to provide more weapons and training in its battle against the militants, but rejects most forms of direct intervention, mistrusting the intentions of foreign powers.

A small number of Turkish trainers were already at the camp near Mosul before the latest deployment in order to train the Hashid Watani (national mobilization), a force made up of mainly former Iraqi police or Sunni Arab origin and volunteers from Mosul.

Meanwhile, Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations appeared to play down a dispute between Baghdad and Ankara over the deployment of Turkish troops in northern Iraq, saying bilateral talks between the neighboring states to end the row were proceeding favorably.

"We are solving it between Baghdad and Ankara bilaterally," Iraqi Ambassador Mohamed Ali al-Hakim told reporters after Russia raised the issue of Turkey's deployment during a closed-door meeting of the United Nations Security Council.

"We have not yet escalated it to the Security Council or to the United Nations," he said, adding that Moscow had not consulted with Baghdad before raising the issue in the council. "For us, what is helpful is the bilateral discussion going on right now between Baghdad and Ankara, and it's going extremely well," he said.

But al-Hakim reiterated that Iraq wanted the Turkish troops withdrawn from its territory immediately, saying the deployment was "illegal" and a violation of the United Nations charter. On the same day, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi asked NATO to put pressure on alliance member Turkey to withdraw its troops immediately from northern Iraq after Ankara said it would not deploy any more but refused to pull out those already there.

"NATO must use its authority to urge Turkey to withdraw immediately from Iraqi territory," al-Abadi said in a statement, posted after a 48-hour deadline set by Baghdad for a withdrawal of the troops expired. Al-Abadi spoke with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg by telephone, the statement added, calling the deployment a violation of Iraq's sovereignty.

## PM: Turkey 'ready to work' with Russia to prevent repeat of jet downing

Hurriyet Daily News, 09.12.2015



PM Davutoğlu said that Turkey is "ready to work" with Russia to prevent a repeat of incidents similar to the downing of a Russian fighter jet by Turkey, while also accusing Russia of "ethnic cleansing" of Turkmens in Syria's Latakia.

"We are ready to work with Russia to prevent similar incidents Davutoğlu said, while reserving harsh words for Moscow's actions in Latakia."Russia is trying to create a safe zone for itself by isolating the Turkmen and Sunni population from Latakia and also trying to safeguard the Russian and Syrian bases," he said, describing the Russian targeting of Turkmen groups as "ethnic cleansing."

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, ruled out the accusations, naming Davutoğlu's remarks "groundless." Davutoğlu also added that the Russian bombing of the Azez region, while also cutting the supply lines of moderate opposition groups, only served the interests of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

The Turkish prime minister also referred to the controversial deployment of Turkish soldiers to Mosul as an "act of solidarity" rather than aggression, amid increasing threats from ISIL against Turkish soldier trainers. Meanwhile, he also expressed optimism over "turning a new page" in EU-Turkey relations, heralding the fact that the relaxation in visa rules for Turkish citizens traveling in the EU would be completed in between six and nine months.

## Central Bank foresees 6.5 pct inflation in 2016

Hurriyet Daily News, 09.12.2015



The Turkish Central Bank has forecast the country's inflation to stand at 6.5 percent at the end of 2016, according to the bank's governor, Başçı. Addressing the presentation of the bank's 2016 monetary and exchange rate policy in Ankara, Başçı said the bank would maintain its tight monetary policy, while ensuring foreign exchange liquidity.

Başçı did not discuss plans to narrow the difference between Turkey's one-week lending rate and overnight lending rate, known as the interest rate "corridor." The Central Bank had announced these plans on Aug. 18, but has not provided additional details since.

Inflation in Turkey rose to an annual 8.1 percent in November from 7.58 percent in October, the Turkish Statistics Institute (TÜİK) reported. The governor said he believed the inflation target should be set together with the Turkish government.

According to Başçı, the target for inflation set by the bank for the next three years would remain at 5 percent, with an uncertainty band of 2 percentage points in both directions. He said the expected minimum wage hike, to 1,300 Turkish Liras (\$446) per month, from the current 1,000 liras (\$342) per month, could impact the year-end inflation prediction of the bank by 1.5 points, as an increase in consumer demand is expected to push inflation higher.

Başçı emphasized the bank had prepared measures to deal with the expected rise in U.S. interest rates in December, as well as for fallout from the European Central Bank's stimulus program, without providing details. "Measures that have been taken have increased the resilience of the economy against external shocks," he said. According to Başçı, improvement in the current account balance will continue. The country's 12-month rolling current account deficit stood at \$40.6 billion, or about 5 percent of GDP, at the end of September 2015.



Russian sanctions against Turkish fruit and vegetable exporters may help ease Turkish inflation, Başçı said, as the increased supply in Turkey will reduce prices. Moscow has approved a raft of sanctions in retaliation for Ankara's downing of one of its fighter jets which reportedly violated Turkish airspace on Nov. 24 after it ignored repeated warnings. Russia will no longer permit the export of fresh fruit and vegetables, which accounts for about \$1.27 billion annually, according to the country's Agriculture Ministry.

## Deputy PM: Turkish economy risks losing \$9 billion over Russia crisis

Hurriyet Daily News, 03.12.2015



Tensions with Russia could cost Turkey's economy nine billion dollars in the worst case scenario of "zero relations", Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Şimşek said.

Moscow has imposed a series of economic sanctions against Ankara after Turkish fighter jets shot down a Russian jet on the Syrian border on Nov. 24, sparking a big crisis between the two countries."In the worst-case scenario, which is zero relations with Russia, we are talking about a loss of nine billion dollars (8.3 billion euros)," Şimşek told private NTV television. The current tension is likely shave 0.3 to 0.4 percent off Turkey's GDP, Şimşek added.

Russia's sanctions include a ban on the import of some Turkish foods and a halt on sales of holiday packages, a major blow to Turkish tourism. Şimşek said that the number of Russian tourists visiting Turkey and construction contracts with Russian companies had also significantly reduced. "There are 603,000 fewer [Russian] tourists," he said.

"We have always seen Russia as an important partner and have no intention to escalate the tensions any further," he said. "But if Russia continues to maintain this attitude... all kinds of dissuasive measures will be taken," he warned.

Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced that Turkey was seeking alternatives to Russian energy, vowing his country would "not collapse" under sanctions. Energy-hungry Turkey relies on Russia for 55 percent of its natural gas and 30 percent of its oil. "It is possible to find different suppliers," Erdoğan said, referring to Qatar and Azerbaijan.

# Turkey not planning to revise Montreux Convention on Bosphorus rights

Hurriyet Daily News, 08.12.2015



Turkey is not involved to revise the Montreux Convention that regulates international access to the Bosphorus and the Dardenelles, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Bilgiç said, refuting reports the convention could be renewed.

“We don’t currently have any preparation to that end. But anything could be subject to assessment due to developments,” Bilgiç said, referring to part of article that allows the accord to be revised every 20 years. The issue has come to the agenda after footage emerged of a serviceman aboard Russia’s Caesar Kunikov landing ship apparently aiming a surface-to-air missile launcher towards Istanbul.

Russian Ambassador Andrey Karlov was summoned to the Turkish Foreign Ministry for an hour-long meeting over the incident. Under the 1936 Montreux Convention, Turkey controls the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles Straits and regulates the passage of warships between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Seas.

The convention states that the Bosphorus’ main principle in peace time is freedom of passage. The convention limits the duration of the stay and the sizes of the military vessels’ belonging to non-literal countries in the Black Sea.

Moscow currently depends on the unrestricted access to the straits afforded it under the Montreux Convention. Through the straits, it sends supplies to Syria from its Novorossiysk naval base in the Black Sea to Russian ports in Tartus and Latakia.

Turkey can only block Russian military vessels from passing through the straits, invoking articles 20 or 21 of the Montreux Convention, if it is in war with Russia or if it considers herself to be threatened with imminent danger of war. Relations between Ankara and Moscow are at their tensest since the end of the Cold War after the downing of a Russian warplane on Turkey’s border with Syria over violations of Turkish airspace.

# Erdoğan says Turkish troops not leaving Iraq yet

Hurriyet Daily News, 11.12.2015



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said it was "out of the question for the moment" that Turkish troops would withdraw from Iraq, after Baghdad accused Ankara of sending them in without permission.

The row has badly soured relations and saw the Turkish ambassador to Iraq summoned to demand that Turkey immediately withdraw hundreds of troops deployed in recent days in northern Iraq, near the ISIL -controlled city of Mosul. Iraq's foreign ministry said Turkish forces had entered Iraqi territory without the knowledge of Baghdad, which viewed their presence as a "hostile act".

Speaking at a news conference, Erdoğan said the troops were there to train Kurdish peshmerga fighters and not for combat purposes. He reiterated an earlier statement that they had been deployed following an invitation by Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi last year.

"The number of our soldiers (in northern Iraq) might increase or decrease depending on the number of peshmerga being trained," Erdoğan stated. "Withdrawing our soldiers is out of the question for the moment."

Erdoğan said there would be a trilateral meeting between Turkey, the United States and Kurdish northern Iraqi authorities but made no mention of talks with Baghdad. Prime ministerial sources said PM Ahmet Davutoğlu had at the request of U.S. officials spoken to Vice President Joe Biden.

Davutoğlu told Biden that Turkey co-ordinating with Iraq in its efforts to tackle ISIL, and that a letter to the Iraqi prime minister laying out the Turkish position was being delivered by a high-level delegation which included Turkey's spy chief, Hakan Fidan.

"He expressed that Turkey will continue to contribute to the government of our friend Iraq's fight against [ISIL], in coordination with Baghdad," one source added. The White House confirmed the call had taken place.

Speaking to his counterpart earlier this week, the Turkish foreign minister emphasised Ankara's respect for Iraqi territorial integrity and said further troop deployments had been halted for now. The furore is the latest blow to Turkey's beleaguered regional relations. Ties with former allies Egypt and Libya are troubled, and Ankara is trying to defuse a row with Moscow after Turkish jets shot down a Russian warplane.

# Russia expands military presence around Turkey amid tension

Hurriyet Daily News, 09.12.2015



Moscow has reportedly beefed up its military presence in the region around Turkey following economic sanctions after the Nov. 24 downing of a Russian SU-24 fighter jet by Turkey near the Syrian border.

Russia sent 14 helicopters to Armenia and deployed them to the Erebuni Air Base. Seven of these helicopters are armored Mi-24 attack helicopters and the others are Mi-8 model transport helicopters. The number of Mi-24 attack helicopters could reach 15 by the end of the year. Russia has sent a submarine called the “Rostov-on-Don” to the Mediterranean Sea, where Russia also houses a naval base in Tartus.

The “Rostov-on-Don” has been equipped with Caliber cruise missiles. Russia had previously sent two submarines and the “Moskva” cruiser carrying an air defense system similar to S-300 missiles to Eastern Mediterranean. Russia has been using the Hmeymim Air Base outside Latakia, one of the strongholds of the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

There are an estimated 55 fighter jets in the base, including SU-30 fighter jets and SU-24, 2U-25 and SU-34 bombers along with seven Mi-24 and five Mi-8 helicopters. The air defense systems of the base include Pantsir-S1, Buk-M2, S-200, Pechora-2M and S-400 batteries. The electronic Krasukha platform, which jams radar-guided systems, has also been deployed to the Hmeymim. There are also an estimated 15 tanks and 30 armored personnel vehicles in the base.

# Putin orders military to take tough action against threats in Syria

AFP, 11.12.2015



President Putin ordered his forces in Syria to take tough action against any threats, speaking two weeks after Turkey shot down a Russian warplane in the war-torn country.

“I order you to act as tough as possible,” he told a defence meeting in televised remarks. “Any targets threatening the Russian grouping or our land infrastructure should be immediately destroyed.” “I would like to warn those who would once again try to organise some sort of provocations against our servicemen,” he said in a thinly veiled threat to Ankara.

Turkey shot down a Russian warplane on the Syrian border, claiming it violated Turkish airspace. After the downing of the jet, which led to the deaths of a pilot and another serviceman who attempted to rescue him, Russia introduced economic sanctions against Turkey and beefed up its firepower at its airbase in Syria.

Putin’s call for a tougher military response is also likely to cause concern among monitors who have repeatedly accused Russia of conducting an indiscriminate bombing campaign and killing civilians in Syria.

Russia has been carrying out air strikes in the war-ravaged nation at the request of President Bashar al-Assad since the end of September, while a US-led coalition is conducting its own campaign targeting the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Russia said it hit IS targets with missiles fired from a submarine in the Mediterranean for the first time since launching the campaign on September 30. Putin rejected claims that Russia is using the Syrian campaign, which also saw the military fire off cruise missiles from warships in the Caspian Sea, to showcase its top weapons to the West.

“Our actions there are not guided by some unclear abstract geopolitical interests, nor are they guided by a desire to practice and test new weapons systems which is of course important in itself,” Putin said at the defence meeting. “The most important thing is not this. The most important thing is to prevent the threat to Russia itself.” Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, for his part, said ISIL jihadists now control 70 percent of Syrian territory, putting their number at 60,000.

# Brussels pushes for EU coastguard-borders agency

AFP, 11.12.2015



The European Commission has drawn up proposals to create a 1,000-strong EU borders and coastguard agency to help secure the bloc's external borders in reaction to the migrant crisis, a top official said.

Dimitris Avramopoulos, the European Commissioner in charge of migration policy, told that national authorities had been overwhelmed by the unprecedented numbers of asylum seekers and other migrants arriving in Europe, creating the need for a pan-European solution. "National authorities manage to do their best but they were not prepared for that (the surge in refugee numbers)," Avramopoulos said.

"We need something more comprehensive and better structured." The commissioner said the proposed new agency's tasks would include defending and protecting EU borders, providing migrants with support and carrying out search and rescue operations. It would have a staff of around 1,000 people and would be authorised to intervene whenever national authorities could not, he added.

The agency would work closely with planned European reception centres, or 'hotspots', to be established in Greece and southern Italy to ensure more comprehensive identification, registration and processing of new arrivals in Europe, the commissioner added. "Nobody would ever come into EU territory without accepting to respect the rules of our union," he said.

The ease with which migrants can get into Europe without being identified has become a hot button issue in the wake of last month's Paris attacks following reports two of the attackers passed through Greece posing as refugees.

Brussels has initiated infringement proceedings against Greece and Italy -- where the bulk of refugees arrive -- over their failure to comply with EU rules which require them to fingerprint every migrant entering the bloc via their territory.

The proposal for a new agency is likely to encounter opposition from member states opposed to any extension of the bloc's institutions and powers and will require approval by the European Parliament as well as national governments.

"It is up to the Council (of Ministers) to make the decision," Avramopolous added. "We think we have to take the step forward of having more Europe to solve this problem. "Member states cannot do it alone. We need to have more instruments in our hand and this will be one more instrument at our disposal.

“We need it. We have found out that we are in real need of having this agency up and running as soon as possible and on the ground.” The commissioner said the idea would be discussed by the European Parliament next week.

## French far right wins record votes in first poll since attacks

AFP, 07.12.2015



France’s far-right National Front (FN) saw record gains in the first round of regional polls, held under a state of emergency just three weeks after Islamic extremists killed 130 people in Paris.

Despite the strong result, it faces an uphill battle to clinch a run-off vote next week after Socialists withdrew candidates in an attempt to block it from power. The far-right National Front (FN) came first with around 28 percent of the vote nationwide in the first round and topped the list in at least six of 13 regions, according to final estimates from the interior ministry.

FN leader Marine Le Pen and her 25-year-old niece Marion Marechal-Le Pen broke the symbolic 40 percent mark in their respective regions, shattering previous records for the party as they tapped into voter anger over a stagnant economy and security fears linked to Europe’s refugee crisis.

Marine Le Pen, a lawyer by training, welcomed the “magnificent result”, saying it proved the FN was “without contest the first party of France”. A grouping of right-wing parties took 27 percent, the official estimates showed, while the ruling Socialist Party and its allies took 23.5 percent.

The polls were held under tight security following France’s worst-ever terror attacks, which have thrust the FN’s anti-immigration and often Islamophobic message to the fore. Around half the 45 million registered voters took part in the polls.

Any party which secures 10 percent backing in the first round has the right to present candidates in the second round, due next Sunday. Final estimates showed 47-year-old Le Pen taking a whopping 40.5 percent of the vote in the economically depressed northern region of Nord-Pas-de-Calais-Picardie, once a bastion of the left.

Marechal-Le Pen did equally well in the vast southeastern Provence-Alpes-Cote d’Azur, known for its glamorous beaches and stunning countryside. The far-right success triggered an immediate debate among the mainstream parties as to whether, in regions where they trailed third, they should urge voters to back the candidate opposing the FN.



Socialist leader Jean-Christophe Cambadélis said his party would withdraw from the second round in the regions Le Pen and her niece were leading in order “to block” the FN. But former conservative president Nicolas Sarkozy, head of The Republicans, which leads the right-wing grouping, repeated his refusal to do the same in key polls where the Socialists were the strongest opposition. “We must hear and understand the profound exasperation of the French people,” he said.

Le Pen said she was “not worried” by Socialist plans to withdraw but acknowledged that “things will obviously be a bit less straightforward”. Right-wing daily Le Figaro and communist L’Humanite both went with “Le Choc” (“Shock”) after the result on their Monday front page, while left-wing newspaper Liberation warned: “It’s coming”.

Le Parisien carried a poll predicting that, faced with a straight choice in the second round between an FN and a right-wing candidate, 59 percent would vote for the conservative and 41 percent for the far-right party. President Francois Hollande has seen his personal ratings surge as a result of his hardline approach since the November 13 attacks in Paris.

But his Socialist Party has languished behind the FN and the centre-right Republicans. The FN’s anti-EU and anti-immigrant narrative has been a lightning rod for many French who have lost faith in mainstream parties after years of double-digit unemployment and a sense of deepening inequality.

Victories next week would not only hand control of a regional government to the FN for the first time, but would also give Le Pen a springboard for her presidential bid in 2017. She has strived to “de-demonise” the party since taking over the reins in 2011, distancing herself from the more overt racism of her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen -- this year going as far as to boot him out of the party he co-founded.

The FN’s repeated linking of immigration with terrorism has also helped it climb in the polls since the gun and suicide bombing assaults in Paris. When it emerged that at least two of the attackers had entered Europe posing as migrants, the FN aggressively pushed a message of “we told you so”.

As the party hailed its victory Sunday, Jean-Marie Le Pen tweeted a video of Christian Estrosi, the conservative rival to Marechal-Le Pen in the southeast, wearing a kippa, a skullcap, and dancing with Jewish men -- a scene apparently recorded at a bar mitzvah or other celebration. “Take heart at a time of ill fortune,” he said in a tweet accompanying the footage, which has since been removed.

The French electoral system has tended to keep the far-right from power, as mainstream voters ganged up against the FN in second rounds. But the party has been on a roll, taking first place in European and local polls over the past two years.



# Trump's latest tirade: Ban Muslims from entering US

AFP, 08.12.2015



Republican frontrunner Donald Trump called for a “total and complete shutdown” of Muslims entering the United States, unleashing some of the most provocative and divisive remarks of his controversial presidential campaign.

The statement followed last week’s shooting in California by a Muslim couple believed to have been radicalized by extremists, and landed with a thunderclap just as fellow presidential candidates were contemplating ways to improve national security. His aides did not specify if the proposal would affect both tourists and immigrants, and did not say either if it would target American Muslims currently abroad.

In a rambling, 50-minute speech aboard the USS Yorktown later, Trump read part of his statement aloud, hardening the tone and saying the halt on Muslims entering the country should remain in place “until our country’s representatives can figure out what the hell is going on.”

“We have no choice,” Trump said, saying that Islamist radicals want to kill Americans. “It’s going to get worse and worse. We’re going to have more World Trade Centers,” he said, referring to the deadly attacks on September 11, 2001.

Trump drew swift condemnation by presidential rivals and the White House, which denounced his call to bar Muslims as “totally contrary” to US values. “We have, in our Bill of Rights, respect for the freedom of religion,” said one of President Barack Obama’s top foreign policy aides, Ben Rhodes.

Trump’s campaign cited poll data allegedly showing “hatred toward Americans by large segments of the Muslim population.” “Where this hatred comes from and why we will have to determine,” the billionaire real estate mogul, who is leading in opinion polls among likely Republican voters, said in the statement.

“Until we are able to determine and understand this problem and the dangerous threat it poses, our country cannot be the victims of horrendous attacks by people that believe only in jihad, and have no sense of reason or respect for human life.”

Trump has been increasingly virulent in his remarks targeting Muslim Americans since the deadly Paris attacks, and again in the wake of last week’s shooting rampage in California, which left 14 dead and 21 wounded.

Last month, he caused a furor when he claimed he saw “thousands and thousands of people” cheering in parts of New Jersey with substantial Arab-American populations as the Twin Towers collapsed on 9/11.



But his latest statement was particularly jarring, and it unleashed severe condemnation on Twitter, including from other Republicans running for president. “Donald Trump is unhinged,” former Florida governor Jeb Bush tweeted. “His ‘policy’ proposals are not serious.”

Rivals Marco Rubio, John Kasich, Chris Christie and Lindsey Graham were among those who rejected Trump’s proposal. Hillary Clinton, the main Democratic presidential hopeful, described Trump’s comments as “reprehensible, prejudiced and divisive.”

“You don’t get it,” she tweeted to Trump. “This makes us less safe.” Democratic contender Martin O’Malley slammed Trump as “a fascist demagogue.” Trump has appeared immune to the denunciations. He remains the clear frontrunner for the Republican nomination less than two months before the first state-wide votes are cast in the primary race, even amid broad public outrage at many of his remarks.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the nation’s largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, said it was “extremely shocked” about Trump’s comments. “It is reckless and simply un-American,” CAIR executive director Nihad Awad said.

“Donald Trump sounds more like a leader of a lynch mob than a great nation like ours.” Trump’s campaign said some of the poll figures it cited were from the Center for Security Policy, which CAIR noted has been branded a “hate group” by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

In New Jersey, director Ahmed Shedeed of the Islamic Center of Jersey City warned that Trump’s remarks were “giving the right to people to hurt us.” “I’m asking him, I’m begging him. It has to stop, all these accusations,” he said after prayers at a mosque in the city, as he urged Trump and others to see Muslims as “part of the American mosaic.”

Protesters interrupted his speech at least three times, with a visibly frustrated Trump criticizing what he described as poor security at the event. White House spokesman Josh Earnest said Trump was tapping into a darker side to “play on people’s fears in order to build on support for his campaign.”

Instead of condemning the Muslim community, US officials should work with Muslim leaders to root out extremist voices and “insulate those who are vulnerable to being radicalized,” Earnest told MSNBC.



# Announcements & Reports

## ► *Financial Regulatory Transparency: New Data and Implications for EU Policy*

**Source** : Bruegel

**Weblink** : <http://bruegel.org/2015/12/financial-regulatory-transparency-new-data-and-implications-for-eu-policy/>

## ► *Comments on the Five Presidents' Report*

**Source** : Bruegel

**Weblink** : <http://bruegel.org/2015/12/comments-on-the-five-presidents-report/>

## ► *Afghanistan and Failed State Wars: An Update*

**Source** : CSIS

**Weblink** : <http://csis.org/publication/afghanistan-and-failed-state-wars-update>

## ► *Iraq: Clash of Coalitions or A Shared Endgame?*

**Source** : Brookings

**Weblink** : <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2015/12/07-iraq-clash-of-coalitions-alkhatteeb>

# Upcoming Events

## ► *The Economic Challenges for Germany and Europe in 2016*

**Date** : 15 December 2015

**Place** : Washington DC, The US

**Website** : <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2015/12/15-economic-challenges-europe>

## ► *Reading 'The Federalist' in the 21st Century*

**Date** : 16 December 2015

**Place** : Washington DC, The US

**Website** : <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2015/12/16-federalist-21st-century-galston>



### ► *Competitive Gains in the Economic and Monetary Union*

**Date** : 23 December 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 December 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 December 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 December 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 December 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** : 28 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** : 29 December 2015  
**Place** : Berlin - Germany  
**Website** : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/541-the-future-of-the-welfare-state/>