



Alliance *for*
Shared Values

Was July 15 Erdogan's Reichstag Fire?

An Alternative to the Turkish Government Narrative

By Alliance for Shared Values
New York, NY

18 July 2017

About the Alliance for Shared Values

Inspired by the work of Mr. Fethullah Gulen, the Alliance for Shared Values is an umbrella non-profit organization serving as a voice for civic, culture and service organizations around the U.S. dedicated to promoting community service, education and interfaith dialogue. The Alliance's member organizations are founded by individuals who are participants in the Hizmet social initiative. The Alliance works with people and organizations of all backgrounds and faiths to promote greater understanding, cooperate on meaningful projects, and build stronger bonds.

About Hizmet

Beginning as a grassroots community in Turkey in the 1970s, Hizmet today is a transnational social initiative that advocates for the ideals of human rights, equal opportunity, democracy, non-violence and the emphatic acceptance of religious and cultural diversity.

Hizmet's culturally and religiously diverse supporters are inspired by the life and works of Fethullah Gulen, one of the world's most important Muslim figures for his decades-long commitment to interfaith tolerance and altruism.

Hizmet participants bring to life these ideals by promoting philanthropy and community service, investing in education for cultivating virtuous individuals, and promoting intercultural and interfaith dialogue for peaceful coexistence.

Topline Takeaways

On July 15, 2016, Turkey experienced a horrific event. The Turkish parliament was bombed and hundreds of soldiers and civilians lost their lives. This coup attempt appeared to have been planned and executed with remarkable incompetence and was crushed quickly. A year later, the failed coup has been used as a pretext to launch an unprecedented crackdown on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's political opponents and the free press, clearing the way for the president to consolidate power and ensure his place as Turkey's leader for years to come. At the one-year anniversary of this incident, many questions remain unanswered while a state of emergency remains in place and the government's vicious persecution of political opposition and the media rages on. This document will examine:

- The Erdogan government's ongoing purges and crackdown in Turkey, which were initiated with surprising speed and efficiency, and have thus far led to the arrests of more than 50,000 people and the dismissal of nearly 140,000 others. Additionally, some 234 journalists have been arrested and 149 media outlets have been shuttered by government decree. The state of emergency initially declared by President Erdogan has been extended several times and remains in place one year after the failed coup.
- The Erdogan government's rush to blame the coup on Fethullah Gulen, despite offering no credible evidence to support this claim. While Mr. Gulen has denied any involvement with the coup, and has publicly condemned it and its participants, the Turkish government has launched a coordinated and concerted effort to defame Gulen and hold him responsible. Meanwhile, several reports from intelligence agencies within the European Union have debunked the allegation that Mr. Gulen orchestrated the attempted putsch. In addition, several leading US intelligence officials have publicly challenged the idea that Gulen was behind the attempt.
- The growing number of inconsistencies in the narrative put forward by Erdogan and senior Turkish officials in the government, military and intelligence apparatus. Publicly, Erdogan has offered conflicting explanations about when and how he became aware of the coup attempt. What's more, questions abound about who, when and how officials within the government were tipped off about the putsch.
- Conflicting evidence and testimony regarding how orders from military officers were delivered and which individuals may have had foreknowledge that a coup attempt was in the works.
- Alternative narratives that might explain what really happened on July 15.

Introduction

On July 15, 2016, Turkey experienced a horrific, unsuccessful coup attempt. The Turkish parliament was bombed and hundreds of soldiers and civilians lost their lives. The coup attempt appeared to have been planned with remarkable incompetence and was crushed quickly. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was not harmed thanks to the 1st army in Istanbul whose commander remained loyal to him.

In the days following the incident, the Erdogan government declared a state of emergency and began a massive purge of alleged sympathizers of the Islamic scholar and preacher Fethullah Gulen. It quickly became clear that the arrests of the bulk of military officers were unrelated to whether they participated in the events of July 15. The arrested commanders had collectively 200,000 members of the Turkish army under their command. The arrested air base commanders had more than 200 fighter jets under their command. If they truly intended it, these commanders could have executed an effective military coup.

But the purges and arrests went far beyond the members of the military. According to TurkeyPurge.com, a site that tracks the victims of the purge, at last count 138,148 people were sacked, including 8,271 academics. Of judges and prosecutors, 4,424 were dismissed and around 3,000 were arrested, and 2,745 of these were dismissed on July 16, 2016. The attack on Turkey's media included 149 media outlets shut down and 234 journalists arrested¹. In total, 108,258 people were detained, of whom 53,668 were arrested as of this writing.

Literally all Hizmet-affiliated institutions were shut down. The categories and numbers of institutions shut down by Erdogan gives a good summary of the areas in which the Hizmet movement has been active during the five decades prior to 2016: 2,099 educational institutions were shut down, including hundreds of private K-12 schools and 15 universities. These closures forced 128,000 students to relocate to other schools, sometimes facing bullying and other forms of abuses in their new schools. Many of the Hizmet-affiliated schools known for their secular curriculum and success in science education were converted into religious schools. Thirty-five hospitals were shut down, resulting in hundreds of doctors and nurses losing their jobs and patients having to be transferred to other hospitals. The humanitarian relief organization Kimse Yok Mu, which helped the victims of every major disaster around the world, with an annual budget of around \$50 million, was also shut down. Intellectual organizations such as the Foundation of Journalists and Writers, a pioneer on rekindling the spirit of interfaith dialogue and respect in the mid-1990s was closed. Professional organizations with thousands of members from among physicians, healthcare professionals, teachers, and engineers were not only shut down, but membership in these associations were later used in courts as evidence of "membership in a terrorist organization."

Among the targets of the purges were the organizers of the International Festival of Language and Culture² which brought together students from more than 150 countries in events dedicated to the celebration of linguistic and artistic diversity in the world and to the promotion of global human solidarity. Having been banned in Turkey, the organization relocated to the United States and has been organizing smaller-scale events in several countries since then³.

Amnesty International⁴, Human Rights Watch⁵ and the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on Torture⁶ reported strong evidence of systematic and widespread torture in detention centers and

prisons. Human Rights Watch reported that the state of emergency that was authorized on July 20 resulted in denials of due process rights to detainees and encouraged both wrongful detentions and inhumane treatment of detainees⁷. The *New York Times* reported that due to its scale and cruelty, analysts compared Erdogan's crackdown with "Joseph McCarthy's Anti-Communist witch-hunt in the 1950s America, the Stalinist purges of the 1930s and the Cultural Revolution in China in the 1960s and '70s"⁸. Some analysts considered the purges as an unraveling of Erdogan's "inner Stalin"⁹. The various categories of human rights abuses committed under the state of emergency are summarized in Exhibit A.

The failed coup attempt provided Erdogan with an excellent excuse to consolidate his power. In addition to purging more than 6,000 members of the Turkish military, Erdogan also changed the military's recruitment, reporting and education structures. In its wake, he reignited the idea of an executive presidency, and he secured a narrow victory in a constitutional referendum in April 2017 — despite many reported electoral irregularities — to open his path to becoming the executive president of Turkey in 2019.

Erdogan's Government's Narrative and the Responses by Western Governments

President Erdogan, speaking on national TV around midnight that fateful day, immediately blamed Fethullah Gulen, a retired preacher and a vocal Erdogan critic who has been living in Pennsylvania since 1999, to be the mastermind of the July 15 incident. Gulen condemned the attempt while it was in progress¹⁰ and repeatedly denied any involvement¹¹ (Exhibit B). He challenged the Erdogan government to allow for an international investigation into the event¹² (Exhibit C). Gulen pledged to abide by its ruling, and if found guilty — even based on false testimony — promised to buy his own ticket to Turkey. Erdogan did not respond to this call.

The Erdogan government's unproven narrative about what happened on July 15th is the following: Gulen-affiliated officers in the Turkish military were alarmed by the news of an impending purge at the August meeting of the Military's Supreme Council. In order to pre-empt such a move and to take over the Turkish state, they planned a coup to start at 3 am in the morning of July 16th. However, their plan was discovered and they had to start early in the evening of July 15th, which led to it being hastily arranged and ultimately failing.

Western governments, intelligence services and observers did not accept Erdogan's narrative of July 15th. In particular:

1. Then-U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry Mr. Kerry said the Turkish government, as part of the extradition process, must provide evidence linking Gulen to the incident that withstands scrutiny in an American court¹⁴. As of this writing, approximately one year after the incident, there is no confirmation from the U.S. Department of Justice that the Turkish government has submitted evidence that meets this criteria.
2. James Clapper, then-director of U.S. National Intelligence, when he was asked whether the Turkish government's allegations that cleric Fethullah Gulen was behind the attempt passed the "smell test" of credibility: "No. Not to me." As reported by *The Washington Post*, Clapper also said that Secretary Kerry was right to press the Turkish government to back up its extradition request with evidence of Gulen's involvement. Clapper added, "We haven't seen it yet. We certainly haven't seen it in intel."¹⁵

3. U.S. House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes told Fox News that it was “hard to believe” that a U.S.-based Turkish cleric is behind the military coup attempt last summer, questioning Turkey as a reliable ally¹⁶.
4. When asked by *Der Spiegel*, whether Gulen was behind the coup as claimed by Erdogan, Bruno Kahl, Head of Germany’s BDN Foreign Intelligence Agency responded, “Turkey has tried to convince us of that at every level but so far it has not succeeded”¹⁷.
5. The European Union Intelligence Center (INTCEN) report on the incident contradicted the Turkish government’s claim that Gülen was behind the plot to overthrow the Turkish government. The report concluded that the coup was mounted by a range of opponents to Erdogan and his ruling AK Party. The report found it unlikely that Gulen himself played a role in the attempt, according to the *Times* of London, and Erdogan’s purges were planned well before the incident¹⁸.
6. A report by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the British Parliament on U.K.-Turkish relations stated that the “U.K. government does not have any evidence that U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen organized Turkey’s July coup attempt.”^{19 20} (Please see Appendix C for the relevant excerpt from the report.)

Why the Turkish Government Narrative was not Found Credible by the West

Observers noted that there was a big gap between the perspectives of the Western governments and the Turkish government narrative of July 15²¹. The primary reasons:

1. First, the government began purging thousands of members of the military and the judiciary on July 16. Western observers noted that it would be impossible for the Turkish government to identify those responsible for the incident on such short notice. It was clear that the purge lists were prepared well in advance²². A failed coup attempt that allowed Erdogan to eliminate perceived critics *en masse* appeared too convenient for Erdogan to be true²³.
2. The second reason was the Turkish government’s failure to provide concrete evidence linking Gulen to the incident²⁴. The few testimonies extracted from officers who “confessed” their links to the Hizmet movement were not found credible because, ironically, pro-government media channels aired photos of those same officers showing clear signs of having been tortured (Exhibit D). More importantly, none of the officers claimed to have received orders from a civilian or anybody other than their commanders or the General Staff Headquarters.
3. Finally, Erdogan’s own narrative had self-contradictions. Erdogan claimed that neither he nor his intelligence service knew anything about the coup attempt up until the day of July 15²⁵. Western observers found it inconceivable that an event of this magnitude, which would require weeks — if not months — of preparation, could be orchestrated from another continent and not be discovered by Turkish Intelligence and a host of other intelligence agencies. Erdogan claimed to have learned about the event not from his intelligence service but from his brother-in-law, giving three different times as to when that happened (Exhibit E). Yet, he did not dismiss the Director of National Intelligence (MIT) Hakan Fidan who, per his own story, failed to inform or protect him after receiving a tip from an informant on the afternoon of July 15²⁶. Similarly, the chief of general staff was not dismissed despite having failed to stop the incident, or protect his office, after being alerted to it several hours beforehand.

Some observers offered the following two reasons for why Gulen could not have organized the coup attempt:

- First, starting in the early 1990s, Hizmet movement participants have setup schools, hospitals, medical clinics, and other civic institutions around the world. It is estimated that there are more than 500 school campuses alone in more than 150 countries. A coup attempt orchestrated by Gulen, if successful, would send an alarming message to world leaders and spell the end of the movement around the world. All other governments would begin to see Gulen-sympathizers as a threat and quickly shut down their institutions and expel their personnel. It doesn't make sense to sacrifice hundreds of institutions, collectively worth millions of dollars, and reputations built through decades of work for the sake of political power in Turkey²⁷.
- Second, the top brass of Turkish military consist of sympathizers of the ideology of the founder of Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, known as Kemalists. There has never been a credible allegation that the top commanders had any Gulen-sympathizers among them²⁸. In fact, none, including the chief of general staff, second chief, force commanders or army corps commanders has been accused of being a Gulen sympathizer. In an information age, it is impossible for mid-level officers to stage a coup without the knowledge and approval of the top commanders. If they did, there would be strong reaction from within the military itself. On the night of the coup, there was very little reaction from within the military itself. Most of the resistance to the attempt was by the police and the Turkish people.

Adding to the suspicions about the government narrative was the Erdogan government's apparent unwillingness to fully investigate the incident. The parliamentary investigatory commission was delayed because the ruling AKP party was slow to appoint members to the commission. Once formed, the commission²⁹, dominated by AKP members, refused to call key witnesses for testimony³⁰, such as the chief of national intelligence and the military's chief of general staff³¹. Mithat Sancar, an opposition member of the commission said the following:

The ruling AKP did not form this commission to illuminate the coup attempt. They constructed a coup narrative. The ruling AKP has a narrative about the coup attempt. They were expecting (this commission to produce) a work that would support this narrative....

Only information or rumors that support the government narrative have been disseminated, and all other information that points to other scenarios has been censored by government authorities and a compliant media. Scores of lawyers have been arrested, and attorney-client privilege has been revoked under a state of emergency, leaving the accused individuals unable to defend themselves through due process.

Below we provide a narrative based on the information available from public sources and received in personal communications with the lawyers, relatives or friends of individuals accused by the Turkish government. The aim of this document is not to make a definite claim about what happened on July 15, 2016, but to raise questions about the government narrative and provide an alternative that deserves to be considered as part of an independent investigation.

Other Narratives about July 15

Several narratives have been proposed by Turkey observers about what happened on July 15, 2016, instead of the Erdogan government's narrative. Excerpts from a number of commentators of diverse political orientations questioning the government narrative and sometimes suggesting an alternative are provided in Appendix B. We will discuss two such narratives, the "Broad Coalition Narrative" because it is the prevalent view among independent Turkey experts and the "Collusion Narrative" because it has the most explanatory power, as will be detailed below.

Broad Coalition Narrative

The prevalent view among Turkey observers in Europe and the United States is the following³²: A broad-based coalition of officers in the military has been discussing an intervention against the Erdogan government. They believed Erdogan undermined the Turkish state's democratic institutions and secularism. This coalition included, but was not limited to, military officers who feared being purged at the August meeting of the Military Supreme Council. They planned a coup with the intention of removing Erdogan and restoring Turkish democracy and secularism. An informant alerted Turkish Intelligence to the plan during the afternoon of July 15, forcing some officers to start the action early. However, many officers gave up and refrained from participating, and hence the effort failed.

Part of the evidence for the broad coalition narrative is the fact that among the officers arrested after July 15, there were many known as Kemalists. Ironically, the emerging declarations by pro-Erdogan political commentators and AKP members also supported the broad coalition narrative. For example, Justice Minister Bekir Bozdag³³ and pro-Erdogan commentators Cem Kucuk and Rasim Ozan Kutahyali, among others, suggested that there were non-Gulen-affiliated groups within the Turkish military that were supportive of a military intervention against the Erdogan government³⁴.

The broad coalition narrative provides valuable insights into the events of July 15 and helps explain some of the questions, such as the apparent ambivalence and confusion of commanders who are known to be Kemalists at the news of a military coup as well as the lack of a significant response from within the military against the attempt. However, the broad coalition narrative does not sufficiently answer many other questions as will be detailed below.

Collusion Narrative

A broad-based coalition of military officers were Erdogan detractors. They believed Erdogan undermined the Turkish state's democratic institutions. They have been discussing a potential military coup for months. Turkish National Intelligence Service (MIT) and Erdogan were aware of these discussions. An ultra-nationalist, or neo-nationalist (*ulusalci* in Turkish), faction among the military associated with the Eurasian-oriented Homeland party colluded with Erdogan and the Intelligence Service to stage a pre-emptive coup on July 15.

The collusion narrative suggests that the incident on July 15 was *a mobilization of a very small portion of the military, a weak and compromised action designed to fail by being crushed by the police force and angry crowds.*

According to this narrative, July 15th was — borrowing the language of a political commentator who does not necessarily endorse this view — a genuine plan that was compromised and weakened, and allowed by President Erdogan to play out in order to crush it and achieve his strategic goals³⁵.

What happened on July 15, 2016, does not match the pattern of a coup planned by the military, but rather one planned by the intelligence service where military officers unwittingly played crucial roles. Below we will give a more detailed account of the Collusion Narrative.

The “Collusion Narrative” of July 15th

Starting in the fall of 2015, a broad base of top-level and middle-level commanders in the Turkish military allegedly held meetings discussing a military intervention in order to stop Erdogan from becoming an elected autocrat, and to help revive Turkish democracy. During the last few months of 2015 and throughout the spring of 2016, there were widespread rumors, numerous articles and claims in the domestic and foreign media of an impending military coup. The rumors of a brewing coup reached such a level that the Turkish general staff felt compelled to issue an unprecedented statement on March 31, 2016, refuting the allegations³⁶.

In December 2015, a delegation of pro-Eurasian Homeland Party (*Vatan Party* in Turkish), formerly known as Workers Party, headed by Mr. Dogu Perincek visited Moscow³⁷. The Homeland Party members in this delegation were ret. Gen. Ismail Hakki Pekin, former director of Military Intelligence, ret. Adm. Soner Polat and ret. Gen. Beyazit Karatas. The Homeland Party delegation met, among others, with Alexander Dugin, a Russian ultra-nationalist known for his Eurasianist views and Konstantin Malofeev, “a multimillionaire with ties to the Russian Orthodox Church” who is also under European Union and U.S. sanctions for financing illegal military groups in Eastern Ukraine³⁸³⁹. The delegation expressed concerns about a looming pro-American coup⁴⁰ and encouraged Russian leadership to repair their relationship with Erdogan. Statements by Alexander Dugin and Konstantin Malofeev about this visit are available on YouTube⁴¹.

Perincek has been a vocal critic of Erdogan for years, and he was imprisoned as part of the Ergenekon trial. Perincek’s Homeland party has a Marxist-Maoist ideology that is diametrically opposed to the religious leanings of Erdogan’s AKP. However, following the 2013 corruption probe, Erdogan decided to bring the judiciary under his control and replace all Gulen-sympathizers within the judiciary. Lacking significant number of qualified supporters to replace the alleged Gulen-sympathizers, Erdogan made a pact with Perincek. In October 2014, in the elections to the Supreme Council of Judges and Prosecutors, both leaders supported a group called “Unity in Judiciary Platform”⁴². When the candidates of this group won the majority of the seats in the Council, both leaders were joyous. This alliance and victory gave Erdogan the power to influence the judge and prosecutor appointments, turning the Turkish judiciary into a political instrument for targeting his critics. After the establishment of the alliance, Perincek was no longer targeted by prosecutors, and he surprised everybody by speaking of the need to keep Erdogan in power so that Turkey can resist the United States.⁴³ The loss of judicial independence in Turkey has been noted by the U.S. Department of State’s annual Human Rights Report⁴⁴, Human Rights Watch⁴⁵, Amnesty International⁴⁶, the European Union’s progress report for negotiations with Turkey⁴⁷ and the International Commission of Jurists⁴⁸, among others.

Gen. Ismail Hakki Pekin later became one of the interviewees of a video documentary to promote the Erdogan government's narrative about Gulen in the United States.⁴⁹ The project was part of an agreement between former Michael Flynn — later President Donald Trump's short-lived national security advisor — and Ekim Alptekin, a Turkish businessman with ties to Erdogan government. Alptekin's family also has ties with Perincek's Homeland Party⁵⁰. According to news reports, Alptekin arranged for a meeting between Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and Energy Minister Berat Albayrak — who is also Erdogan's son-in-law — with Flynn in which the Turkish side wanted to discuss the possibility of removing Gulen from the United States and taking him to Turkey⁵¹.

Erdogan was aware of these rumors and the alleged discussions of a coup. It is, of course, inconceivable that when the rumors about a looming coup reached even politicians, Erdogan would not become aware and not have it investigated by his intelligence service.

More concretely, after their visit to Moscow, the Homeland Party arranged a visit by Alexander Dugin along with a Russian delegation to Turkey in March 2016, during which they met with AKP officials and Erdogan's relatives. It is reasonable to assume that in addition to discussions about repairing the relationship with Russia, they discussed measures against the impending coup, which they claimed would be "pro-American." It is not clear whether there were other visits by Alexander Dugin, but on July 15, 2016, he was in Ankara⁵².



Figure 1 Alexander Dugin meeting with Dogu Perincek, head of Homeland Party and members including ret. Gen. Ismail Hakki Pekin, former head of Military Intelligence in Turkey.

It is an open secret that the Homeland Party has significant presence in the state's security and intelligence services⁵³. The so-called "Eurasianist clique" within the Turkish military⁵⁴ was described in a 2003 leaked cable by U.S. Embassy in Ankara as pursuing Eurasianism as an

alternative to the U.S. “without understanding the Russia-dominated nature of the ‘Eurasia’ concept”. In 2003, the pro-U.S. and pro-NATO group called the “Atlanticists” were seen as losing influence within the Turkish General Staff.

Perincek’s Homeland Party is favorite among retired high-ranking military officers. Perincek’s deputy is retired Col. Hasan Atilla Ugur. Party leader Perincek said on a number of occasions that the party is “strong in the military, in the judiciary”. Other ex-military members of the party include ret. Gen. Hasan Kundakci and the aforementioned ret. Gen. Ismail Hakki Pekin, the former head of Turkish Military Intelligence. Perincek issued the following message upon the death of Admiral Aziz Cem Cakmak who was tried for participation in the Sledgehammer coup plot: “We are sending Admiral Cem Cakmak, our comrade during the Sledgehammer and Ergenekon trials, to his final journey⁵⁵. In an audio recording dating to 2012 and attributed to Adm. Cakmak, he claimed that thanks to an agreement made between their side and Erdogan, Gulen sympathizers would soon have to leave the country and would not even find water to drink⁵⁶.

The Homeland Party is also known for its anti-American views⁵⁷ and opposition to Turkey’s membership in NATO, which they label as an instrument of U.S. imperialism⁵⁸. After July 15, half of the Turkish NATO officers of the Turkish military were purged and replaced. When Gen. Joseph Votel, the head of U.S. Central Command expressed his concerns over the impact of the purges on the relationship with their Turkish military, President Erdogan scolded Votel by saying, “It’s not up to you to make that decision. Who are you? Know your place! You are taking the side of coup plotters instead of thanking this state for defeating the coup attempt.”⁵⁹ Reuters reported that 149 military envoys posted to the alliance’s headquarters and command centers in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Britain were ordered to return to Turkey within three days based on a classified military dispatch seen by the agency⁶⁰. It was clear that the reason for the recall and the prospective indictment of these officers was not participation in the incident of July 15⁶¹.

As another sign of Erdogan’s awareness of the coup discussions, an article published in a Pro-Erdogan outlet *Turkiye* on April 21, 2016, penned by Fuat Ugur threatened Gulen-sympathizers in the military with the following language: “Do you think that our government is not aware of you? They are just waiting for you to act, and they will summarily execute you.” ⁶²⁶³

On the night of July 14, 2016, National Intelligence Chief Fidan, who is a close confidant of Erdogan, held meetings with Special Forces Commander Aksakalli and Chief of General Staff Akar. As of this writing, the contents of these two crucial meetings the night before the failed coup attempt have not been revealed. Neither Akar nor Fidan were called to answer questions before the parliamentary investigation committee, and in their written responses to the questions by the committee, neither of them referred to these meetings.

July 15 does not Match the Pattern of Previous Military Interventions in Turkey

Military experts suggest that the pattern of actions on the night of July 15th do not fit the pattern of a military coup but rather a coup-like action that is designed by an intelligence service. The July 15 event lacked crucial actions of a military coup and included counterproductive actions that did not make sense in that context. Crucial missing pieces of a military coup included preparing the public opinion, starting the action after midnight during the early hours of the day, securing key politicians first, then securing control of media outlets and communications centers and the participation of land forces. In this case, the actions that actually happened don’t make sense in a

military coup, including starting the mobilization at rush hour, closing a busy bridge to traffic⁶⁴, bombing the parliament, bombing police headquarters and targeting civilians.



May
27,
1960

Sep
12,
1980

July
15,
2016

Previous Interventions	July 15, 2016
Public opinion was prepared for an intervention.	Public opinion was not prepared.
Action started after midnight, during the early hours of the day.	Action started during rush hour at 9:30pm.
The leader(s) of the intervention were clear and they made public declarations.	The leader(s) of the intervention was not clear ⁶⁵ . No person made a public declaration. A declaration by the "Peace at Home Committee" was aired on TRT without disclosing the members of the committee.
Communications centers were secured.	Communications centers were not secured.
Radio and TV stations were secured.	With the exception of a handful of soldiers sent to TRT and CNN-Turk, pro-Erdogan TV channels were not secured.
Lead politicians such as Prime Minister and Interior Minister were detained.	President Erdogan, PM Binali Yildirim and the Interior Minister were not detained.
The military was careful to avoid civilian casualties.	Hundreds of civilians were killed.
The military did not target the parliament or the police.	Parliament and police headquarters were bombed.

Who Mobilized Military Units on July 15?

In this section, we will discuss when, how and by whom military units were mobilized during the evening of July 15. This is important because the government narrative claims that officers associated with Gulen staged the coup with directives from civilians affiliated with Gulen. However, there is not a single officer who states in his testimony that he acted on the night of July 15 by the directives of a civilian. Activation of military units can be traced to one of the three primary sources:

1. Office of Gen. Yasar Guler, the Second Chief of General Staff.
2. Office of Gen. Zekai Aksakalli, Commander of Special Forces.
3. Gen. Mehmet Disli, Director of Strategic Transformation.

Secondary sources of mobilization, such as Colonel Cemil Turhan, Gen. Mehmet Partigoc and Gen. Ilhan Talu, who were on duty at the headquarters of the general staff that night claimed that they simply followed the orders they received from the primary sources, and/or were threatened by the pro-coup officers.

In addition to the military units mobilized to perform their duties under martial law, many units were mobilized under the pretense of one of the following⁶⁶:

- Participation in a regular exercise
- Participation in an educational exercise
- Participation in an “unconventional exercise”
- Participation in an operation to protect general staff headquarters
- Protection of a military or civilian compound from a terrorist attack

Special Forces Units Were Ordered to Participate in an “Unconventional Exercise”

During the days leading to July 15, a group of officers from special forces were given orders to participate in an “unconventional exercise.” The goal of this exercise was described as protecting the general staff headquarters against a terrorist attack. However, the units who fulfilled their orders on the night of July 15 were later arrested as coup plotters. Col. Firat Alakus, one the special forces commanders arrested as a coup plotter, said in his testimony that he received his orders from Gen. Zekai Aksakalli, the top commander of the special forces. Other officers claimed that a plane carrying the alleged pro-coup commander Gen. Semih Terzi was allowed to fly despite the general ban on military flights by Aksakalli’s close aide Col. Umit Tatan, commander of EtiMesgut Special Forces Air Command. Col. Umit Bak of special forces stated that Gen. Aksakalli told him to allow only Gen. Semih Terzi to special forces headquarters that night⁶⁷. Terzi was killed by a lower ranking officer once inside the special forces headquarters that night. Aksakalli denied the claims against him and was never charged. Instead, he was given the task of commanding the Turkish Military units that staged the Firat Shield Operation.

The orders for special forces units to participate in an “Unconventional Exercise” were issued starting on July 11 by Col. Bak, who claimed that he received his orders from Gen. Aksakalli, the commander of special forces. Gen. Aksakalli claimed the orders were issued without his knowledge or approval. If Col. Bak issued orders without Aksakalli’s approval, during the four days from July 11 to July 15 an officer who received the orders could easily have brought it up in a meeting with Gen. Aksakalli. In that case, Colonel Bak would face court martial.

As previously noted, on July 14, a confidential meeting was held at special forces headquarters by Gen. Hulusi Akar, the chief of general staff, Hakan Fidan, director of National Intelligence Organization (MIT) and Gen. Aksakalli, commander of the special forces. After the conclusion of this meeting, Gen. Aksakalli and intelligence chief Fidan held a separate meeting. The contents of these meetings have never been revealed.

Orders Were Issued from the Office of Gen. Yasar Guler, Second Chief of General Staff

Another group of officers were mobilized on July 15 by orders from the office of Second Chief of General Staff Gen. Yasar Guler. The orders were issued by his aide de camp, Captain Mehmet Akkurt, who was killed by another officer that night. Gen. Guler claimed that his aide de camp issued these orders without his knowledge or approval. If Guler's claim is true, it is not clear whether an aide de camp at the level of captain could take such an action without the approval of another superior officer. The only other two officers who could give him such an assurance are Gen. Hulusi Akar, the chief of general staff, and Gen. Mehmet Disli, who was known to be a close friend of Gen. Hulusi Akar.

Certain military units were sent directives to mobilize by officers on duty at the general staff headquarters, such as Gen. Mehmet Partigoc, commander of the Office of General Staff Personnel, Gen. Ilhan Talu, and Col. Cemil Turhan. These officers claimed that they followed orders from the office of the second chief of general staff or were threatened by the putschists.

Gen. Guler claimed that after discussing preventive measures against a potential military coup with the chief of general staff and intelligence chief, he returned to his desk to continue "routine work." The question remains unanswered as to why he would return to routine work against the threat of a military coup instead of working with the chief of general staff and force commanders around a crisis desk until the threat is completely eliminated.

Maj. Gen. Mehmet Disli, Head of Strategic Transformation Department, Mobilized Officers
Many officers who acted on July 15 were led by Gen. Mehmet Disli, commander of strategic transformation⁶⁸. Gen. Disli is the brother of AKP Vice Chairman Saban Disli, who is a close friend of Erdogan. The Disli family is known to have close ties to the Erdogan family dating back decades. According to observers, this office was specially created for Gen. Disli. On the night of July 15, many AKP deputies called Gen. Disli to find out what was going on, showing the degree of trust that existed between the party officials and Gen. Disli. Disli was later implicated by Gen. Akar as a coup plotter and was arrested despite denying charges against him.

Pilots Misled and Threatened

Pilots who were not on duty and were simply spending time with their families were summoned to their air bases to ostensibly defend against a major terrorist attack⁶⁹. Pilots were threatened at gunpoint and with threats to their families to drop bombs at the parliament and the police headquarters. The government's explanation for the bombing of the parliament has a major self-contradiction: The putschists were so angry at the government that they bombed the parliament building but somehow missed Erdogan's massive presidential palace despite the state of the art military aircraft and precision bombs under their disposal.

Students of Air War College

Students from Air War College were put on buses and carried to the Istanbul bridges on the night of July 15. These students were later arrested for participation in a coup.

Important Questions About the July 15 Incident





Despite a year passing since the incident, some aspects of July 15 have not been explained, even with the ongoing trials of alleged pro-coup officers.

Shutting Down Bridge Traffic

Shutting down Istanbul's busy Bosphorus bridge to traffic was not only senseless as a coup tactic, it was counterproductive. This action did not help achieve any military objective in any way and instead made the public angry. The military units sent to shut down the bridge traffic were abandoned on the bridge and faced lynching by angry mobs in the morning. Gen. Umit Dundar, the commander of the 1st Army in Istanbul who pledged allegiance to Erdogan, did not intervene to remove the military unit that occupied the bridge. That led to civilians attacking the military unit, receiving fire and ultimately severely beating and killing some soldiers. On the night of July 15, a sniper allegedly shot at and killed civilians from atop one of bridge's poles. The sniper himself was shot and killed by police snipers and the case was never fully investigated by the government despite the use of civilian deaths on the bridge as an element of the media campaign against Gulen⁷⁰. Among the civilians allegedly killed on the bridge was Erol Olcak, a former pollster and communications consultant of Erdogan, who tweeted days before the incident that Erdogan was preparing for a historic transformation of the Turkish military⁷¹.

Civilian Deaths

Deliberately targeting civilians during a coup is unprecedented in the history of military coups in Turkey. Video footage of the night reveals that some officers and soldiers were distressed by the fact that they were abandoned by their commanders and angry crowds were approaching them, possibly to lynch them. It appears that some of the civilian deaths are a result of the actions of panicked soldiers. It is also alleged by eyewitnesses that paramilitary units, possibly belonging to the SADAT international defense consulting organization started by Erdogan, were responsible for some of the civilian deaths⁷². Two witnesses reported that individuals shooting from black vans or cars shot at civilians⁷³. An individual who appears like a radical religious figure can be seen in a video claiming that he is ready to play his role with his weapon⁷⁴.

			
<p>Muteber Ayabak, mother of a young man killed on the night of July 15, claims her son was shot from behind by individuals shooting from a black Ford Transit van.</p>	<p>Witness claiming that civilians were shot by individuals (possibly police) shooting from a black Mini Cooper on the Bosphorus bridge.</p>	<p>Dr. Nevzat Tarhan, psychological counselor for Erdogan's paramilitary SADAT force, stating that former members of military affiliated with ASDER, were active on the night of July 15.</p>	<p>An Erdogan supporter with a gun in the morning of July 16 stating that they have a battle to fight.</p>

While using the civilian deaths as a crucial component of their messaging around the attempt, the Erdogan government made little effort to actually illuminate the specifics of those deaths. Ironically, it was the accused military officers who asked for forensic examination of the firearms

and bullets used by the soldiers under their command along with the autopsies of the killed civilians. These requests were not welcome by the plaintiffs or judges⁷⁵. The government's refusal to investigate the sniper on the Bosphorus bridge, who allegedly shot civilians, was also suspicious, as the regular units that were sent to the bridge that night normally do not include a sniper⁷⁶.

Aerial Bombing of the Parliament and Police Headquarters

The damage that the parliament building sustained allegedly due to aerial bombing was one of the primary elements of the government's media campaign to justify the subsequent purges. In the early morning hours of July 16, military jets dropped bombs at the garden and an unoccupied corner of the parliament building, and at the front yard of the presidential palace. Although the parliament building was damaged, there were no casualties and there was no harm done to Erdogan's presidential palace. Bombing the parliament is unprecedented in Turkey's history of coups. It is also not clear why the pilots, if they were truly acting as part of a coup, might have missed Erdogan's enormous palace. One of the pilots who were accused of bombing the parliament building claimed that he was called from his home under the pretense of defending against a terrorist attack. When he found out that his bombing target was the parliament, he initially attempted to evade the order by jamming the fighter jet's mechanism, but he was coerced to carry out the order⁷⁷.

There are other problems with the government's narrative about the bombing of the parliament. Government officials claimed that the parliament building was by two-stage penetrating bombs dropped from F-16s. Observers, who claim to be purged NATO officers, disputed this claim and pointed out that the video images and the impact of the explosions at the parliament building match the pattern of an internally-placed bomb rather than a penetrating bomb dropped from a fighter jet⁷⁸ (EXHIBIT F). When combined with the pilots' testimonies that they were threatened to bomb the parliament, it is possible that the internally placed bombs were detonated to ensure that the building would be sufficiently damaged in case the pilots refused to directly target the parliament⁷⁹.

The Crew of a Search-and-Rescue Helicopter Who Sought Asylum in Greece

The eight-person crew of a search-and-rescue helicopter, from an air base in Istanbul, sought asylum in Greece the morning of July 16. In their asylum application, the officers said they were part of an army search-and-rescue unit with three helicopters and were told by their commanders to pick up casualties on the night of July 15. However, when they approached the designated locations of the casualties, their helicopter, along with two others, received fire from the ground. They returned to a nearby army base but they could not reach their commanders as the police broke into the base and started shooting at soldiers. The crew of the three helicopters decided to re-group and fly together in one helicopter to seek asylum in Greece because they thought they would be charged with participation in the coup attempt and would not receive a fair trial in Turkey⁸⁰. There are other reports of commanders ordering officers — in some cases after being recalled from their vacation — to perform actions apparently unrelated to a coup only to be abandoned by the same commanders and charged the next day with participation in the attempt.

Contradictions of the Erdogan Camp

The statements by President Erdogan and his allies, including Hakan Fidan, the director of National Intelligence Service (MIT), and the chief of general staff, include many contradictions and leave many important questions unanswered. Below we will give some examples.

President Erdogan

President Erdogan reported four different times for when he learned about the coup. Before dawn on July 16, he held a press conference at the Istanbul airport,⁸¹ where he said, “As it is known, there was activity in the military in the afternoon”⁸². In an interview to CNN on July 18, he said he learned about the attempt from his brother-in-law around 8 pm⁸³. In an interview with Reuters on July 21, he said the time of the call from his brother-in-law was between 4 and 4:30pm. In an interview to Turkish A-Haber on July 30, he said that he misremembered earlier and the correct time was around 9:30 pm (Exhibit E). In an event like a military coup, Erdogan would be the primary target and his life would be in danger. It is difficult to believe that he did not remember exactly when he first learned about the incident.

Also a puzzle is Erdogan’s refusal to fire, or even investigate, his intelligence chief and military chief despite their failure to inform or protect him. In an interview with France24, when pressed by the host to explain why he did not seek the resignation of his intelligence chief, Erdogan argued that there were security lapses in other places as in the case of the Paris terror attacks, completely ignoring the fact that a terrorist attack by a few individuals and a military coup are completely different events⁸⁴.

Erdogan’s claim that he was first informed about the event by his brother-in-law around 9:30 pm and that he could not reach Intelligence Chief Fidan was contradicted by Chief of General Staff Akar. In his written statement to the parliamentary investigation committee, Akar said that Intelligence Chief Fidan called and spoke with the head of Erdogan’s security guard during their meeting before 8:30 pm. In order for Erdogan’s account to be true, we have to assume that the head of Erdogan’s security guard did not inform him despite being asked about their preparations for a possible attack. Questions such as why Fidan did not ask to speak with Erdogan, why he did not specify the nature of the threat to the head of security, and why Erdogan claimed that he could not reach Fidan until 10 pm were never answered.

Erdogan claimed that his airplane was assaulted by pro-coup fighter jets but protected by pro-government jets. The Greek Air Force refuted Erdogan’s claims that no such air fight occurred⁸⁵. It is also inconceivable that if loaded F-16s targeted Erdogan as he claimed, why would they not be able to shoot down his plane or force it to land? Erdogan claimed that pro-coup forces assaulted his vacation residence 15 minutes after he left the location, around 1 or 1:30 am. However, special forces units aiming to arrest Erdogan arrived at his vacation resort around 3-3:30 am. This brings up the question of whether there was a secondary assault at Erdogan’s vacation resort two hours before the special forces arrived there.

President Erdogan’s failure to respond to Gulen’s call for an international investigation, accompanied by his pledge to abide by its ruling, is also noteworthy. Assuming Erdogan was sincere about his claim, there would be no reason from his perspective not to accept this challenge. If Gulen were to be found guilty and fulfilled his pledge, then the case would be over. If Gulen were to be found guilty but backed out from his pledge, then he would incriminate himself in both domestic and world public opinion and justify some of Erdogan’s purges. Of course, the committee could also determine that Gulen was falsely accused. Furthermore, the committee

could also want to investigate other aspects of the July 15 incident besides Erdogan's accusation against Gulen. Were these the reasons why Erdogan refused to accept Gulen's challenge? We might never know.

Hakan Fidan, Director of National Intelligence Organization (MIT)

In the afternoon of July 15, a captain referred to as O.K. informed the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) headquarters that an attack on the building was planned to capture the MIT chief. This officer was never identified publicly, ostensibly to protect him, and later discharged from the military, rather than being given a medal of honor. He was later re-admitted to the military and was given a position with MIT.

MIT Chief Fidan sent his deputy to the office of general staff at 4 pm and later himself met with the military chief, Akar, at 6 pm. According to the accounts of President Erdogan and Prime Minister Binali Yildirim, the intelligence chief did not inform or protect either the president or the prime minister. In fact, they claimed they could not communicate with the intelligence chief until 10 pm.

Fidan's account of the events of the night is full of puzzles and contradictions. According to Gen. Akar's testimony, Fidan called Erdogan's guards and asked them if they were prepared against an attack, without specifying the nature or the scale of the attack and without asking to speak with Erdogan. Instead of staying with Gen. Akar to investigate and take precautions against a possible coup, Fidan left the general staff headquarters to attend to pre-arranged meetings.

Gen. Umit Dundar, commander of 1st army in Istanbul

Gen. Umit Dundar pledged allegiance to Erdogan during the early hours of the attempt, according to Berat Albayrak, Erdogan's son-in-law⁸⁶. As early as 12:52 am, Dundar confidently declared the attempt to be the work of a small faction within the military and hence doomed to fail⁸⁷. He was later declared the acting chief of general staff as the whereabouts of Gen. Akar were not known. However, during the early hours of the incident, Fatih Tezcan, a famous pro-Erdogan political commentator, labeled Umit Dundar as a putschist⁸⁸.

Military experts note that it is very difficult to stage a coup in Turkey without the participation of the 1st army. Indeed, the famous Sledgehammer military coup plot, which resulted in the trials of many officers, was discussed at the headquarters of the 1st army in Istanbul in 2003. It is unlikely that a military leadership would consider committing to a coup without the participation of the commander of the 1st army. It is possible, therefore that Dundar earlier gave the impression that he was in favor of a coup and misled some officers while intending to side with Erdogan.

Military units in Istanbul closed access to the Bosphorus bridge around 8 pm and then the bridge traffic in one direction around 9:30 pm. It is later revealed that these units were under the impression that they were participating in an exercise⁸⁹. This action did not help the coup in any way, but simply exacerbated public reaction to it. The commander of 1st army, Umit Dundar, who pledged allegiance to Erdogan early on, did nothing to stop the bridge closure despite the bridge being in the 1st army's area of responsibility.

As the hours passed, officers and units under the false impression that the military was staging a coup with the full chain of command realized that they were being abandoned⁹⁰.

Gen. Yasar Guler, the 2nd Chief of General Staff

Directives were issued from Gen. Guler’s office and were sent to military units around the country for them to take actions that were later characterized as participation in the coup attempt. His aide de camp, Captain Mehmet Akkurt, allegedly issued these orders. Guler himself denied any involvement. As was mentioned above, it is inconceivable to think that his aide de camp, who is a captain, would issue a declaration of martial law without the approval of Gen. Guler himself, or Gen. Akar or Gen. Disli, who is known as a close friend of Gen. Akar. On the night of July 15, special forces units entered general staff headquarters relatively easily. The commander of the general staff headquarters guard unit reports to Gen. Guler.

Gen. Hulusi Akar, Chief of General Staff

Gen. Akar did not go along with the demands of the pro-coup officers. However, some of his actions raise questions. Could top-level commanders hold meetings about a military coup plan without his knowledge and approval? Was he threatened by Erdogan to play along with his plan? Why did he not protect himself or the general staff headquarters or inform Erdogan? Why did he not take more effective actions between 4 pm, when he was first informed by the intelligence chief, and 9 pm, when he was reportedly taken hostage?

Gen. Akar was also criticized for not recalling force commanders — who were attending wedding ceremonies — to return to their headquarters and resume command of their forces. Despite the early information these commanders did not take precautions to protect themselves and were later taken hostage. Their self-reported actions to try to stop the coup attempt were meager and raise many questions⁹¹.

Observers noted the absence of the leader for the attempt, which is unprecedented in the history of military coups in Turkey.⁹² The government accused Gen. Akin Ozturk, the former commander of the Air Force, of being the military leader of the coup. However, the Office of the Chief of the General Staff posted a message on its website describing him as a hero who tried to stop the pro-coup officers and prevent bloodshed⁹³. Nevertheless, Ozturk was charged, arrested and jailed. The message on the website of the Office of Chief of the General Staff was later removed, but a copy is available on other sites⁹⁴ (Exhibit G).

Force Commanders

Many of the top commanders of the Turkish Military, including three of the force commanders, were attending wedding ceremonies on the night of July 15. They were eventually detained and taken to Akinci air base, the alleged headquarters of the coup attempt. None of these commanders is charged with being a Gulen-sympathizer and they have retained their positions after the incident. Their failure to act in time to stop alleged pro-coup officers, and their testimonies regarding their responses to the news of a military coup attempt, leaves many questions unanswered.

Explanatory Power of the Collusion Narrative

Below we summarize how the collusion narrative helps answer all the important questions about the July 15 incident that remain unanswered within the government’s narrative.

Question	Response based on Government Narrative	Why the Government Response is not convincing	Answer according to the Collusion Narrative

Why did the military units shut down busy Bosphorus Bridge during rush hour traffic?	As a show of force.	In no previous coup did the public or the police put up any resistance to the military. Until the whereabouts of the chief of general staff was revealed, there was no political commentary in the media out of fear of the attempt succeeding. So this “show of force” was completely unnecessary from a military strategic viewpoint.	To make the public angry and help antagonize them to attack soldiers
Why was the Parliament building bombed?	The military wanted a show of force.	The parliament includes delegates from all parties. Even though members of the military may be angry at Erdogan’s AKP, members of the opposition parties are also in the parliament.	To antagonize the public and give the message that the “pro-coup” officers are against the “people’s will”
Why did the pilots miss Erdogan’s huge palace?	No response.	Erdogan’s palace is a massive building, impossible to miss by fighter jets equipped with guided missiles and bombs.	Pilots were threatened at gunpoint to drop bombs at the parliament and police headquarters by Erdogan’s colluders. Erdogan did not want his palace damaged.
Why were a handful of soldiers sent to Erdogan’s palace, which would be well-guarded?	Incompetence of the coup plotters.	Any military officer would know that Erdogan’s palace would be well-protected. It doesn’t make sense to send a handful of soldiers to attempt to take over the palace.	The “attack” at Erdogan’s palace was simply a show to depict Erdogan as a victim.
Why were police headquarters bombed?	The military was against the police.	The police did not resist the military coups in the past. There was no indication that there would be a strong resistance this time either. If anything, bombing police headquarters amplified the police response.	To antagonize the police and help them attack the military units active that night.
Why did President Erdogan report	Forgetfulness.	It is hard to believe that Erdogan would not	He is not telling the truth. It is impossible

four different times as to when he learned about the attempt?		remember the precise moment when he learned about this potentially life-threatening event.	for him to forget the time he learned about an event that threatened his life.
Why didn't the intelligence director inform or protect Erdogan?	Intelligence director called head of Erdogan's guard.	Intelligence director did not ask to speak with Erdogan, he did not specify the nature of the threat and did not attempt to fortify protection around Erdogan.	He didn't need to, because Erdogan already knew and his life was not in danger.
Why didn't the chief of general staff inform Erdogan or recall force commanders to their commands and protect headquarters of office of general staff?	Chief of general staff made calls to halt flights of military aircraft and movement of armed vehicles.	Actions taken by the chief of general staff were too weak to stop a real military coup attempt. The chief himself was allegedly taken hostage several hours after being informed.	He was informed beforehand that this would not be a real coup. He was allied with Erdogan.
Why did the pro-coup units fail to occupy/control communications centers, TV stations other than TRT and CNN-Turk?	As they were forced to start the coup earlier than they planned they stumbled.	Only a handful of soldiers were sent to TRT and CNN-Turk and they were easily subdued by police and civilians. No military units were sent to other TV stations, including pro-Erdogan TV channels whose studios were walking distance from the few positions the soldiers "occupied."	If this attempt were genuine, even if the military were forced to start early, this would be a crucial step. The military did not plan this attempt. It was planned by the intelligence service. Therefore, the crucial pieces of a military coup were missing.

Government's "Evidence" against Gulen and Responses

The Erdogan government offered alleged "evidence" implicating Gulen and his sympathizers to the coup⁹⁵. Here we explore those claims and offer responses. The case of Adil Oksuz, the alleged civilian leader of the coup, is discussed in more detail in Appendix A.

Claim 1: Three police officers allegedly affiliated with Gulen were among the putschist soldiers.

Response: These three officers were not among the thousands of police officers purged before July 15 by the Erdogan government. If Erdogan's claims of Gulen having thousands of sympathizers within the police force were true, it would not make sense that only three would participate in the attempt.

Claim 2: Levent Turkkan, aide de camp of Chief of General Staff, "confessed" to being a Gulen affiliate.

Response: Turkkan showed clear signs of torture when he first emerged from detention. His testimony is unreliable. At his court hearing, Turkkan stated that he gave his initial testimony under duress.

Claim 3: Confession of Brigadier General Sagir

Response: Similar to Col. Turkkan, Gen. Sagir showed signs of torture when he emerged from detention. His testimony, therefore, is not reliable.

Claim 4: Task List Recovered on Putschist General

Response: The alleged task list is full of contradictions. Many important civilian posts that are supposed to be filled by military officers are missing. The allocation of military officers to the posts on the list does not line up. Gen. Akin Ozturk, for instance, is assigned a post that is inferior to the post he had prior to July 15. The captain who informed the Intelligence Service of an impending coup is also included in this list. In any case, the relatively easy recovery of such a list is simply too convenient to be true.

Claim 5: Offer to Put Chief of General Staff Akar on a Phone Line with Gulen

Response: Both Gulen and Gen. Hakan Unver, who allegedly made the offer to Akar, denied this claim. Akar was not called to give testimony to the parliamentary commission about this or other allegations against him. He did not address this issue in his written responses to the commission.

Claim 6: Adil Oksuz was the civilian mastermind of the coup.

Response: The government claimed that Adil Oksuz, who is a professor of Theology at Sakarya University, was the organizer of the air force officers affiliated with Gulen. Besides the fact that it is impossible to stage a military coup with the air force alone, this allegation raises many questions. The government claimed that Oksuz was arrested near the Akinci Air Base, the alleged headquarters of the attempt. According to an interview by Oksuz's family to a Turkish TV station, when he met with them before his disappearance, Oksuz claimed that he was brought near the Akinci Air Base against his will by the police after being detained at a check point. Despite reportedly having an Intelligence Service file on him, Oksuz was let free by two judges on July 16 and at a mandatory report stop at the courthouse on July 18. He then traveled on a commercial flight to Istanbul going through airport security checkpoints with his own ID and then disappeared after meeting his family. It appears the government wanted Oksuz to disappear so that the claims against him and the alleged link to Gulen could be circulated without challenge. A more detailed discussion of this case is given in Appendix A.

Claim 7: Other civilians found at Akinci Air Base, TRT and TURKSAT.

Response: There are many problems with the arguments made by the Erdogan government against the Hizmet movement regarding the accused civilians allegedly found at key locations on the night of July 15 including the Akinci air base, TRT broadcasting center and TURKSAT satellite center: First, the reliability of the "confessions" of these individuals is questionable due to the overwhelming atmosphere of blame and indicators of torture while in detention. Exacerbating this are reports of at least some of the accused having been brought to those locations against their will, including the now-famous Adil Oksuz. Some civilians with technical skills were claimed to have been brought to TRT by the putschists to stop its broadcast⁹⁶. However, it was not clear why the putschists would want to stop the TRT broadcast rather than occupy it. Finally, whatever the intentions and actions of the civilians allegedly involved in the events of July 15, there appears to be no military action that can be traced to them according to officers' testimonies. All military

officers report receiving orders to mobilize from their superiors or through messages issued within the military communications system originating from the Office of General Staff. The one individual, Capt. Mehmet Akkurt, the aide de camp of the Second Chief of Staff Yasar Guler, who is charged with issuing orders for martial law is unable to defend himself since he was killed on the night of July 15.

Claim 8: Social media posts and media interviews hint at an impending coup by individuals allegedly connected with Gulen.

Response: While it is true that certain social media posts by certain individuals hint at an impending coup, that does not offer evidence to implicate Gulen or Hizmet participants for three reasons: First, prior to July 15, the rumors of an impending coup were so widespread and by individuals of all orientations, including Erdogan sympathizers. Second, the nature of the relationship between the accused individuals and Gulen is highly debatable. It is possible to find posts by Hizmet sympathizers that are highly critical of the aforementioned posts and that accuse those individuals of being moles planted by the Turkish Intelligence Service. In any case, there have been no statements by credible affiliates of Gulen that confirm the affiliation of those individuals with him. Finally, some of those posts and media interviews have been edited and disseminated out of context. For instance, a video interview segment by Dr. Osman Ozsoy, a history professor, author and TV program host, has been circulated by pro-Erdogan media as evidence of Gulen sympathizers' involvement in the July 15 attempt. In the segment, Ozsoy says that he would be able to serve his country much better as a colonel in Turkish army rather than in his current role as an academic and commentator. What is edited out of this segment is the part where Ozsoy explains what he means. According to his explanation, many of the Turkish military anti-terror operations are commanded by colonels. He is expressing his wish that as a colonel he could be part of counterterrorism operations that the Turkish army has been conducting for years.

Claim 9: Gulen-sympathizers used "ByLock," an encrypted communication program.

Response: The "ByLock" software was commercially available on Apple's App Store and Google Play. The main server for the ByLock software was brought down several months before July 15, according to its author, making it unusable⁹⁷. In their briefing to foreign reporters, members of the Turkish Intelligence Service stated that none of the ByLock messages that they intercepted referenced a coup plot⁹⁸. Nevertheless, the use of the ByLock software has been used by Turkish courts to establish "guilt by association"⁹⁹ and incriminate thousands of Turkish citizens including academics¹⁰⁰, business people¹⁰¹ and housewives¹⁰².

Strategic Goals Achieved by Erdogan Thanks to the July 15 Incident

The July 15 incident gave Erdogan an excellent excuse to pursue his goal of consolidating power. In particular:

1. *Massive purges and arrests targeted members of the bureaucracy and the civil society.* In the morning of the coup, a big purge started with the dismissal and later arrests of 2,745 members of the judiciary. During the remaining months, more than 120,000 government employees were sacked. Purges continued to unprecedented proportions, and tens of thousands of civilians, including housewives and mothers of infants¹⁰³ were targeted.

2. *Erdogan's bid for executive presidency gained momentum.* Prior to the July 15 coup attempt, opinion polls consistently showed that the majority of the Turkish electorate was opposed to the executive presidential system proposed by Erdogan¹⁰⁴. In the aftermath of the incident, Erdogan began pushing for the change. In a constitutional referendum in April 2017, he secured by a narrow margin the path to a 2019 executive presidency.
3. *Purging and restructuring the military became much easier.* In the morning of the coup, a big purge started, with more than 2,700 members of the judiciary and 8,000 military officers sacked, including 150 NATO officers (half of the NATO staff in the Turkish military). Erdogan started a complete overhaul of the Turkish military's system of education, recruitment, reporting and promotion.
4. *Turkish army entered Syria.* It was well known that Erdogan wanted the Turkish military to intervene in Northern Syria to support the Free Syrian Army against the group known as the "Syrian Democratic Forces led by Kurdish YPG forces. That desire, however, was met with resistance by some commanders of the Turkish military. Gen. Adem Huduti, commander of the Second Army, and Gen. Erdal Ozturk, commander of the 3rd Army Corps, both known as Kemalist/Secularist commanders, were arrested after July 15. While Gen. Huduti was at his command on the night of July 15, Gen. Ozturk was on vacation at a Mediterranean resort. The common attribute of these commanders, along with Gen. Semih Terzi, commander of Special Forces' 1st Brigade, who was killed by an inferior officer that night, is that they were known to have strongly opposed Turkish Military's incursion into Syria. Turkish Military started an incursion into Syria in August 2016¹⁰⁵.

Concluding Remarks

On July 15, 2016, a horrific and an unprecedented tragedy occurred in Turkey. An action that looked like a military coup, one that cost the lives of hundreds of soldiers and civilians, was crushed primarily by the police force and Turkish citizens. Many aspects of the incident baffled observers and questions persist to this day such as President Erdogan's having reported four different times as to when he learned about it, the Intelligence Chiefs not informing or protecting Erdogan, the military Chief of General Staff's not communicating with Erdogan or protecting himself, the soldiers' failure to take President Erdogan or PM Binali Yildirim into custody, the lack of any attempt to control 100 plus media outlets friendly to Erdogan, the starting of the action at rush hour, the shutting down of Istanbul's very busy Bosphorus traffic, and the bombing of the parliament building and police headquarters. These actions don't make sense in a military coup, which Turkey faced multiple times before, and important questions remain about the government's narrative. However, there is an alternative narrative under which all of these actions make sense.

The alternative narrative, which is referred to as the "Collusion Narrative" here, is that a group of ultra-nationalist officers, in collusion with Erdogan and his Intelligence Service, started a weak and compromised military action only to crush it with the help of the police force and angry crowds. The move was designed to lack essential components of a military coup, and hence was guaranteed to fail. According to this narrative, President Erdogan reported four different times as to when he learned about the incident because he was not telling the truth. The Intelligence Director did not inform or protect Erdogan because Erdogan did not need to be informed or protected. The military action was set up to fail and there was no real threat to Erdogan's life. The action began during rush hour and the parliament building was bombed to aggravate the public.

Police special operations headquarters was bombed before police took any action against the military, in order to aggravate and embolden the police.

At this point, there is not enough evidence to claim that the collusion narrative is what actually happened on July 15. And this discussion is not intended to serve as a definitive assertion or accusation, but rather as a call for an independent investigation comprised of an international committee of experts. For such an investigation to succeed, the Turkish government must also guarantee the safety of the accused military officers and their families so they can testify without fear of reprisal by the government. Ironically, the clarification of what really happened on July 15 is in the hands of the Erdogan government, which so far has shown little interest in ferreting out the facts.

EXHIBIT A: Categories of Human Rights Abuses under Erdogan's State of Emergency

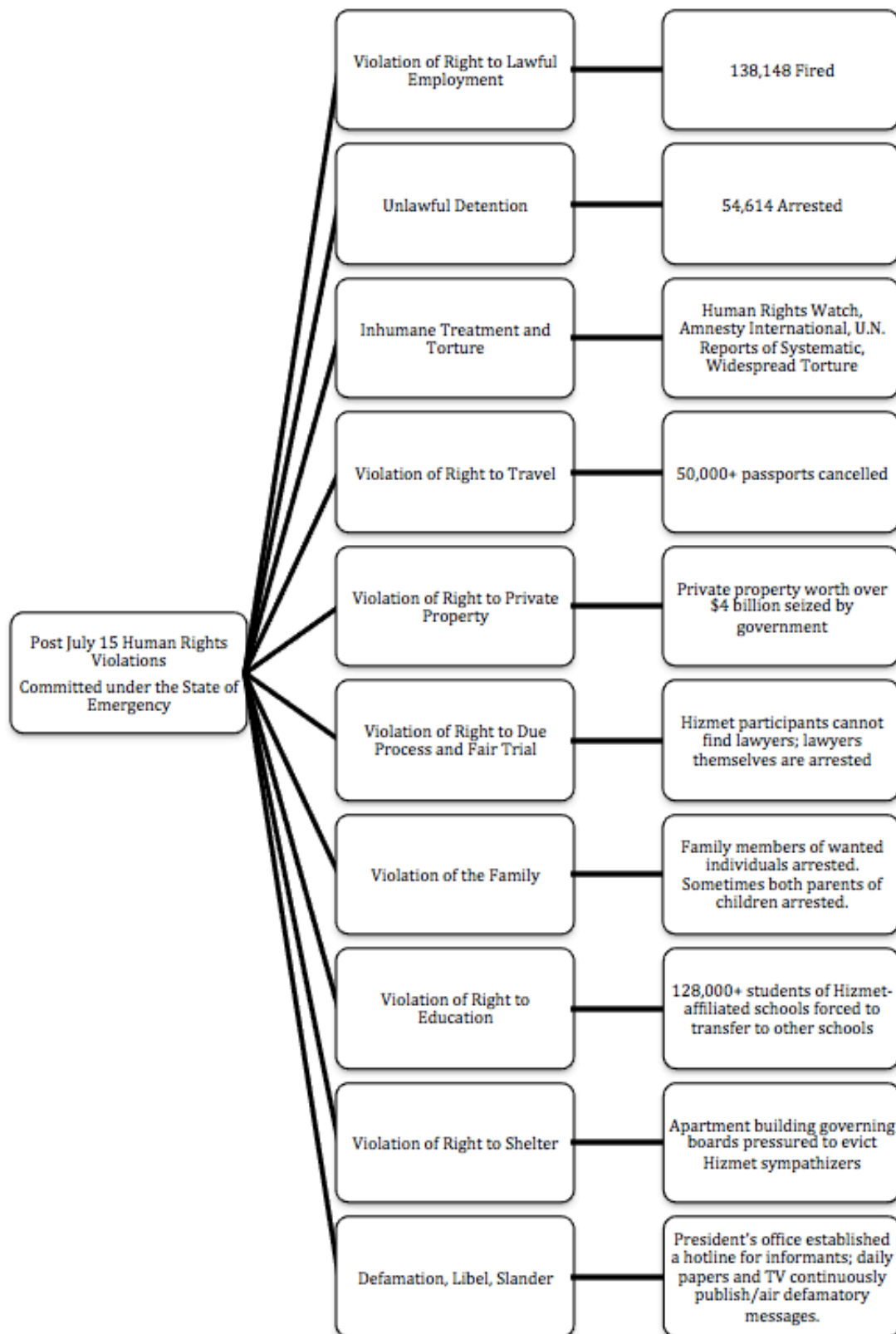


EXHIBIT B: Gulen's Message Condemning the Attempt and Denying Any Involvement

The following message was approved by F. Gulen for publication around 1:48 AM Turkish time while the coup attempt was in progress.

733 Third Ave. Suite 1700 | New York, NY 10017 | www.afsv.org | 212 – 682 4278



July 15, 2016

Fethullah Gulen issued the following statement on recent developments in Turkey

I condemn, in the strongest terms, the attempted military coup in Turkey. Government should be won through a process of free and fair elections, not force. I pray to God for Turkey, for Turkish citizens, and for all those currently in Turkey that this situation is resolved peacefully and quickly.

As someone who suffered under multiple military coups during the past five decades, it is especially insulting to be accused of having any link to such an attempt. I categorically deny such accusations.

EXHIBIT C: Gulen's Op Ed Challenging Erdogan On Le Monde (11 August 2016)

Gulen challenged Turkish Government to allow for an international investigation into the event and pledged to provide full cooperation.

M International

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Fethullah Gülen : « Je demande une enquête internationale sur le putsch raté en Turquie »

Dans une tribune au « Monde », le prédicateur répond aux attaques du président ture qui l'accuse d'être l'instigateur du récent coup d'Etat avorté.

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EXHIBIT D: Photos of Officers Showing Signs of Torture



Colonel Levent Turkkan, aide de camp of Chief of General Staff, allegedly “confessed” to participating in the coup at the urging of Gulen affiliates.



Soldiers piled up like fish during detention.



Gen. Akin Ozturk, former commander of the air force, showing signs of ill treatment and potentially torture. Ozturk was accused by the government to be the military mastermind of the coup despite being exonerated by the Chief of General Staff Akar. Akar later retracted his exonerating statement from the web site of his office.



Colonel Firat Alakus of Special Forces showing signs of ill treatment and potentially torture. Alakus was accused of participating in the coup. He denied the accusation and said that he simply followed his orders to protect the office of the Chief of General Staff issued by the Special Forces Commander Gen. Aksakalli. Aksalli was never charged.

EXHIBIT E: Erdogan's Contradictory Reports of When He Learned About the July 15 Attempt

 <p>Askeri darbe girişimi Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan:Öğleden sonra hareketlilik başladı</p>	
July 16: Erdogan at Istanbul Ataturk airport, around 4:20am, stating that “as it is known there was mobilization within the military in the afternoon hours”.	July 18: Erdogan telling CNN that he learned about the event from his brother in law around 8pm.
 <p>SON Dakika CUMHURBASKANI REUTERS'A KONUSTU</p>	 <p>SON Dakika HABERLER.COM O GECE NELER YAŞANDI? CUMHURBASKANI ERDOĞAN SORULARI YANITLIYOR</p>
July 21: Erdogan telling Reuters that he learned about the attempt around 4:30pm.	July 30: Erdogan telling Turkish news channel A-Haber that he learned about the attempt around 9:30pm.

EXHIBIT F: Visuals of Damage to the Parliament Building



Parliament room allegedly damaged by aerial bombing. Observers note that the doors hinges show no sign of explosion damage.



Parliament room allegedly damaged by aerial bombing. Observers note that the HDTV on the wall shows no sign of explosion damage in contrast with the furniture.



Ex-military observers noting a visual pattern inconsistent with a penetrating two-stage bomb damage.



A site devoted to analyzing government claims about July 15 contrasts the visual pattern of the alleged aerial bombing of the parliament with the video footage of a real aerial bombing with the ammunition claimed to have been used.

EXHIBIT G: Press Release by the Chief of Turkish General Staff on July 21 Exonerating Gen. Akin Ozturk (Item 5), praising his effort to try to stop the attempt. The press release was later removed from the Chief of General Staff's web site under pressure by Erdogan.

www.tsk.tr/BasinFaaliyetleri/BA_193

[ANASAYFA](#) [GENELKURMAY BAŞKANI](#) [TSK HAKKINDA](#) [BASIN YAYIN FAALİYETLERİ](#) [OLAYLAR](#) [İNSAN KAYNAKLARI](#) [GENEL BİLGİLER](#)

BASIN AÇIKLAMASI

TARİH:21 Temmuz 2016
SAAT :14:55

- Daha önce açıklandığı üzere; 15 Temmuz 2016 Cuma günü saat 16:00 sularında Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı tarafından verilen bilgi, Genelkurmay Karargâhında; Genelkurmay Başkanı, Kara Kuvvetleri Komutanı ve Gnkur. İl'nci Başkanı'nın katılımıyla değerlendirilmiştir. Bu değerlendirmeye bağlı olarak;
 - Genelkurmay Başkanı tarafından;
 - Silahlı Kuvvetler Komuta Harekât Merkezi telefonla aranarak, Türk hava sahasında ikinci bir emre kadar hiçbir askeri hava aracının (uçak, helikopter vb.) havalanmaması, havada bulunanların derhal üslerine dönmesi,
 - Kara Havacılık Komutanlığına gidilerek orada bulunan personel konuları ve hava araçlarının uçmaması dahil gereken her türlü tedbirin alınması,
 - Etmesgut'taki Zırhlı Birlikler Okulu ve Eğt.Tüm. Komutanlığına gidilerek tank ve zırhlı araçlar başta olmak üzere tüm araçların hareketlerinin durdurulması ve hiçbir şekilde dışarı çıkmamaları yönünde gereken tedbirlerin alınması emirleri ilgili personele verilmiştir.
 - Gnkur.İl'nci Başkanı tarafından da; Gnkur.Bşk.nın emriyle Hava Kuvvetleri Komutanlığı Harekat Merkezi aranmış ve Türk Hava Kuvvetlerine ait tüm hava araçlarının uçuşlarının durdurulması talimatı verilmiştir.
- Bu kapsamda;
 - Türk Silahlı Kuvvetlerinin ayrılmaz bir parçası olan ve milleti için var olan Hava Kuvvetlerine sızmış olan illegal çete mensubu terörist hainlerin (FETÖ) girişimlerine yönelik olarak Genelkurmay Başkanı Orgeneral Hulusi AKAR'ın talimatları doğrultusunda büyük çoğunlukta mensupları ile mücadele edilmiş ve durum kontrol altına alınmıştır.
 - Genelkurmay Başkanlığının, uçuşların durdurulması ve havadaki görevli uçakların indirilmesine ilişkin talimatı Hava Kuvvetleri Harekat Merkezine iletilmiş, bu direktif Eskişehir'deki Hava Harekât Merkezi tarafından tüm birliklere tebliğ edilmiş, uçuşların durdurulmasına ilişkin işlemler saat 19:26 itibarıyla tamamlanmıştır. Direktif, 19:56 ve 20:31 itibarıyla tüm birliklere teyiden tekrar iletilmiştir.
- Hava Kuvvetleri Harekât Merkezi ve Eskişehir'deki Hava Harekât Merkezinde görevli ekiplerce direktifin gereği yakından takip edilmiştir. Tüm bu ikaz ve uyarılara rağmen 21:45'ten itibaren bir kısım meydanlardan değişik tanıtıcı kodlar ve çağrı isimleri kullanılarak kalkış yapıldığı tespit edilmiştir.
- İllegal çete mensubu hain teröristlerce (FETÖ) öncelikle Hava Kuvvetleri Harekât Merkezinin kontrol altına alınmasının istenmesi üzerine İstanbul'da bulunan Hv.K.Komutanı Org. Abidin ÜNAL tarafından Ankara'da Hava Kuvvetleri Kurmay Başkanı Vekiline Hava Kuvvetleri Harekat Merkezinin teröristlerden temizlenmesi ve tüm bağlantıların kesilmesi talimatı verilmiştir. Talimatın gereği yapılarak Hava Kuvvetleri Harekât Merkezi işlevsiz hale getirilmiştir. Aynı anda tüm yetkilerin Eskişehir'deki Hava Harekât Merkezinde olduğu, Hava Kuvvetleri Harekât Merkezinin hiçbir talimatının yerine getirilmemesi, Hv.K.Komutanı talimatı olmadan hiçbir uçuşa izin verilmemesine ilişkin direktif, mesaj ile tüm birliklere yayımlanmıştır.
- Ayrıca Hv.K.Komutanı Ankara'da AKINCI Üssü lojmanları bölgesinde bulunan Orgeneral Akin ÖZTÜRK'ü arayarak kendisine 4'üncü Ana Jet Üssü AKINCI'dan kalkan uçakların yasa dışı olduğunu, ivedilikle AKINCI'ya giderek oradaki kalkışmada bulunanları ikna etmesini istemiştir.
- Üs Komutanlarına verilen doğrudan direktifler sonucu, kalkışmanın 3 meydan ile sınırlı olduğu belirlenmiştir. Eskişehir Hava Harekât Merkezinde bulunan personeli takviye amacıyla üst rütbeli generaller görevlendirilmiştir. Bu işlemlerden sonra İstanbul'da Karargah dışında bulunan Hv.K.Komutanı Org. Abidin ÜNAL ve beraberindeki Muh.Hv.Kv.Komutanı Korg. Mehmet ŞANVER illegal çete mensubu terörist hainler (FETÖ) tarafından gözaltına alınmıştır.
- Bilahare Sn.Başbakan ve Milli Savunma Bakanı'nın bilgisi ve direktifleri doğrultusunda planlamalar yapılmış, öncelikle illegal kalkışlara reaksiyon olarak, değişik meydanlardan F-16 aların reaksiyon uçakları kaldırılarak havadaki uçaklar inişe zorlanmış; talimatlara uymamaları durumunda vurulacağı bildirilmiştir.
- Müteakiben uçakların kalkış yapmalarını engellemek amacıyla meydan üzerinde baskı kurulmuş, AKINCI meydanındaki uçuş pistleri F-4 uçakları ile bombalanarak kapatılmıştır. Ayrıca aynı meydanı kalkış yapmak isteyen helikopterler taciz ateşiyle engellenerek, AKINCI meydanı kontrol altına alınmıştır. Tüm bunlara ilave olarak illegal çete mensubu terörist hainlerin (FETÖ) teslim olmalarını sağlamak amacıyla, üs içindeki bazı noktalar bomba ile vurularak baskı devam ettirilmiş ve eylemin kırılması sağlanmıştır.
- Bu zilleti ve rezaleti, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devletine, mazisi şan ve şerefle dolu Türk Silahlı Kuvvetlerine ve asil milletimize yaşatan alçaklar en ağır şekilde cezalandırılacaklardır.
- Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri en genç erinden en yüksek rütbeli general/amiraline kadar tüm personeliyle demokratik hukuk sistemi içerisinde Devletimizin ve yüce Milletimizin emrinde, görevinin başındadır.

Kamuoyuna saygı ile duyurulur.

Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri

Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri

Son Güncelleme: 22.7.2016

APPENDIX A: Adil Oksuz: The Alleged Civilian Leader of the Attempt

Turkish government has claimed that Dr. Adil Oksuz, a professor of theology at Sakarya University was the civilian organizer behind the July 15th incident. The government claimed that he traveled to the United States, allegedly to meet with Gulen and get his approval for a coup attempt. Oksuz was detained on the night of July 15th near Akinci air base in Ankara, the alleged headquarters of the attempt. The information that surfaced about him, however, raises several questions about the government's story. Let's examine the evidence against him:

1. A photograph of Oksuz at the Akinci air base, dated July 16th, together with detained officers. [VISUAL]
2. A video of Oksuz, entering and exiting Sincan court house in the morning of July 18th. Two related video recordings show Oksuz at Ankara's Esenboga airport and Istanbul's Sabiha Gokcen airport around 9am the morning of July 18th. [VISUAL]
3. Testimonies by two secret witnesses, named Sapka (Hat) and Kuzgun (Raven), that Oksuz traveled to the U.S. to get Gulen's approval for the coup and was actively organizing officers the night prior to the coup.

Oksuz was captured near Akinci air base on the night of July 15. The government alleged that he was there to touch base with the military officers. He was arrested and kept at the air base and photographed there before being taken to Sincan court house along with 99 military officers. While all the officers were arrested, Oksuz was released by judge Koksak Celik due to lack of evidence with the conditions that he report to the court house two days later and with a ban on foreign travel. Prosecutor Mehmet Yilmaz appealed the release decision to a higher court (Asliye Ceza). This time, judge Cetin Sonmez denied the prosecutor's appeal on the basis that there was no evidence to justify an arrest. Pro-government media alleged that the judges were Gulen-sympathizers. However, it was revealed later that one of the judges issued a supervisor/trustee ("kayyim" in Turkish) to a Hizmet-sympathetic company as part of Erdogan's crackdown on Hizmet. Two days later, Oksuz reported to the court, spending 21 minutes at the courthouse and then took a flight to Istanbul from Ankara's Esenboga airport. Oksuz was welcomed at the Istanbul airport by his brother-in-law and taken to his house. He spent the day at his house and then headed to Sakarya, his workplace and where his in-laws were living. He spent the night of July 19 in their home, told his story, and left in the morning, presumably for work, never to be seen since.

While at his in-laws' home, Oksuz told them that he was detained against his will by the police in Ankara and dropped at a highway near the Akinci air base. He was immediately arrested there and taken to the base. He was interrogated and released later.

The case of Adil Oksuz raises many questions for the government narrative. If Oksuz indeed played a role in the preparation of July 15 and had previous relationships with military officers, then it is inconceivable that Turkish Intelligence Service MIT did not have a file on him. While 99 soldiers who were brought to the court were arrested, Oksuz was released by two separate judges. In the video of his returning to the court house for reporting, as asked by the judge, he appears comfortable and ready for travel with a suitcase in his hand. He enters and exits the court house with the suitcase. When he is welcome by his brother in law in Istanbul, the latter makes a visual call, presumably to Oksuz' family, and Oksuz waves his hand. Oksuz' general appearance at the courthouse on the morning of July 18, his taking a flight to Istanbul by showing his photo ID, fully aware of security cameras recording his actions, spending July 18 at his own residence and then spending the next night at his in-laws' residence do not reflect the psychology and expected

behavior pattern of a man involved in orchestrating a military coup and being lucky enough to be released by mistake. AKP government purged 2745 members of the judiciary the day after the coup attempt and more than 2000 of them were also arrested and imprisoned. The two judges who released Oksuz, however, were not dismissed or imprisoned. They were simply subjected to an inquiry, an incomparably favorable treatment in contrast to the thousands of judges and prosecutors who were first dismissed and then arrested starting on July 16.

APPENDIX B: Excerpts from Independent Commentary on the Alternative Narratives

*German intelligence expert and author Erich Schmidt-Eenboom, speaking on a German public broadcaster ZDF*¹⁰⁶:

“According to CIA analyses, the so-called coup attempt was staged by Erdoğan to prevent a real coup. The BND, CIA and other Western intelligence services do not see the slightest evidence showing Gülen instigating the coup attempt.”

Andrew Anglin, writing for the Daily Stormer:¹⁰⁷

“It is the most likely possibility – that certain elements of the military collaborated with the Erdogan regime to stage a coup that was destined to fail for the purpose of making Erdogan look like a hero both domestically and internationally.”

*Veteran Turkish Journalist Cengiz Çandar on Al Monitor, Posted July 17, 2016*¹⁰⁸

While the Turkish coup was underway, The New York Times was asking me whether I was surprised, expecting my answer to be, “Of course I am.” I bluntly wanted to respond “No” and remind New York Times correspondent Sabrina Tavernise that only two weeks ago, in our lengthy chat in Istanbul, I had told her of the “Faustian bargain President [Recep Tayyip] Erdogan made with the military, which therefore, in my opinion, opened the way for a coup or a coup attempt to take place in Turkey within the upcoming two years.” But I conceded and told her, “Yes, I’m surprised. I did not expect that to happen in two weeks.”

Kemal Kilicdaroglu, chairman of main opposition party CHP:

“The real coup was done on July 20, after the controlled coup of July 15th was over. Nobody should forget July 20th. This is the date when the executive branch got the approval for the state of emergency from the parliament. Now, the real putschists of July 20 want to constitutionalize the current situation. That is why they brought this constitutional amendment to the parliament.” ¹⁰⁹ (Translation and emphasis by authors) ¹¹⁰

*Kjetil Stormak, A Norwegian Blogger who had Spoken to Norwegian Military Sources*¹¹¹:

The senior officers, three- and four-star generals, and those who worked with Turkey for 30-40 years and who mentored Turkish officers for four or five years, say they do not believe that there was a coup. If the Turkish Armed Forces wanted to carry out a coup, they would have succeeded. That’s a tradition in Turkey, said a NATO source, without a hint of irony.

German Focus magazine reported the following in their July 2016 issue:

British signals intelligence agency GCHQ intercepted communication between top Erdogan brass about half an hour after shooting started that the coup would be blamed on Gulen and purges would start the next day^{112 113}.

HDP leader Selahattin Demirtas in a speech at Turkish parliament:

“I heard it from my brother-in-law.” He says. Lie! He knew about it before you, me, MIT (Turkish Intelligence Service). You knew about the coup, took your precautions, and just to consolidate your power you let all those people die. We are facing one of the biggest setups in the history of Turkey¹¹⁴. “

Demirtas was arrested in February 2017 under terrorism charges¹¹⁵.

A FoxNews.com article four days after the incident, on July 19, 2016 stated:

Others believe the most plausible scenario may lie between the two theories: The attempted coup may have begun as an independent and organic movement, but in the hours or days before it was executed Erdogan was tipped off. He then allegedly allowed it to unfold in order to draw out his enemies¹¹⁶.

Aykan Erdemir, former Turkish parliamentarian and senior fellow at Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies questioned the relative speed in which the coup attempt was foiled:

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s allegations about exiled cleric Fethullah Gülen’s involvement in the July 15 coup d’etat bid in Turkey is not being taken seriously by many analysts based in various world capitals. However, governments are maintaining silence on the matter in deference to the ‘legitimate democratic government’ in Ankara.

Most analysts are indeed questioning the way the Turkey coup was foiled before it actually got implemented on the ground. Was the plot set up for a guaranteed failure? Was it aimed to strengthen Erdogan’s rule while his grasp over his electorate was loosening thanks to failure in Syria, economic losses due to Russian sanctions imposed for shooting down its plane and mistrust vis-à-vis Iran?¹¹⁷

Joe Lauria, a veteran foreign-affairs journalist wrote:

Because Erdogan knew of the coup hours before, there is a stronger possibility that he let it happen to smoke out disloyal officers, confident his handpicked brass would crush it. They may have played along with the coup and then double-crossed the coup leaders once it was underway. It would be a seriously amateurish attempt to go ahead without the consent of the top military leadership¹¹⁸.

Harold Rhode, a former Pentagon Middle East Expert, told the following to a reporter ¹¹⁹:

“Giving into the Russians and Israelis in order to repair relations with them was humiliating” for him in the eyes of many Turks and people in the Middle East, said Rhode in an interview on Sunday. Thus, Erdogan’s contrived victory over the supposed coup attempt shows the world that he is still powerful. It is quite possible that Erdogan engineered and then defeated the supposed coup so that he could redeem his honor.”

Mithat Sancar, member of the Parliamentary Commission Investigating the July 15th Incident representing opposition HDP¹²⁰:

“Many individuals, who would have provided valuable information to illuminate the coup attempt were not called to testify at the parliamentary investigation commission. The ruling AKP did not form this commission to illuminate the coup attempt. They produced a coup narrative. The ruling AKP has a narrative about the coup attempt. They were expecting a work that would support this narrative.... In our opinion, AKP leadership and the President knew about the coup plan a while ago. The president and his team knew about it. Instead of stopping it, they allowed it to start. Their purpose was to capture the coup plotters on the night of the attempt. Not only that. When the President called the coup attempt “a gift from God”, he was publicizing his plan for the aftermath of the attempt. They used the coup attempt as an opportunity and implemented a counter coup.”¹²¹ (Translation by authors)

APPENDIX C: Excerpt from Report by U.K. House of Commons on U.K. Turkish Relations¹²²

“Given the brutality of the events of 15 July, the severity of the charges made against the Gülenists, and the scale of the purges of perceived Gülenists that has been justified on this basis, there is a relative lack of hard, publicly-available evidence to prove that the Gülenists as an organisation were responsible for the coup attempt in Turkey. While there is evidence to indicate that some individual Gülenists were involved, it is mostly anecdotal or circumstantial, sometimes premised on information from confessions or informants, and is—so far—inconclusive in relation to the organisation as a whole or its leadership. As we publish this report, nine months after the coup attempt, neither the UK nor Turkish governments can point us to one person who has been found guilty by a court of involvement in the coup attempt, let alone anyone being found guilty with evidence of involvement with Gülenist motives. We also note that, despite Turkey purportedly submitting 80 boxes of ‘evidence’ to the US to achieve the extradition of Fethullah Gülen on the basis that he masterminded the coup attempt, the US judiciary has not yet moved to deport him.”

ENDNOTES

¹ <https://turkeypurge.com> numbers reported as of 23 June 2017.

² <http://www.intflc.org>

³ <http://internationalfestival.us>

⁴ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/07/turkey-independent-monitors-must-be-allowed-to-access-detainees-amid-torture-allegations/>

⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/10/25/turkey-emergency-decrees-facilitate-torture>

⁶ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20977>

⁷ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/10/24/blank-check/turkeys-post-coup-suspension-safeguards-against-torture>

⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/17/world/europe/turkey-erdogan-gulen-purge.html>

⁹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-l-phillips/erdogans-inner-stalin_b_11101118.html

¹⁰ <http://hizmetnews.com/18205/fethullah-gulen-condemns-coup-attempt-turkey/>

¹¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/26/opinion/fethullah-gulen-i-condemn-all-threats-to-turkeys-democracy.html>

¹² http://www.huffingtonpost.com/emre-celik/fethullah-gulen-i-call-f_b_11480974.html

¹³ <http://www.theglobepost.com/2017/03/25/after-8-months-turkish-govt-still-unable-to-sell-coup-narrative-to-allies/>

¹⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/20/world/europe/fethullah-gulen-erdogan-extradition.html>

¹⁵ https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/a-reality-check-on-the-middle-east-from-america-spy-chief/2016/07/21/a221a1aa-4f86-11e6-aa14-e0c1087f7583_story.html?utm_term=.aa0eff4f74a

¹⁶ <http://theglobepost.com/2017/03/19/us-house-intel-chair-says-hard-to-believe-gulen-behind-turkey-coup/>

¹⁷ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-germany-idUSKBN16P0LQ>

¹⁸ <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/erdogan-plotted-purge-before-coup-say-brussels-spies-2hh8mgx6h>

¹⁹ <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2017/2/1/UK-No-evidence-Gulen-involved-in-Turkey-coup-attempt>

²⁰ <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmfa/615/615.pdf>

²¹ <https://washingtonhattius.com/2017/06/15/western-diplomatic-sources-western-govts-not-believe-gulen-behind-coup/>

²² A member of the judiciary who was on the purge list died months before the incident.

²³

http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/foreigners/2016/07/why_the_failed_turkish_coup_will_empower_erdogan.html

²⁴ <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmfa/615/615.pdf>

²⁵ <https://www.turkishminute.com/2017/05/21/testimony-shows-major-informed-mit-about-coup-7-hours-beforehand/>

²⁶ <https://www.turkishminute.com/2016/12/04/chp-deputy-implies-july-15-coup-attempt-staged/>

²⁷ <https://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/562-post-putsch-narratives-and-turkeys-curious-coup.html>

²⁸ <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-skeptics/why-erdo%C4%9Fan-shouldnt-double-down-dictatorship-after-the-coup-17017>

²⁹ Turkish parliament took the decision to form the commission on July 26th. However, by providing the names of AKP delegates to the commission just before the parliament went on vacation, AKP delayed the start of the commission's work until October 4th.

³⁰ <http://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/yazarlar/2017/01/10/akpye-ragmen-bu-karanlik-darbenin-sirlari-ortaya-cikacak/>

³¹ The commission did not even ask for an affidavit from Mr. Gulen in response to the accusations against him.

³² <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/publications/joint-center-publications/item/13209-a-botched-coup-and-turkeys-descent-into-madness.html>

³³

http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/siyaset/775047/Bekir_Bozdog_Darbe_olmus_Basbakanlik_musavirisiniz_gidip_konusuyorsunuz_siz_kimsiniz_.html

³⁴ <http://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/kutahyali/2017/03/07/15-temmuz-ve-ataturkcu-subaylar>

³⁵ <http://www.globalresearch.ca/why-the-failed-turkish-coup-attempt-wasnt-a-false-flag-power-grab-by-erdogan/5536341>

³⁶ <http://www.atimes.com/article/turkish-military-denies-coup-attempt-against-erdogan-what-next/>

³⁷ <http://vatanpartisi.org.tr/genel-merkez/gundeme-dair/rus-yetkili-bizi-vatan-partisi-ikna-etti-20264>

³⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_people_sanctioned_during_the_Ukrainian_crisis

³⁹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11038730/French-politician-defends-plan-for-Crimean-theme-park.html>

⁴⁰ <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-dugin-trump-putin-turkey-20170203-story.html>

⁴¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWkHihbiYDw>

⁴² <http://bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/BPC-President-Erdogan-Turkey.pdf>

⁴³ <http://www.tgrthaber.com.tr/politika/perincek-erdogan-olmazsa-abdye-karsi-koyamayiz-175248>

⁴⁴ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/turkey>

⁴⁶ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/turkey/report-turkey/>

⁴⁷ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/10/turkey-criticised-over-media-freedoms-and-judicial-independence-in-eu-report>

⁴⁸ <https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Turkey-Judiciary-in-Peril-Publications-Reports-Fact-Findings-Mission-Reports-2016-ENG.pdf>

⁴⁹ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/mike-flynn-pro-turkey-work-an-unfinished-documentary-to-boost-countrys-image-1496183276>

⁵⁰ <http://dailycaller.com/2017/06/01/the-landscape-surrounding-michael-flynn-enigmatic-client/>

⁵¹ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/ex-cia-director-mike-flynn-and-turkish-officials-discussed-removal-of-erdogan-foe-from-u-s-1490380426>

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⁵³ <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/10/turkey-power-struggle-between-islamists-and-secularists.html>

- ⁵⁴ <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/07/13/turkeys-post-coup-purge-and-erdogans-private-army-sadat-perincek-gulen/>
- ⁵⁵ <http://www.palo.com.tr/a/özgürlüğümün-bir-tümörle-gelmesi-ne-acı-demişti-287753>
- ⁵⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHoGhGbc_a4
- ⁵⁷ <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/07/12/turkeys-deep-state-has-a-secret-backchannel-to-assad/>
- ⁵⁸ <http://vatanpartisi.org.tr/english/dosyalar/the-turkish-left-and-the-pkk-11094>
- ⁵⁹ <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/07/29/erdogan-and-u-s-general-in-post-coup-war-of-words/>
- ⁶⁰ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-nato-exclusive-idUSKCN12C16Q>
- ⁶¹ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/07/partial-assessment-of-turkeys-post-coup.html>
- ⁶² <http://www.turkiyegazetesi.com.tr/yazarlar/fuat-ugur/591124.aspx>
- ⁶³ Bu konuşma 7 Şubat MİT darbesinden sonra, 17-25 Aralık darbe girişiminden de öncedir. Ümit Akdemir o vakit şöyle yanıtlıyor onları:
“Bak Murat bey. Emniyet’te örneğin kaç müdürlük var. Diyelim ki 500. Ama bir düşünün. O 500 hizmet elemanını oraya yerleştirirken sen en az 2000 adayı küstürmüşsün. Siz sanıyor musunuz ki emniyet sadece bizden. Bu yargıda da, bürokraside de böyle. Sanıyor musunuz ki devlet uyuyor. Hepsini takip ediyor. Emir yukarıdan geldiğinde harekete geçenler aynı zamanda kendilerini de ifşa etmiş olurlar. Devlet de onların zaten hizalanmasını beklemektedir ve büyük temizliğe başlar. Anadolu’da bir laf vardır, Tavuk TAR’da sayılır. Siz dolaşır, çalışırsınız. Sanırsınız ki devletin hiçbir şeyden haberi yok. Emir komuta ile Tar’ın, yani odunun üzerine sıralanıp hizalandığınızda öyle kolay sayılır ve avlanırsınız ki neye uğradığınızı şaşırırsınız. Devlet bazı hareketlerinizi göremeyebilir ama ortaya çıktığınız an hepinizi avlar.”
- ⁶⁴ http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/foreigners/2016/07/why_the_failed_turkish_coup_will_empower_erdogan.html
- ⁶⁵ <http://www.dailystormer.com/was-the-turkish-coup-an-erdogan-hoax/>
- ⁶⁶ <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/07/turkey-kamikaze-coup-attempt-fails.html>
- ⁶⁷ <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/darbe-girisiminden-yargilanan-binbasi-aksakal-40357733>
- ⁶⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/18/military-coup-was-well-planned-and-very-nearly-succeeded-say-turkish-officials>
- ⁶⁹ <http://www.posta.com.tr/tbmm-yi-bombalayan-darbeci-pilot-terorle-mucadele-harekati-sandim-haberi-1282771>
- ⁷⁰ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/pro-coup-sniper-on-istanbuls-bosphorus-bridge-tower-shot-dead-during-coup-attempt-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=101904&NewsCatID=341>
- ⁷¹ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/erdogan-ally-died-in-bosporus-bridge-confrontation-1468949276>
- ⁷² A lawyer who escaped from Turkey after the incident shared the story of a resident of Cengelkoy district in Istanbul. According to this resident civilians were killed in their district by bearded, armed men on motorcycles. This description fits the description of members of SADAT, what is in effect President Erdogan’s personal army.
- ⁷³ <http://www.shaber3.com/adam-kacirilan-siyah-transporterlar-15-temmuzda-da-sahnedeymis-haberi/1286295/>
- ⁷⁴ <http://www.sozcu.com.tr/2016/gundem/silahli-sivillerin-sokakta-ne-isi-var-1317315/>
- ⁷⁵ <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/turksat-davasinda-ikinci-ara-karar-gundem-2458915/>
- ⁷⁶ <http://www.aei.org/publication/did-erdogan-stage-the-coup/>

⁷⁷ https://stockholmcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/15_July_Erdogans_Coup_13.07.2017.pdf

⁷⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHr3MdZn8G8>

⁷⁹ <https://purgednato.files.wordpress.com/2017/05/a-search-for-truth1.pdf> p.48

⁸⁰ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3694232/Eight-coup-supporters-fled-Greece-Blackhawk-helicopter-fight-Turkish-demands-sent-home-face-retribution.html>

⁸¹ <http://www.cnbc.com/2016/07/15/gunfire-heard-jets-seen-flying-in-turkish-capital-of-ankara.html>

⁸² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GtZaYQ9JQ>

⁸³ https://stockholmcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/15_July_Erdogans_Coup_13.07.2017.pdf

⁸⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZtuHW-fFIY>

⁸⁵ <http://www.keeptalkinggreece.com/2016/07/21/greeces-air-force-erdogans-aircraft-at-no-point-harassed-by-rebel-f-16s-on-coup-night/>

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⁸⁷ <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/07/turkey-kamikaze-coup-attempt-fails.html>

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⁸⁹ <http://www.yeniasya.com.tr/gundem/koprudeki-askerler-darbe-girisimi-gecesi-yasadiklarini-anlatti-406078>

⁹⁰ <http://www.gazetevatan.com/darbeci-askerlerden-sasirtan-ifadeler-1039748-gundem/>

⁹¹ https://stockholmcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/15_July_Erdogans_Coup_13.07.2017.pdf

⁹² <http://www.dailystormer.com/was-the-turkish-coup-an-erdogan-hoax/>

⁹³ <http://www.bbc.com/turkce/36858601>

⁹⁴ <http://www.emekliasubaylar.org/images/haberler/darbe/genkur-basin-21-temmuz.jpg>

⁹⁵ <https://www.hizmetstudies.org/commentary/questions-we-dare-not-ask-gulen-and-the-coup/>

⁹⁶ <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2016/08/23/trtyi-basan-sivil-ismin-kimligi-ortaya-cikti>

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¹⁰³ <http://www.turkeypurge.com>

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¹⁰⁵ It is interesting to note that Homeland Party member former Gen. Pekin and other retired senior Turkish officers Rear Adm. Soner Polat and Maj. Gen. Beyazit Karatas, visited Damascus in January, April, and May 2015 and met with “several of the most influential security chiefs, diplomats, and political officials in the Syrian government” in order to facilitate a normalization of relations with Turkey. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/07/12/turkeys-deep-state-has-a-secret-backchannel-to-assad/>

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- ¹⁰⁶ <http://citifmonline.com/2017/04/05/erdogan-was-behind-failed-coup-based-on-cia-bnd-reports-german-intel-expert/>
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- ¹⁰⁸ <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/en/originals/2016/07/turkey-military-coup-attempt-more-questions-than-answers.html>
- ¹⁰⁹ <http://www.diken.com.tr/kilicdaroglu-ohali-tanimladi-gercek-darbe-20-temmuzda-yapildi/>
- ¹¹⁰ <http://presstv.ir/Detail/2017/04/03/516596/Turkey-AKP-CHP-Kemal-Kilicdaroglu-Erdogan-coup-FETO-Gulen>
- ¹¹¹ <https://yavuzbaydar.wordpress.com/2017/01/28/is-gulenist-coup-a-hoax-turkey-has-become-a-country-thats-devouring-itself/>
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- ¹¹⁴ <https://www.hdp.org.tr/en/en/news/from-hdp/demirtas-erdogan-knew-about-the-coup-before-it-happened/9047>
- ¹¹⁵ <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/02/turkey-kurdish-politicians-face-up-143-years-jail.html>
- ¹¹⁶ <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/07/19/turkish-coup-attempt-spawns-conspiracy-theories-bolsters-erdogans-clout.html>
- ¹¹⁷ <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/media-hit/dr-aykan-erdemir-turkish-coup-staged-by-erdogan/>
- ¹¹⁸ <http://www.commondreams.org/views/2016/08/04/mystery-turkeys-failed-coup>
- ¹¹⁹ <http://www.ipost.com/Middle-East/Possible-that-Erdogan-engineered-coup-former-Pentagon-official-tells-Post-462243>
- ¹²⁰ <http://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/yazarlar/2017/01/10/akpye-ragmen-bu-karanlik-darbenin-sirlari-ortaya-cikacak/>
- ¹²¹ Original: "Dinlenmeleri halinde darbeye ilgili pek çok noktayı açığa çıkartacak kişiler çağrılmadı. AKP bu komisyonu belli ki darbeyi açığa çıkarmak gibi bir amaçla kurduymamıştı. Bir tür darbe hikayesi kurguladılar. Bir anlatısı vardı AKP'nin darbeye ilişkin. Bu anlatıyı destekleyecek çalışma bekliyorlardı. Neydi bu anlatı; 15 Temmuz darbesi Gülen cemaatine mensup subaylar tarafından organize edilmiş, hayata geçirilmiştir. Bütün sorumluluk, bütün planlar Gülen cemaatine aittir... Darbeye kalkışanların siyasi bağlantıları, Gülençilerin sayısı, cemaat dışından ne kadar kişinin katıldığı gibi sorular hiçbir şekilde tartışılmadı. AKP'nin anlatısı, darbe sonrasına ilişkin siyasi stratejisi bu soruları mümkün olduğunca sordurmamaktı. Böyle bir stratejinin doğal sonucu olarak darbede kimlerin rol aldığı, siyasi ayağının ve amacının ne olduğunun ortaya çıkmasını istemediler. AKP kendi anlatısına uygun bir çalışma için komisyonu araçsallaştırdı." "Bize göre AKP yönetimi, başta Cumhurbaşkanı darbe girişiminden belli bir süre önce haberdar olmuşlardı. Cumhurbaşkanı ve ekibinin darbeden haberi vardı. Darbe girişimini önceden engellemek yerine yol verdiler darbecilere. Onların darbe girişimine başlamasına izin verdiler, imkan tanıdılar. Darbe gecesi darbecileri kısıvrak yakalamaktı amaçları. Sadece bundan da ibaret değil. Cumhurbaşkanı 'Bu bize Allahın bir lütfü' derken darbe gecesi sonrasına ilişkin stratejisini net bir biçimde açığa vuruyordu. Darbeyi fırsat olarak kullandılar ve karşı darbe gerçekleştirdiler."
- ¹²² <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmfaif/615/615.pdf>