

BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD
TURKEY

Weekly Report on Turkey's Political, Geo-Strategic, Economic and Social Issues,

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News Outline

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	3-4
POLITICAL NEWS	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PKK spreads chaos in southeastern Turkey, killing 6• War expanding from Southeast, says BDP deputy• Gülen Community file sent to Erzurum by Cihaner successor• Top Turkish court to discuss charter amendments Tuesday	
GEO-STRATEGIC NEWS	7
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Israel killed more than 9, threw wounded into sea, witnesses say• Gaza-bound flotilla activists given hero's welcome in Turkey• Turkey's Senior Diplomat In Israel Returns To Turkey• Turkish NGOs to protest Israel on Golan Heights• Davutoğlu presses for UN probe into aid ship deaths• Gül: Israel will be greatly damaged due to this assault• Turkey expects Israel to apologize, Turkish chief negotiator• Turkey's military programs with Israel remain in place• Global ire shifts to Gaza blockade after Israeli raid on aid flotilla• Turkey, Egypt to accelerate military cooperation• Turkey offers northern Iraq investment for peace• Turkey's Arab appeal surges after Israel's raid• Hamas refuses Israel's delivery of flotilla supplies• Aid flotilla activists missing, says Turkish charity head• Turkey to ink cybercrime treaty• Turkey puts state energy deals with Israel on hold• Gaza assault jeopardizes Turkish tourism, defense deals• Turkey: Israel will pay the price for 'pirate' violence• Turkish-Azerbaijani gas deal may foster exports• US presses Azerbaijan, Turkey on gas transit deal• Turkish textile sector to grow with Syrian fair	
ECONOMIC NEWS	34
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hazelnut exports exceed \$1 billion• Turkish stocks tumble after Israel's brutal attack on flotilla• Turkish Exports Reach \$9 Bln In May 2010• Turkish businessmen may take steps in Chile, Erdoğan• Hürriyet buys Radikal daily for TL 5 million	

- Fruit juice industry unscathed by global economic crisis
- Private pension funds exceed TL 10 billion in Turkey
- Turkey, Brazil cement strategic partnership with focus on trade
- Turkey creates legal basis for military hardware cooperation with Saudis

SOCIAL ISSUES

41

- Turkey to give weight to international Asian group
- Turkey spends 15 billion USD for cigarette annually
- Amnesty notes little progress on human rights in Turkey

COMMENTARY

44

- A look at Turkish-Israeli economic relations after the crisis
- Turkey's statesmanship in the Israeli crisis
- Kurdish problem or PKK problem?

Summary of Political News

Six Turkish soldiers including village guards and a private security guard were killed and 10 others were injured in an armed clash with terrorists from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in southeastern Turkey.

SUMMARY OF GEO-STRATEGIC NEWS

On Monday ,520 aid volunteers and nine dead bodies of the aid activists which were killed by Israeli forces during Israel attack on aid flotilla returned to their home Turkey. The returnees were welcomed by thousands of supporters ,Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç and several Turkish lawmakers. Turkey's senior diplomat Oguz Celikkol in Israel returned on Thursday to Turkey after Israeli attack on Gaza-bound aid flotilla. According to Turkey, she will cut-off her diplomatic relations with Israel if Israel do not apologize over her this mistake.

Around 20 Turkish nongovernmental organizations, mainly based in the country's eastern and southeastern provinces, are preparing to denounce a recent Israeli assault on an aid flotilla in international waters during a major rally on the Golan Heights that will continue until the humanitarian aid the flotilla was bringing to Gaza reaches Palestinians. The Syrian Officials allowed the entrance of rally-activists towards the Golan –heights without any official document and passport.

Turkey's military ties with Israel have not been hindered by the ongoing tension over Israel's killing of civilians on a Gaza-bound aid flotilla. Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül says there are no large-scale joint projects, but ongoing programs with Israeli defense companies are worth hundreds of millions of dollars and will continue. In another development, Turkey has suspended all state water and energy projects with Israel. Hamas refused to accept an Israeli delivery of at least 20 truckloads of humanitarian aid from the flotilla of ships that commandos intercepted in a raid that left nine people dead. The group said it was waiting for instructions from the Turkish government on whether to accept the supplies.

Turkey is hopeful that the both sided cooperative relations between Turkey and Egypt in the defense industry, education and training of the armed forces will accelerate and will become more flourish in the future.

Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said Turkey will boost its economic activities in northern Iraq if Iraqi Kurdish authorities improve security conditions and step up their cooperation in anti-terror activities.

Turkish Transportation Minister Bilali Yıldırım has said Turkey will soon sign the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime. The treaty, which came into force on July 1, 2004, aims to pursue a common criminal policy aimed at protecting society against cybercrime, especially by adopting appropriate legislation and fostering international cooperation.

Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yıldız said. Turkey and Azerbaijan will sign an agreement on natural gas from the Shah Deniz fields next week. A senior U.S. envoy urged Azerbaijan and Turkey to sign a long-awaited deal he said was crucial for retaining confidence in Western plans to reduce Europe's dependence on Russian gas.

SUMMARY ECONOMIC SUMMARY

Turkey has earned \$1.1 billion from hazelnut exports in the first nine months of the export season that began in September 2009. Turkish exports increased by 24.8 percent to 9 billion U.S. dollars in May 2010 when compared to May 2009.

Cash accumulated in the coffers of private pension funds in Turkey has exceeded TL 10 billion. A private pension system was introduced in Turkey in October 2001 and has seen a quick rise in the number of contributors and the size of total assets.

Turkey and Saudi Arabia have signed on 24 May 2010 a military as well as technical and scientific cooperation agreement that has created the legal basis for Turkey to enter the Saudi defense market, which relies heavily on off-the-shelf arms bought mainly from Western countries.

SUMMARY OF SOCIAL NEWS

Turkey spends 15 billion USD annually for cigarette. Amnesty International (AI) has noted little progress made on enhancing human rights protections in Turkey, accusing Turkey of failing to address increasing human rights abuses in various areas.

POLITICAL NEWS

PKK spreads chaos in southeastern Turkey, killing 6 HURRIYAT

Six Turkish soldiers, village guards and a private security guard were killed and 10 others were injured in an armed clash with terrorists from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in southeastern Turkey on Saturday.

The Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) has been carrying out an operation against the outlawed PKK in the region for a week.

One sergeant, one private, three village guards and one special security guard were killed and 10 others were wounded in the clashes that took place in the southeastern provinces of Şırnak, Hakkari, Siirt and Hatay. Two terrorists were found dead.

During a search near Mount Çırav in Şırnak, a group composed of Turkish soldiers and a village guard came across a group of terrorists. The terrorists opened fire on the soldiers and the village guard, killing an infantry sergeant and a village guard and injuring three soldiers. The injured soldiers were taken to Şırnak Military Hospital by helicopter. One private soldier died at the hospital.

During a military operation in Hakkari's Çukurca district, terrorists opened fire on a number of soldiers and injured three of them.

In another attack by a group of terrorists, two village guards who were on duty were killed and four others were injured others in Siirt's Pervari district.

The terrorist organization carried out an armed attack on a coal mine in Hatay. A clash broke out with the mine's security guards in which one was killed and another seriously injured. Two terrorists were found dead following the clash.

31 May 2010, Monday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

War expanding from Southeast, says BDP deputy

Thursday, June 3, 2010

DİYARBAKIR – Doğan News Agency

HURRIYAT

Monday's attack on an İskenderun naval base indicates that Turkey's main terrorist organization is geographically expanding its struggle, according to a deputy from the country's pro-Kurdish party.

"I see it as though this war will not just be in Kurdistan anymore. ... Let no one get angry at me for saying so. The facts are painful; they hurt. We have to speak about the facts; if we do, we might solve [the problem]," said Emine Ayna, a Mardin deputy for the Peace and Democracy party, or BDP, during a rally in the southeastern province of Diyarbakır. The BDP's local provincial branch organized the event to demand an end to military operations in the area, the release of imprisoned Kurds and a solution to the Kurdish problem.

Roughly 25,000 marched for two kilometers from the BDP building to Koşuyolu Park, shouting slogans supporting the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, and its imprisoned leader, Abdullah Öcalan. The PKK is recognized as a terrorist organization by Turkey and much of the international community.

While addressing the crowd, Ayna mentioned the recent PKK attack on a Turkish naval base in the Mediterranean district of İskenderun and said the “war” had started to raise its head.

Issuing a call to both Turks and Kurds, Ayna said: “It seems as if a war that could develop after this will not be like the one of the past 30 years. My call to everybody is, let us not stop for one second, let alone one day. Let’s together do everything in our power for peace, freedom, equality and justice.”

She further said, “The government of the Republic of Turkey is as responsible as the Israeli government for these deaths, the raid and the results.”

Israel had been clear since the beginning on their prospective course of action, Ayna said, blaming the Turkish government for not taking any precautions.

Gülen Community file sent to Erzurum by Cihaner successor

Thursday, June 3, 2010

MESUT HASAN BENLİ

ANKARA – Radikal

HURRIYAT

An investigation file into the Islamist Fethullah Gülen Movement initiated by Erzincan’s former chief prosecutor and current Ergenekon suspect, İlhan Cihaner, has been given to authorities in Erzurum by his successor.

Hasan Can, who assumed the post after Cihaner was arrested, decided to pass the file to Erzurum, saying the case was not within his jurisdiction.

The Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office of Erzurum was also investigating the community on accusations that it was “attempting to eliminate the constitutional order through violence and force.”

Before his arrest, Cihaner, who also conducted an investigation into the Islamist İsmailağa Community, began an investigation into the Gülen Community on charges that members “were in an organization founded to commit crimes,” “opening an unlawful education facility” and “opposing Law no. 677 [on religious facilities].”

Osman Şanal, the former Erzurum Chief Public Prosecutor with special authority, also had an ongoing investigation into the Gülen Community and detained 11 people for the same charges listed above on March 23, 2009, but released them after one day.

Şanal had requested the file prepared by Cihaner at the time but Cihaner did not answer the request.

In the months that followed, Cihaner was arrested by Şanal as an Ergenekon suspect, which led to Şanal being stripped of his special authority by the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors, or HSYK.

Top Turkish court to discuss charter amendments Tuesday

Thursday, June 3, 2010

ANKARA – Hürriyet Daily News

The fate of constitutional amendments designed to restructure judicial institutions in line with the ruling government’s demands will be determined by the Constitutional Court on Tuesday.

The court said it has accepted the main opposition’s appeal to annul the amendments.

Parliament, along with President Abdullah Gül, approved the government-backed amendments in early May, with final approval for the changes to be sought in a countrywide referendum set for Sept. 12.

Three articles of 27 were found controversial by the opposition, who argued that the amendments aim to bring the judiciary under political tutelage.

Haşım Kılıç, the court's president, has already said the judges would review only the three controversial articles that the opposition appealed. The government, however, strongly criticized the court president for his statement.

The opposition, however, refrained from making a statement on the development. "We all have to respect the ruling of the court. We'll all respect it," Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, chairman of the Republican People's Party, or CHP, told reporters Thursday.

GEO-STRATEGIC NEWS

Israel killed more than 9, threw wounded into sea, witnesses say

Planes carrying 520 aid volunteers and nine dead bodies of activists killed by Israeli security forces on Monday returned home on Thursday, with many claiming mistreatment at the hands of Israeli military officers and other officials and additional allegations that not everyone has returned.

Activists say some people who were initially on the flotilla are missing. They are also telling stories of horror, carnage and pure barbarism at the hands of Israeli officials. In a shocking account, Humanitarian Aid Foundation (İHH) President Bülent Yıldırım, who returned on Thursday, said a photographer, whose first name was Cevdet, was shot in the forehead by a soldier one meter away from him. "Our Cevdet [Kılıçlar], he is a press member. He has become a martyr. All he was doing was taking pictures. They smashed his skull into pieces. We soon made out that these were real bullets they were firing. Rubber bullets also kill because you shoot at very close range, between one-and-a-half and two meters."

Kevin Ovenden of Britain, an activist on the ship that arrived in İstanbul on Thursday, also said a man who had pointed a camera at the soldiers was shot directly through the forehead with live ammunition, with the exit wound blowing away back of his skull. There were also claims that Israeli official reports on the number of people killed are untruthful. Yıldırım said, "Until now they have returned nine dead bodies, but our list is bigger. There are people missing." Speaking to journalists at Atatürk International Airport shortly after his return, Yıldırım said: "We saw 38 injured who were brought back to us by doctors after the attack. Now they are saying there are 21 people who have been injured." Yıldırım was on the main passenger ship, the Mavi Marmara, which the Israeli navy attacked at the start of its raid.

Another witness, Yücel Köse, who was on the ship Gazze repeated Yıldırım's allegations of missing people. "The Mavi Marmara was bombed right in front of our eyes. They threw the wounded into the water," he said. Köse said the soldiers were upset when some of their men were held by activists aboard the Mavi Marmara.

Forensic examination of bodies

Turkey's Council of Forensic Medicine completed examining some of the bodies. The findings have not yet been announced. It will be a few weeks before the experts get back all the results, but initial statements from doctors confirm Yıldırım's account of the shootings at close range. According to İHH official Ömer Yağmur, who spoke to the

doctors, 19-year-old Furkan Doğan was killed by four bullets to the head -- all fired at close range -- and one bullet into his chest, also fired at close range. He said Doğan was studying at a private high school in Kayseri and hoped to become a doctor in the future. The council also confirmed yesterday that eight of the nine bodies brought back from Israel belong to Turkish citizens. The ninth person was identified as a US citizen of Turkish origin. More than 500 activists who were brought to Turkey were examined on Thursday by 120 forensic medicine experts and their assistants.

People thrown into the sea Activist İdris Şimşek, who also arrived on Thursday, claims that four wounded activists were thrown into the sea. Şimşek also stated that there was immense psychological pressure on the activists. Şimşek said they expected some harassment but had no inkling of what would happen, noting that they were not expecting an armed attack. He also mentioned that there were no weapons, including a small Swiss army knife that some foreign press organs claimed was on the ship. He stated, as many other activists have, that the person who was waving a white flag to surrender was shot by soldiers. He said that he saw many people lying in puddles of blood after the soldiers opened fire. critically wounded and under arrest) and Uğur Süleyman Söylemez from İstanbul are being treated in Israeli hospitals.

03 June 2010, Thursday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBU

Gaza-bound flotilla activists given hero's welcome in Turkey

Along with thousands of cheering supporters, Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç and several Turkish lawmakers welcomed the activists at the airport after Turkey put pressure on Israel to release the detainees, most of whom were Turkish.

In Ankara, where three air ambulances landed, were Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and Health Minister Recep Akdağ, who personally delivered their "get well soon" messages to all of the injured activists.

"They faced barbarism and oppression but returned with pride," Arınç said. A few thousand jubilant relatives and supporters, waving Palestinian and Turkish flags, burst into applause outside the airport, chanting "God is great!"

Speaking to reporters, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu said a total of 470 people had returned to İstanbul, including 466 activists and four deputies who had traveled Tel Aviv to bring back the flotilla activists. The planes waited at the Israeli airport for a long time before departure as the Turkish government refused to depart before each and every activist was onboard the planes. Davutoğlu said takeoff was delayed because Turkey "did not want any of its citizens to be left behind." The majority of the 466 people aboard the planes were Turkish, with some British, Norwegian, Dutch and Spanish citizens among them. Yavuz Dede, the vice president of the Humanitarian Aid Foundation (İHH), alleged that Israel had failed to account for all of the passengers and crew onboard the six ships and was deliberately delaying the activists' departure to cover up the missing persons. "We see this delay in the planes' [taking off] as an attempt to disguise the loss of people," Dede said at a press conference at the foundation's İstanbul headquarters.

The Israeli Interior Ministry, however, said all those aboard the aid convoy had been accounted for. They listed 702 activists deported and seven still in Israeli hospitals. They said five were taken to the Lebanese border and repatriated there. More than 120 activists

from a dozen Muslim nations without diplomatic relations with Israel were deported to Jordan before sunrise on Wednesday.

Turkish Ambassador to Israel Oğuz Çelikkol, whom Turkey recalled in protest over the Israeli raid on the Turkish ship, also returned to İstanbul on Thursday. Erol Demir, another activist on the Mavi Marmara, said they had footage of the chaos and the carnage on the ship, emphasizing that the footage will show the real face of Israeli soldiers to the entire world. "They even shot those who surrendered. Many of our friends saw this. They told me that there were handcuffed people who were shot." All activists stated that Israeli helicopters sprayed cold seawater onto the ship for three hours.

Hakan Albayrak, a journalist from the Yeni Şafak daily who was also on the ship, said: "It was an outright massacre what Israel did out there. They attacked us in international waters. We protected our ship. We had no weapons. I think we lost more people."

Activist Özlem Şahin Ermiş said 60 soldiers took her hostage. The prisoners were harassed by violent attack dogs and some were badly bitten. She also noted that they were not fed any food or given anything to drink during their initial interrogation on the ship.

The İHH said the activists Çelebi Bozan, Osman Kurç and Aydın Ataç were definitely still missing. These individuals might still be in a hospital in Israel, İHH officials said.

Meanwhile, the full list of the names of the nine Turks whose corpses were sent to Turkey and their hometowns were announced as İbrahim Bilgen - Siirt, Ali Haydar Bengi - Diyarbakır, Cevdet Kılıçlar - İstanbul (İHH staff), Çetin Topçuoğlu - Adana (national taekwondo team member), Necdet Yıldırım - Malatya (İHH staff), Furkan Doğan - Kayseri, Fahri Yıldız - Adıyaman, Cengiz Songür - İzmir and Cengiz Akyüz - Hatay. Doğan was only 19. He was killed with four bullets to the head and one to the chest.

Ahmet Aydan Beker from Kayseri (critically injured), Mehmet Ali Zeybek of Diyarbakır As activists disembarked from the planes at İstanbul Atatürk Airport they raised their arms in defiance, but afterwards some were overcome with emotion and wept.

The bodies of those killed in the bloody attack and all the activists were taken to the Council of Forensic Medicine (ATK) for autopsies and health checks.

Turkey sent three air ambulances and three passenger planes to Tel Aviv on Wednesday to bring back the detained Turkish activists. All of the activists were flown home from Israel on Turkish planes early on Thursday after Turkey gave Israel an ultimatum, threatening to review the state of its ties with the Jewish state unless each and every Turkish national was safely returned. Tens of thousands of Turks gathered at İstanbul's Taksim Square on Thursday night to celebrate the return of the peace activists. The group As activists disembarked from the planes at İstanbul Atatürk Airport they raised their arms in defiance, but afterwards some were overcome with emotion and wept.

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Injured Irish activist to Turkish delegate: Don't leave me here

Health Minister Recep Akdağ and Davutoğlu welcomed three air ambulances that landed in Ankara late on Wednesday. The first ambulance, which touched down at the Etimesgut Military Airport at 11 p.m., was carrying two critically injured activists identified as İmdat Avli of Turkey and Irish national Almahti Alharati. Officials said Alharati was taken onboard the Turkish air ambulance at his request. "Don't leave me here," the activist reportedly told Turkish officials at the hospital he was being treated at in Tel Aviv.

The two other air ambulances, carrying 17 injured activists, landed in Ankara at around midnight. All of the 19 injured activists were taken to the Atatürk Teaching and Research Hospital. "These people, who hoped to extend a helping hand to Gaza, taught humanity a lesson even though they were exposed to atrocity. The injustice they faced will certainly be responded to. Now, we will try to provide spiritual support for them by dressing their and their families' wounds," Akdağ told reporters at the airport.

Davutoğlu previously announced that they had decided to leave two Turkish activists at a Tel Aviv hospital for a few more days since they are "too seriously wounded to be brought to Turkey." Davutoğlu added, however, that a Turkish doctor would accompany the patients since "the Turkish government will not leave its citizens at the mercy of anyone." Davutoğlu said on Thursday that they will be brought to Turkey as soon as they recover.

A Greek plane carrying 35 activists from the Gaza-bound aid flotilla also landed at a military airport near Athens early on Thursday, as more than a hundred relatives and supporters cheered and shouted pro-peace slogans. There were 31 Greeks, three French nationals and one American released by the Israeli authorities aboard the military aircraft, the Greek Air Force said. Greek Alternate Foreign Minister Dimitris Droutsas and Greek lawmakers were also at Elefsis Airport to meet the returning activists. While Turkish and Greek protesters flew home on special planes sent by their respective governments, others on the ship from nearly 20 countries took commercial flights home. After all the planes took off, the Israeli Foreign Ministry said three activists remained in detention over "documentation and other issues," without elaborating. The three were from Ireland, Australia and Italy.

03 June 2010, Thursday

TODAY'S ZAMAN WITH WIRES İSTANBU

Turkey's Senior Diplomat In Israel Returns To Turkey

USAL PUBLICATION

Thursday, 3 June 2010

Turkey's senior diplomat in Israel returned on Thursday to Turkey after Israeli attack on Gaza-bound aid flotilla.

Turkey's Ambassador to Israel Oguz Celikkol arrived in Istanbul, and will proceed to the capital Ankara later on Thursday.

Turkey recalled Celikkol after Israeli navy forces raided on Monday a convoy of aid ships of Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) carrying humanitarian aid for Gaza, killing nine people and injuring 30 others.

Celikkol came back to Turkey for consultations in January 2010 after Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon summoned him to express Israel's uneasiness over a

Turkish TV-series showing Israeli agents kidnapping a child. During the meeting, Ayalon had Celikkol sit at a lower armchair in front of a table with only the Israeli flag on it, refusing to shake his hand in front of the press.

The diplomatic crisis ended when Israel apologized with a letter after repeated calls from Turkey which warned otherwise that it would withdraw its ambassador. Celikkol then returned to Israel.

Thursday, 3 June 2010

Turkish NGOs to protest Israel on Golan Heights

Around 20 Turkish nongovernmental organizations, mainly based in the country's eastern and southeastern provinces, are preparing to denounce a recent Israeli assault on an aid flotilla in international waters during a major rally on the Golan Heights that will continue until the humanitarian aid the flotilla was bringing to Gaza reaches Palestinians. The organizations set off for Syria yesterday after Syrian officials announced that they would not ask for a passport or any other official document from the activists. The 250-vehicle convoy included activists from many Turkish cities, including Van, Diyarbakır, Batman, Bingöl, Elazığ, Urfa, Kahramanmaraş and Erzurum. The convoy was planning to reach the Golan Heights yesterday night.

The activists will set up camp in the Golan Heights to pressure Israel to send the humanitarian aid in the flotilla to Gaza as soon as possible.

Participants of the convoy said they do not believe that Israel will send the aid to Gaza and decided to pressure the Israeli government with a major rally. "We will not return until we learn all aid materials have reached Gaza," they remarked.

In the early morning hours of Monday, Israeli naval commandos attacked a Turkish boat in international waters and killed at least nine peace activists and wounded dozens more. The boat was one of six boats in the Freedom Flotilla, which was bound for the besieged Gaza Strip. The violent attack increased the already high tension between Turkey and Israel, with Turkish authorities vowing to make Israel pay the price of their atrocity. The NGOs will be joined by civil society groups based in İstanbul on Friday.

03 June 2010, Thursday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Davutoğlu presses for UN probe into aid ship deaths

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu yesterday rejected an Israeli probe into a bloody takeover of a Gaza-bound aid ship by Israeli commandos, calling for a United Nations investigation instead.

We want a detailed investigation by the United Nations into Israel's rogue state actions," Davutoğlu said at a press conference upon his return from Washington, where he had talks with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

"What can be expected from an investigation run by a state in criminal status? It's Israel's actions that need to be investigated."

Israel's bloody raid on a flotilla of aid ships that were carrying about 400 Turks dramatically escalated tensions with Turkey. The attack killed nine people, including at least four Turks. Turkey withdrew its ambassador and scrapped war games with Israel as a result. Davutoğlu made it plain that Turkey would review its ties with Israel if all Turks are not released.

But Davutoğlu left the door open for a mending of ties if Israel lifts its three-year-long blockade of Gaza. “I see no reason for not normalizing the ties [with Israel], once the Gaza blockade is lifted and our citizens are released,” he told reporters.

Davutoğlu spoke with Clinton on Tuesday to discuss the diplomatic crisis, and had been in New York a day earlier for a UN Security Council meeting called by Turkey to pass a resolution condemning Israel’s actions. Davutoğlu welcomed the US endorsement of a UN Security Council statement condemning acts that caused deaths on the aid flotilla on Monday morning but was at odds with Clinton regarding US reluctance to condemn Israel and regarding who should conduct the investigation into the deadly incident.

The UN Security Council endorsed a resolution soon after the incident on Monday, expressing deep regret over the casualties in the Israeli operation, and condemning acts that resulted in the loss of life and other casualties. The council called for a prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation of the incident conforming to international standards. The US backed the statement.

“I think the situation from our perspective is very difficult and requires careful, thoughtful responses from all concerned,” Clinton said after meeting Davutoğlu on Tuesday. “We support an Israeli investigation that meets those criteria. We are open to different ways of ensuring a credible investigation including international participation,” Clinton said, without elaborating.

State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said the United States would push for an international role in the probe. “Turkey has a vital interest in this. Other countries have a vital interest in this,” he told a news briefing. “We will work, within the [Security] Council and more broadly, to see how an international element can be introduced into this investigation.”

Crowley also said Davutoğlu did not demand condemnation by the US in his meeting with Clinton. “The secretary reiterated during the meeting what she said afterwards, which is we have to have a careful, thoughtful approach to this going forward,” Crowley said. But another senior Obama administration official told the Associated Press that Davutoğlu had in fact made plain to the United States his disappointment over the response. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

Another issue that Davutoğlu raised in his meeting with Clinton and a separate meeting with US national security adviser James Jones was the fate of the Turks captured by Israel on the aid ship. In those meetings, Davutoğlu asked the US to convey to Israel that Turkey was preparing measures in response unless Israel moved quickly to release the Turkish citizens held in the raid and return the bodies of those killed.

Speaking to reporters before his talks with Clinton, Davutoğlu said that Turkey -- an important US ally on issues ranging from Middle East peace to the war in Afghanistan -- was disappointed that the US had not offered stronger backing. “Some of our allies are not ready to condemn the Israeli actions,” Davutoğlu said, comparing the incident to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

“We expect full solidarity with us,” he said. “It should not be a choice between Turkey and Israel. It should be a choice between right and wrong.”

International fury over the flotilla attack has created a tough balancing act for the Obama administration, particularly with Turkey, a key NATO ally seen by Washington as a secular Muslim power that can counter Islamic militancy in the region. A senior

administration official, speaking to Reuters on background, said the United States saw mistakes on both sides.

“We believe that there was a good-faith effort to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza. By the same token the organizers of the flotilla were clearly seeking a confrontation -- and tragically they got one,” he said.

Without laying direct blame, Clinton said the flotilla incident underscored the “unsustainable and unacceptable” situation in the Gaza Strip, which been subject to an Israeli blockade since the radical group Hamas seized control of the coastal desert territory in 2007. “Israel’s legitimate security needs must be met, just as the Palestinians’ legitimate needs for sustained humanitarian assistance and regular access to reconstruction materials must also be assured,” Clinton said.

‘Israelis safe in Turkey’

Meanwhile, Davutoğlu also gave assurances that measures are being taken to ensure safety of Israeli diplomats

and tourists in Turkey. Israeli media reported that families of Israeli diplomats stationed in Turkey, once the Jewish state’s closest Muslim ally, were being flown home due to security concerns.

Davutoğlu said it was “time that calm replaced anger in reaction to Israel” and he urged people to avoid impulsive behavior. “The security of families of Israeli diplomats, Israeli tourists and Jewish Turks is our nation’s honor. We will be making sure they are safe,” he said.

03 June 2010, Thursday

TODAY’S ZAMAN ANKARA

Gül: Israel will be greatly damaged due to this assault

President Abdullah Gül has stated that Israel’s attack on a Gaza-bound civilian aid flotilla on Monday and its treatment of the civilians taken captive in the aftermath of the military raid on the ships will greatly damage that country.

Erdoğan and Obama had a telephonone conversation late on Tuesday, discussing an Israeli attack on aid ships in international waters bound for Gaza early on Monday.

Erdoğan said the attack was unacceptable, against international law and norms, according to the statement released after the conversation. He also told the US president that he had demanded that Israel immediately return all dead, injured and detained peace activists.

Erdoğan also informed Obama that Turkey had requested that the aid ships be returned to Turkey and that the Gaza siege be lifted.

The White House said Obama called Erdoğan to express “his deep condolences for the loss of life and injuries resulting from the Israeli military operation” on a Turkish aid ship bound for Gaza.

Turkey, a key ally of the United States, reacted angrily to Monday’s raid, in which at least nine people were killed when Israeli commandos stormed the ship in international waters. The ship had been trying to break an Israeli blockade on Gaza. The White House said Obama had in his telephone call with Erdoğan reiterated the United States’ support for “a credible, impartial and transparent investigation of the facts surrounding this tragedy.”

“The president affirmed the importance of finding better ways to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza without undermining Israel’s security,” the White House said in a statement.

The diplomatic crisis prompted by Israel’s raid on the flotilla of aid ships bound for the Gaza Strip confronts President Obama with a second major test by the Israeli leadership, following the issue of Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory, and presents yet another blow to his goal of brokering peace with the Palestinians.

The aid convoy was intent on breaking Israel’s three-year blockade of the Gaza Strip, imposed after Hamas seized control of the tiny Mediterranean territory in 2007.

The statement further said Obama told the Turkish leader that the US was “working in close consultation with Israel to help achieve the release of the passengers, including those deceased and wounded, and the ships themselves.”

Immediately after the raid early on Monday, Erdoğan accused Israel of “state terrorism.”

The government recalled its ambassador to Israel and called off military exercises with the Jewish state. His anger did not abate on Tuesday when he told Parliament the Israeli assault violated “international law, the conscience of humanity and world peace.”

Speaking to the press after a meeting with members of the Kayseri Journalists

Association’s executive board at the Çankaya presidential palace on Wednesday, Gül answered questions on the latest situation involving Israel. He said it was unacceptable for Israel to release the Turkish citizens it has detained in separate groups, commenting: “We demanded that they all be released together, at once. We know that nine people, including four Turkish citizens, have died. Israel is only harming itself. This will not stand. Israel will be greatly damaged because of this.”

The president also remarked on the recent rise in the number of terrorist attacks in Turkey. “The biggest obstacle holding Turkey back is terrorism. We can overcome this with unity. Everyone is a first-class citizen of this country. A person from İstanbul or Kars can travel to any spot in this country and start a business anywhere they like.”

Gül said he attends all of the funerals held in Ankara for soldiers killed in terrorist clashes, regardless of the person’s rank. “It is not easy to cope with this grief,” he said, noting that the deaths take a major toll on the human psyche.

Meanwhile, Gül had a telephone conversation with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak regarding Israel’s attack on the aid flotilla. According to reports, Mubarak offered his condolences to Gül and announced his country’s decision to open the Rafah border crossing and allow humanitarian aid materials, including food and medicine, into the Gaza Strip. In turn, Gül said both Turkey and the international community appreciated Egypt’s move.

03 June 2010, Thursday

TODAY’S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Turkey expects Israel to apologize, Turkish chief negotiator

Turkish chief negotiator said on Thursday that Turkey expected Israel to apologize for its deadly raid on a Gaza-bound aid flotilla.

Turkish State Minister and Chief Negotiator for EU talks Egemen Bağış and Sweden's Foreign Minister Carl Bildt attended the inauguration of Swedish Consulate General, also known as the Swedish Palace, in Istanbul after the building went through restoration recently.

Replying to a question, Bağış said, "Turkey will determine its policy in accordance with attitude of Israel from now on. We expect Israel to apologize. The issue should be inquired under auspices of the UN, EU and international organizations."

Answering another question, Bağış said a written statement issued on behalf of EU condemned Israel definitely.

Meanwhile, Bağış's meeting with U.S. Congressman William Delahunt scheduled to take place in Istanbul today was cancelled.

03 June 2010, Thursday

THE ANATOLIA NEWS AGENCY İSTANBUL

Activists say new Gaza flotilla planned for fall

Pro-Palestinian activists say they are organizing a new flotilla to try to break Israel's blockade of Gaza in early fall.

Free Gaza Movement spokeswoman Greta Berlin said Thursday her group is working with the European Campaign to End the Siege to send at least three aid ships to Gaza in September or October.

She said Turkish charity İHH is welcome to join the flotilla, despite Israel's allegation the group has terror ties. The group is not on the US terrorism list.

She said another cargo ship with a dozen activists aboard including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mairead McGuire is steaming toward Gaza and should arrive "early next week."

Nine people aboard an İHH ship were killed Monday when Israeli commandos raided a six-ship aid flotilla, sparking an international outcry.

03 June 2010, Thursday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Turkey's military programs with Israel remain in place

Thursday, June 3, 2010

ÜMİT ENGİNSOY

ANKARA - Hürriyet Daily News

Turkey's military ties with Israel have not been hindered by the ongoing tension over Israel's killing of civilians on a Gaza-bound aid flotilla. Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül says there are no large-scale joint projects, but ongoing programs with Israeli defense companies are worth hundreds of millions of dollars and will continue. In another development, Turkey has suspended all state water and energy projects with Israel. Despite unprecedented tensions between Turkey and Israel over the military attack on a Turkish aid flotilla bound for Gaza, several defense industry programs between the two countries remain in place.

National Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül on Tuesday made it clear that Turkey would not cut its defense cooperation with Israel, but said presently there were no large-scale or "serious projects" left anyway.

One ongoing program is the delivery process of Heron medium-altitude, long-endurance drone systems made by Israel.

After delays of more than two years, an Israeli partnership of Israel Aerospace Industries and Elbit managed to formally deliver six Heron unmanned aerial vehicles to the Turkish military in April. Four other Herons are expected later this month or in July, Gönül said.

One of the six delivered Herons underwent a moderate accident on the ground, but officials said it would be repaired. Five Herons have started operations.

The \$183 million Heron contract was signed in 2005, but the program was dogged by technical difficulties from the start.

Separately, the Turkish military earlier this year leased a Dominator drone from Israel's Aeronautics Defense Systems. The military uses the Israeli drones mainly for reconnaissance purposes against the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK.

Other programs

In another ongoing program with Israel, the Turkish land vehicles manufacturer BMC signed a contract last year worth a few hundred million dollars with the Turkish procurement agency to produce a total of 468 Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected, or MRAP, vehicles.

BMC's model is based on the Navigator vehicle, developed by Israel's Hatehof company. The BMC vehicles will go to the Turkish Army, and are hoped to prove effective against improvised explosive devices planted by the PKK.

In addition, Israel's IAI is providing specific radars for Turkish fighter jets and Israel's Elbit is selling some avionic systems in Turkey's program to modernize the aging T-38 trainer aircraft.

Also, Turkey's military electronics company, Aselsan, and Israeli Military Industries, which has upgraded 170 Turkish M60 main battle tanks for \$670 million, late last year signed an agreement to jointly modernize M60 tanks in the world armies using this specific kind of tank.

Despite ongoing cooperation, defense analysts agree that amid the present political tensions, fresh large-scale defense industry deals between Turkey and Israel are highly unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Privately, Israeli officials also have voiced reluctance to sell strategically important weapons systems to Turkey. In the most remarkable example, Israel's Arrow 2 system is absent in a Turkish competition to buy the country's first long-range antimissile air defense systems worth between \$1 billion and \$2 billion. U.S., European, Russian and Chinese companies are eyeing the Turkish contract.

Turkey and Israel raised their ties to a strategic partnership degree in the mid-1990s, and in ensuing years Israeli companies won Turkish contracts altogether worth billions of dollars to upgrade F-4 and F-5 fighter aircraft and M60 tanks and sell other weapons.

Global ire shifts to Gaza blockade after Israeli raid on aid flotilla

Font Size: [Larger](#)|[Smaller](#)

Thursday, June 3, 2010

FULYA ÖZERKAN

ANKARA - Hürriyet Daily News

The relationship between Turkey and Israel, once regional allies, incurred irreparable damage from the aid-ship attack, but hopes are rising that the incident could lead to the removal of the blockade on Hamas-controlled Gaza. Diplomatic observers say the first thing that should be done is to carry out a credible, impartial investigation into the deaths

Hopes that the blockade against the besieged Gaza Strip may soon be lifted have been bolstered in the wake of the deadly Israeli attack on a flotilla seeking to deliver humanitarian aid to the area.

The possibility for this positive consequence to come out of the tragic incident does not mean, however, that bilateral Turkish-Israeli ties will return to normal, Ankara said Tuesday.

“The future of relations depends on Israel’s behavior and ties will not be restored unless an international probe is launched into what has happened in international waters, its results are implemented by Israel and the blockade on Gaza is lifted,” Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said.

“The most important thing for now is to ensure international action that brings about a full, credible and impartial international investigation into the events,” a Western diplomat who wished to remain anonymous told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review.

“The blockade has to be lifted in line with U.N. Security Council Resolution No. 1860,” the diplomat added. “As a regional leader, but also a country directly affected by recent events, Turkey has a unique role in working with others to encourage a coherent international response.”

Turkey is pressing the international community for an impartial, independent inquiry into the incident, which killed nine people, eight of them Turks. Ankara has dismissed the prospects for an Israeli probe, while demanding the lifting of the blockade on Gaza as a condition for normalizing relations.

Not all observers, however, agree that this will be easy – or even desirable – to do.

“I don’t think the incident will help break the Gaza blockade, but it might reshape its format and change policy regarding the land blockade,” said Israeli journalist Chico Menashe. “The maritime blockade is a security blockade that showed huge justification when Israel caught the Francop ship last November, for example. The ship was loaded with tons of weapons and missiles. Further ships coming freely into Gaza might worsen the security situation in the region.”

According to Menashe, there is a significant difference between the maritime blockade and the blockade on land crossings between Gaza and Israel/Egypt. He said the land blockade is political and much more problematic, as its goal seems more to weaken Hamas’ ability to govern Gaza. Changes in the blockade policy might danger deeply Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas’ position, Menashe said.

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“And still, although the U.S. supported the Israeli blockade in order to keep Abbas’ position, we hear today voices from the [U.S.] administration about rethinking the blockade issue,” the Israeli journalist added.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has demanded that Israel immediately lift its blockade of the Gaza Strip and indicated he may eventually launch his own probe of the raid. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has hotly rejected calls to lift the

blockade on Hamas-ruled Gaza, insisting it prevents missile attacks on Israel and labeling worldwide criticism of his navy's bloody raid as "hypocrisy."

According to senior American officials, the Obama administration considers Israel's blockade of Gaza to be untenable and plans to press for another approach to ensure Israel's security while allowing more supplies into the impoverished Palestinian area.

Rift in Turk-Israel ties

In the wake of the Israeli offensive, Turkey, a non-permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, called for an urgent meeting. Diplomatic sources said an Israeli representative also joined the U.N. session upon request. The Turkish delegation, led by Davutoğlu, reportedly left the room in protest once the Israeli representative began his address.

"This is a worst-case scenario for the United States," said an observer. "One [party] is its traditional ally – Israel – and the other a NATO ally. The two falling out with each other is a nightmare for Washington."

A diplomat who accompanied Davutoğlu on the plane and heard his phone conversation with Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak told the Daily News it was a very serious talk. Barak called two or three times following the Israeli attack as the Turkish minister's plane changed course, going from Brazil to New York, the diplomat said.

"You cannot intercept the ships in international waters. This is tantamount to sea piracy. Release the ships at once and return the passengers," Davutoğlu told Barak, who reportedly responded, "We'll take care of the injured."

"We'll not even leave an injured person in a country that has behaved that way," the Turkish foreign minister responded. "Turkey is not like any other country."

The deaths of Turkish civilian in international waters have brought the already-strained relationship between Turkey and Israel to a breaking point, with both President Abdullah Gül, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and other government officials saying relations with Israel would never be the same again.

"As long as the combination is an Erdoğan-led Turkey and an Israeli right-wing government in power, there's no chance in the near future that Turkey will change its strategic decision to isolate Israel, and to strengthen its bond with Hamas, Syria and Iran," journalist Menashe said.

Turkey, Egypt to accelerate military cooperation

Chief of General Staff Gen. İlker Başbuğ has said as Turkey and Egypt move closer to each other, both countries will be strengthened.

This cooperation will also contribute to establishing and maintaining peace in the region," Başbuğ said, speaking to reporters as he was leaving the Turkish fallen soldiers' cemetery in Cairo on Saturday.

Başbuğ believes cooperation between Turkey and Egypt, including cooperation in the defense industry, will accelerate in the coming period. He said education and training are the primary areas of cooperation between the Turkish and Egyptian armed forces.

Başbuğ's visit to Egypt had been delayed by three months. He was expected to visit Egypt in February but cancelled his trip when the Sledgehammer coup plan was discovered.

Başbuğ first met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and then had talks with his Egyptian counterpart, Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, who had visited Turkey last year.

Başbuğ reportedly discussed military relations between the two countries. Başbuğ then went to visit the Turkish fallen soldiers' cemetery in Cairo, where almost 4,500 Turkish soldiers are buried.

Başbuğ said that wherever he visits, from the Balkans to the Caucasus, he sees Turkish soldiers' cemeteries, which shows how big the Ottoman Empire was. He expressed gratitude to the Egyptian caretaker of the cemetery and presented him with a gift. Noting that the two armies have great importance considering their size, Başbuğ said these are two very experienced armies comprising 500,000-700,000 soldiers. He said there are many areas in which the two armies could cooperate and undertake joint projects, adding that he had discussed these areas with Egyptian officials during his meetings.

At the end of last year when Tantawi visited Turkey, he and Başbuğ signed a memorandum of understanding for military training and technical and scientific cooperation between the Turkish and Egyptian armed forces.

31 May 2010, Monday
TODAY'S

ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Turkey offers northern Iraq investment for peace

Thursday, June 3, 2010

SEVİL KÜÇÜKKOŞUM

ANKARA - Hürriyet Daily News

Turkey will boost its economic activities in northern Iraq if Iraqi Kurdish authorities improve security conditions and step up their cooperation in anti-terror activities, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said. "We expect full cooperation from all Iraqi brothers, especially from the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Administration, in the fight against terrorism," Davutoğlu said at a joint press conference with administration president Massoud Barzani, who is paying a landmark visit to Turkey after a gap of six years.

Ankara used Barzani's visit, seen as a first important step toward normalization of relations between the parties, to introduce its new "carrot and stick" approach to the Iraqi Kurds.

Thursday's talks focused on economic ties between Ankara and the northern Iraqi administration, as well as security cooperation against increasing terrorist activities by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has some of its bases in the region. "What is new with this visit is that we in the past solely used the 'stick,' but now we also have a 'carrot' for them," a senior foreign ministry official who was familiar with the talks told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review after the Barzani-Davutoğlu meeting.

"We are talking about 400 companies that are doing business in Barzani's area and we are talking about developing the infrastructure there," the diplomat added. "We want him to see the larger picture and we think he has started to tune into this."

Many Turkish companies – particularly in the construction, energy and infrastructure sectors – have invested in northern Iraq following the demise of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003.

“We have made the decision to implement a strategy enhancing economic integration between us. A work of full economic integration will be conducted as the bridge for these close relations between Turkey and Iraqi Kurds,” Davutoğlu told reporters at the press conference.

This common strategy, he said, involves energy and transportation projects, noting the establishment of Arbil branches of İşbank and Ziraat Bank and the beginning of direct flights to the northern Iraqi city.

At the press conference with Davutoğlu, Barzani also expressed his willingness to enhance relations in every field.

The ‘stick’ part

Returning to the “stick” part of the conversation, Turkish officials made clear their concrete expectations from Barzani, giving him a list of senior PKK members they want to see arrested and deported to Turkey, the same senior diplomat said. Turkey has made this request several times in the past with no positive answer from the northern Iraqi leader.

“He was given all kinds of evidence and intelligence reports on the PKK. We made it clear to him once again that we insist on the implementation of this needed cooperation,” the diplomat said.

During his trip to Turkey, where he also met with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Barzani repeated his support for Turkey’s fight against terrorism, but did not specify efforts to battle the PKK. “We want to maintain

During his trip to Turkey, where he also met with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Barzani repeated his support for Turkey’s fight against terrorism, but did not specify efforts to battle the PKK. “We want to maintain better relations,” sources quoted Barzani as saying.

Terrorism is the major threat to fraternity between the two peoples, Davutoğlu said at the press conference. “Vision, peace, security and a future cannot be established in a place where terrorism prevails,” he said. “Thus, we expect full cooperation from our Iraqi brothers, especially from the Iraqi Kurdish regional administration, in the fight against terrorism. We are pleased with the recent increasing cooperation.”

As Barzani’s visit coincides with signs of an escalation in PKK attacks, Ankara was expecting him to send a strong message against terrorism during his visit.

Commenting on Monday’s deadly attack by the PKK in İskenderun, Barzani said: “We are saddened by the deaths of young people, no matter they are Turkish or Kurdish. This has to end once and for all. We in no way favor the continuation of violence. We do not separate our security from that of Turkey. We will exert all effort to stop these saddening events.”

In response to a question about his scheduled meeting with Selahattin Demirtaş, the leader of the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP, Barzani said he had welcomed the Turkish government’s “democratic initiative” and hoped all Kurds would support it.

Turkey's Arab appeal surges after Israel's raid

Thursday, June 3, 2010

DUBAI – Agence France-Presse

HURRIYAT

Turkey's tough response to Israel's raid on a Gaza-bound aid flotilla has cemented its popularity among Arabs, frustrated with their governments' inability to face up to Israel, analysts say.

Demonstrators in most Arab cities, who rushed to the streets this week to protest the deadly attack, carried Turkish flags while posters of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan flew high.

"The growing involvement of Turkey and its engagement in favor of the Palestinians, as well as the uncompromising positions of Erdoğan, have led the Arab street to consider him like a new (Gamal Abdel) Nasser," said Michel Nawfal, referring to the late Egyptian president and pan-Arab legend. "Turkey is no longer considered the Trojan horse of the West in the region," said Nawfal, who authored a book titled "The Return of Turkey to the Orient."

Turkey was the first Muslim country to establish diplomatic relations with Israel, and the two countries signed a military cooperation accord in 1996. But their relations have deteriorated relentlessly since Israel launched a 22-day military offensive on Gaza in Dec. 2008.

Erdoğan, whose conservative government in the secular Muslim country has strengthened ties with the Arab world, launched a tirade against Israel after Monday's raid, which he called a "bloody massacre."

Eight Turks and a U.S. national of Turkish origin were killed in the raid on a Turkish ferry that was part of the flotilla. Many of the 45 people wounded were also Turks. On Wednesday, the Turkish parliament unanimously demanded that the government review all political, economic and military ties with Israel.

A day earlier, in an extraordinary session of the Kuwaiti parliament, the majority of deputies hailed what was called "the heroic stance of Ankara." And Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas was interrupted by a long round of applause during a speech when he mentioned Turkey's role.

"This new role for Turkey," heir to the Ottoman Empire, which ruled most of the Arab world for centuries until its defeat in World War I, "compensates for the weakness of Arab regimes," argued Nawfal. "It also represents at the same time a positive equivalent to Iran's" role in the region, he added.

Analyst Abdul Wahab Badrakhan said, "Turkey's policies in the region represent now a lifeline for the Arab street, as opposed to the weakness of Arab regimes with regard to Israel." "Turkey came to fill an important gap, because the role of Egypt (in confronting Israel) does not exist, while that of Saudi Arabia is limited and Syria cannot act on its own," he said referring to the three Arab heavyweights.

Erdoğan's popularity in the Arab world took a strong boost last year as he stormed out of a debate at the World Economic Forum, accusing the Jewish state of "barbarian" acts in Gaza. The fact that Turkey is a Sunni Muslim country gives it a preference over Shiite Iran in the majority-Sunni Arab world. "The popularity of Turkey could have gone to Iran," which champions the Palestinian conflict with Israel, "but the Sunni-Shiite conflict does not allow that," Badrakhan said.

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Gaza. The fact that Turkey is a Sunni Muslim country gives it a preference over Shiite Iran in the majority-Sunni Arab world. "The popularity of Turkey could have gone to Iran," which champions the Palestinian conflict with Israel, "but the Sunni-Shiite conflict does not allow that," Badrakhan said.

Abdul Bari Attwan, editor-in-chief of London-based Al-Quds Al-Arabi daily, agreed that Turkey is more acceptable than Iran "because the Turks are Sunnis and are not in direct confrontation with the West like Iran," which has locked horns with the international community over its nuclear program. "Turkey has realized that the Palestinian issue is the best gateway to play an important role in the Arab world," he said.

Turkey presents to Muslim Arabs, who are "tired of being branded as terrorists, an economic and democratic model of moderate Islam," he said. "For the first time, Arabs put aside their (Arab) nationalism in favor of pan-Islamism," he added.

Hamas refuses Israel's delivery of flotilla supplies

Thursday, June 3, 2010

CAIRO – Bloomberg

HURRIYAT

Hamas refused Thursday to accept an Israeli delivery of at least 20 truckloads of humanitarian aid from the flotilla of ships that commandos intercepted in a raid that left nine people dead.

The group said it was waiting for instructions from the Turkish government on whether to accept the supplies.

Hamas officials in the Gaza Strip and Israel's Defense Ministry said Thursday the cargo, including medical supplies, clothing, blankets and toys, was held up at the Kerem Shalom crossing after being brought 38 kilometers south from the port in Ashdod.

Hamas said it would not take the aid because Israel confiscated some of the supplies and was still holding some of the more than 700 passengers involved in the May 31 attempt to break Israel's naval blockade of Gaza.

Israel said last night it had expelled all foreigners from the ships except for seven who are hospitalized. It is also detaining an Israeli Arab religious leader who may be prosecuted. Hamas is considered a terrorist organization by Israel, the United States and the European Union.

"The government decided not to receive any aid until the occupation releases all those who are held," Ahmed al-Kurd, the Hamas minister for social welfare, said in a telephone interview from his office in Gaza City. "We will accept all of the aid or none of it."

The Israeli Defense Ministry unit that coordinates civilian issues with the Palestinian Authority said it had checked the flotilla cargo for weapons and other prohibited materials before delivering it to Gaza.

Israel is "acting in coordination with international aid organizations operating in the Gaza Strip which are waiting for the transfer of the cargo on the other side of the border," the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories said in a statement posted on the Defense Forces website.

Al-Kurd said Hamas was waiting for instructions from the Turkish government on whether to accept the supplies. "We will wait for a Turkish green light to receive the aid because this flotilla was flying the Turkish flag," he said. "Once it decides we should take the aid, we will take it."

The pro-Palestinian activists were attempting to sail into Gaza, which has been under Israeli blockade since the Islamic Hamas movement took full control of the territory in 2007. A seventh ship has sailed for Gaza to try and breach the Israeli blockade. Egypt temporarily eased its own blockade on the Gaza Strip yesterday to allow trucks of food and other supplies to cross the border and more than 600 Palestinians to leave, according to Palestinian border officials.

Aid flotilla activists missing, says Turkish charity head

Thursday, June 3, 2010

Thursday, June 3, 2010

ISTANBUL – Daily News with wires

HURRIYAT

Funeral prayers are held in Istanbul for eight of the nine people killed on a Gaza aid flotilla as families around the country mourn their dead. At least three activists are still missing, the group that organized the flotilla says, vowing to send larger convoys to break the blockade on the Gaza Strip

At least three members of the Gaza-bound aid flotilla that was attacked by Israeli commandos are still missing, the group that organized the convoy said Thursday as funeral prayers were given for eight slain activists.

“We have a longer list. There are still people who are missing,” Bülent Yıldırım, the head of the Humanitarian Relief Foundation, or İHH, one of the main organizers of the flotilla, told reporters at Istanbul’s Atatürk Airport. “Our doctors handed over to Israel 38 people who were injured, but they told us there were only 21 injured when we were returning.” The İHH leader also said the group would send larger convoys to end the embargo on the besieged Gaza Strip.

Yıldırım and hundreds of other activists returned early Thursday to a hero’s welcome in Istanbul. About 1,000 people, some chanting anti-Israeli slogans, packed the city’s airport in the middle of the night to greet the planes carrying them back from Israel.

Seven planes were used to deport 527 activists to Turkey and Greece, said Israeli interior ministry spokeswoman Sabine Haddad, adding that seven other activists remained in Israeli hospitals for treatment of wounds suffered during the Israeli raid. Another plane brought 31 Greeks, three French nationals and one American to Athens.

The first plane contained the bodies of eight Turks and a U.S. national of Turkish origin. All were shot dead in the Israeli raid, according to forensic experts. The nationalities of the victims were determined after post-mortem examinations at a forensic institute in Istanbul, the Anatolia news agency reported. Forensic experts found bullet marks on all the bodies and determined that one was shot at close range.

The exact circumstances of the activists’ deaths are expected to become clear in a ballistics examination that will take about a month to complete.

The 19 wounded activists deported from Israel also suffered from gunshot wounds, according to the chief doctor of the Ankara hospital treating them. “The patients generally have serious injuries to their chests, abdomens and limbs. What we have is mostly gun wounds,” Metin Doğan said in televised remarks.

Israel charges that the passengers on the boat attacked its soldiers, but organizers of the flotilla say Israeli forces started firing as soon as they landed on the ship.

Families mourn

Funeral prayers for eight of the nine people killed onboard the Mavi Marmara were held at the Fatih Mosque in Istanbul on Thursday. The coffins of Cengiz Akyüz, Ali Haydar Bengi, İbrahim Bilgen, Furkan Doğan, Cengiz Songür, Çetin Topçuoğlu, Fahri Yıldız and Necdet Yıldırım were wrapped in Turkish flags. The crowd at the funeral chanted anti-Israel slogans before and after the prayers. The funeral prayer for journalist Cevdet Kılıçlar, an İHH member, will be held at the same mosque Friday.

Families of the victims also mourned in various provinces of the country. Photographs of Bilgen, who was a mayoral candidate from the Saadet, or Felicity, Party in the March 2009 local elections, were hung over busy streets in the eastern province of Siirt.

In Adana, Cumali Topçuoğlu, the brother of 54-year-old victim Çetin Topçuoğlu, said family members were happy because their brother had become a “martyr.”

In Diyarbakır, a condolence tent was erected in front of the Ulu Mosque for Bengi, the father of four children.

An official from the İHH identified 19-year-old Doğan, originally from the central Turkish town of Kayseri, as the U.S. national among the victims. Doğan, who held an American passport, had four bullet wounds to the head and one to the chest, according to the İHH’s Ömer Yağmur. The bodies were handed over to the victim’s relatives after the autopsies.

The United Nations and the European Union have harshly criticized Israel after its commandos stormed the six-ship flotilla in international waters, setting off the clashes. About 700 activists – including 400 Turks – were trying to break the Israeli and Egyptian naval blockade by bringing in 10,000 tons of aid.

Eyewitness accounts

Two Swedes aboard the aid flotilla intercepted by Israeli forces this week said they had witnessed “premeditated murder.”

“We were witnesses to premeditated murders,” historian Mattias Gardell told Swedish public radio Thursday upon arrival in Istanbul.

“This was a military attack on a humanitarian aid operation far out in international waters,” said Gardell, a Swedish activist who was on the Mavi Marmara along with his wife, fellow historian Edda Manga, during the attack. “It was a very surprising and aggressive overreaction by Israel.”

Kuwait citizen Ali Buhamd said he saw a wounded Turkish citizen getting shot in the head. “The soldiers also left another Turk to bleed to death despite [his] calls for help,” he added.

Shane Dillon from Ireland, from the crew of the ship Challenger 1, said he witnessed some volunteers being beaten up and a Belgian woman’s nose being broken.

Of five Australians on the Gaza flotilla, two – journalists Paul McGeough and Kate Geraghty, who was injured by a stun gun during the Israeli raid – have returned to Turkey, daily The Australian reported on its website Thursday. Three others – Ahmed Luqman, who was shot in the leg, his wife, Jerry Campbell, and his sister Maryam Luqman – are reportedly still in Israel.

Compiled from Anatolia News Agency and Agence France-Presse reports by the Daily News staff.

Turkey to ink cybercrime treaty

Thursday, June 3, 2010

ISTANBUL – Daily News with Milliyet
HURRIYAT

The Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime will serve as Turkey’s domestic law text as the country will soon add its name to the treaty, says Turkish Transportation Minister Binali Yıldırım. Having come into effect on July 1, 2004, the treaty introduces heavy penalties against crimes such as infringements of copyright, computer-related fraud, child pornography and violations of network security

Turkey will soon sign the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime, Turkish Transportation Minister Bilali Yıldırım has said.

The treaty, which came into force on July 1, 2004, aims to pursue a common criminal policy aimed at protecting society against cybercrime, especially by adopting appropriate legislation and fostering international cooperation.

The convention is the first international treaty on crimes committed via the Internet and other computer networks, dealing particularly with infringements of copyright, computer-related fraud, child pornography and violations of network security. It also contains a series of powers and procedures such as the search of computer networks and interception.

With the convention, Turkey will have the opportunity to benefit from international cooperation on cybercrime. It will fight together with 43 countries that have inked the deal against cybercrime.

Speaking to daily Milliyet, Yıldırım said, “The treaty is the most extensive one in terms of international cybercrimes. Within the convention, the definition, classification and uniformity of cybercrime is attached to rule.”

Noting that the treaty also brings a common definition of crime and common penalty policy, efficient protection of society against cybercrimes, common designation of investigation methods and international collaboration, Yıldırım said: “Due to its nature cybercrime requires international relations. No matter how advanced national legislation is, it fails to efficiently fight cybercrime. With the signing, the convention will gain a domestic law context.”

Sanctions against hackers

Following the signing of the treaty, Turkey will start implementing the treaty. It will bring legal measures against people who access all or part of a computer system illegally. Intervening in transmission of private computer data and actions to access a system will be defined as crimes. The destruction, deletion, deformation and change of computer data as well as making them inaccessible will be crimes. It will also be a crime to have or import software, computer passwords and access codes produced and used for such purposes.

There will be heavy penalties for adding new data, changing, deleting or making inaccessible any computer data to provide material benefits illegally through fraud. Actions that violate copyright will be considered cybercrimes when they are conducted via a computer system.

Meanwhile, there will be heavy penalties for producing, distributing or expanding access to child pornography over a computer system and providing child pornography for oneself or others. The participation of a minor or someone who appears to be a minor in a pornographic activity will be regarded as child pornography.

The Convention on Cybercrime is the product of four years of work by Council of Europe experts, but also the United States, Canada, Japan and other countries that are not members of the organization. It has been supplemented by an additional protocol making any publication of racist and xenophobic propaganda via computer networks a criminal offence.

Turkey puts state energy deals with Israel on hold

Thursday, June 3, 2010

ISTANBUL — Bloomberg

HURRIYAT

Turkey suspended all state water and energy projects with Israel pending a solution to the dispute over Israel's raid on a Turkish aid ship, Energy Minister Taner Yıldız said in Istanbul on Thursday.

"At a time when we are focused on the humanitarian aspects of what Israel did, we can't talk about commercial and economic matters," Yıldız said. "We won't start any project with Israel until relations with them have been normalized."

Yıldız singled out the Manavgat water project, which would transport as much as 50 million cubic meters (1.77 billion cubic feet) of water from Turkey to Israel annually, and a proposed extension of the Blue Stream 2 natural gas pipeline to Israel, as examples of projects that were being put on hold.

The suspension doesn't include deals between non-government companies, Yıldız said. That means projects by companies such as Turkey's Zorlu Enerji Elektrik Üretim A.Ş., which has natural gas agreements with Israeli companies including Ashdod Energy Ltd., Ramat Negev Ltd. and Solad Energy Ltd., can move forward.

Israeli commandos raided an aid ship owned by a Turkish charity, the Humanitarian Relief Foundation, on May 31, killing nine people, most of them Turks. The ship was part of an international flotilla attempting to break Israel's embargo of the Gaza Strip.

Israeli assault draws sharp reaction from Turkish civil society

Thousands of Turks took to the streets on Monday in protest of a pre-dawn Israeli assault on a flotilla of aid ships bound for the Gaza Strip which left up to 19 people dead and dozens wounded.

The aid ships, dubbed the Freedom Flotilla, were taking badly needed humanitarian supplies to the people of the Gaza Strip, who have for the past three years been living under a harsh economic blockade. The Israeli assault came as the ships were sailing in international waters.

The assault drew strong condemnation by Turkish civil society, which denounced the Israeli violence with massive rallies throughout the day yesterday.

A group of around 2,000 people had convened in Istanbul's Taksim Square before noon. Carrying Turkish and Palestinian flags, the group chanted anti-Israeli slogans and called on the Turkish government to take action against the disproportionate use of force by

Israeli soldiers against civilians. “Down with Israel!” “Greetings to Palestine and aid ships; go ahead with resistance!” and “Turkish soldiers to Israel!” chanted the protestors. Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay) President Tekin Küçükali said his organization was ready to provide medical assistance to civilians injured during the Israeli attack. “The armed raid on civilians carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza has opened a deep wound in people’s consciences. We are ready to undertake any responsibility to take the injured to secure places and take care of their wounds there,” he stated.

In the meantime, officials at the Antalya Customs Office announced that passengers on the Turkish ships in the aid convoy did not have any weapons or even a knife on them. “All passengers boarded the ships after being screened. Our records show that no weapons were detected on them,” they said.

The announcement refutes Israeli claims that the activists were carrying weapons and munitions to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

The Humanitarian Aid Foundation (İHH) expressed concern that Israeli security forces may plant weapons on the aid ships after seizing control. “Let alone a weapon, there wasn’t even a jackknife onboard the ships. But the ships are currently under Israeli control, and the Israelis may place weapons or munitions on the ships to back up their assertions,” İHH Vice President Yavuz Dede said. İHH is one of the main coordinators of the Freedom Flotilla.

Ahmet Mercan, another İHH official, said Israel’s bloody raid on aid activists was a “unilateral war” waged against unarmed civilians. “The assault has shown that Israel is not a state or a society. It is a terrorist organization. The world is now faced with a test. Will it side with human rights or not? How will the world react in the face of such an assault? Israel initiated a war. This is a unilateral war being waged on civilians. This is a war waged on 50 countries. This is a war waged on the collective conscience of humanity,” he said.

Members of Turkey’s Jewish community also condemned the attack, saying they share Turkey’s feelings about the killings of activists on the aid ships. “We are saddened to learn that a military operation was launched against the Mavi Marmara [one of the Turkish ships in the flotilla]. We share the reactions the operation sparked in our country [Turkey],” read a statement issued by the community.

Thousands of people living in İstanbul and Ankara have been in front of the Israeli Embassy and Consulate since the early hours of Monday to protest the killings of the unarmed civilians. Police tightened security measures around the buildings, preventing protestors from entering the embassy or consulate.

‘Attack damaged Turkish-Israeli ties’

A statement issued by the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen’s Association (MÜSİAD) said the Israeli assault had damaged ties of fraternity between Turkey and Israel.

“With the most recent assault in international waters of unarmed ships which were carrying only humanitarian aid to Gaza, Israel has shown the entire world that it will not allow any peaceful attempt in the region and will not respect human rights. The attack cannot be approved or backed by any nation in the world. World leaders do not have the luxury to hide themselves behind mere statements. It is high time the world said ‘stop’ to the perpetrators of the bloody assault,” the MÜSİAD statement read and called on the United Nations and the international community to review their approach to Israel.

A similar statement came from Confederation of Turkish Real Trade Unions (Hak-İş) President Salim Uslu, who said Israel committed a crime against humanity by attacking civilians on a ship carrying humanitarian aid to people in need. He also called on the international community to take action against Israeli violence.

“Israel insists on not ending its terror and attacks in the Middle East. It has turned into a traumatic actor in the region. It attacks civilians, children or women included. Israel has caused the shame of the century to humanity and continues to do so. ... The United Nations, NATO, the European Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference [OIC] and the Arab League should take action and say ‘stop’ to [Israel’s] dirty game,” the statement went on to say.

A doctors’ organization known as Yeryüzü Doktorları (Doctors on Earth) also condemned the killings of the activists on the aid flotilla, saying humanitarian aid flowing to people in need should not be blocked, regardless of their religion, language or ethnicity. “The attack on the Freedom Flotilla came in violation of international law and universal humanitarian values. Yeryüzü Doktorları strongly condemns the Israeli assault on the aid ships carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza,” read the statement.

01 June 2010, Tuesday
TODAY’S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

ISTANBUL - Daily News with wires

Gaza assault jeopardizes Turkish tourism, defense deals

Tuesday, June 1, 2010

Israeli military’s deadly assault against the Gaza aid flotilla is expected to have serious repercussions in economic and trade ties between Ankara and Tel Aviv. As Culture Minister Ertuğrul Günay confirms thousands of reservation cancellations by Israelis, the Defense Ministry is pondering the annulment of joint military projects

The Israeli military raid on a Turkish aid ship headed for Gaza that left at least nine dead is expected to have serious repercussions in economic ties between the two countries.

As tourism seems to be the first area that will be hit by the unprecedented tension, defense deals could also be put under scrutiny by the Turkish government.

“We have no problem with the people of Israel,” Anatolia news agency quoted Günay as saying. “There are cancellations. We understand this.”

Turkey has had problems about Israeli tourists “since Davos,” Günay said, referring to the Jan. 29, 2009, spat during a World Economic Forum conference that resulted in Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan storming out of the hall at the Swiss mountain resort.

“This year, there were reservations and Israelis were coming. Turkey is a country that offers safe travel and holiday for Israel, near the Middle East. This won’t change. It will be the same after the Israeli people oust that intolerant government [of theirs],” he said.

Günay put the number of first cancellations at “between 10,000 and 20,000.”

However, Başaran Ulusoy, chief of the Association of Turkish Travel Agencies, said “a minimum of 70,000-80,000 tourists from Israel will be lost.”

“Turkey is the United Nations of international tourism,” Vatan newspaper quoted him as saying on Tuesday. “The safety of the lives of Israeli tourists is under the guarantee of the Turkish Republic. Everybody should continue their holidays without fear.”

Cruises changing course

Vatan reported Tuesday that cruises carrying Israeli tourists to destinations such as Alanya and Marmaris have changed course in the aftermath of the Israeli assault and are now heading toward Cyprus or Rhodes. The Mirage-1, which was carrying 420 Israeli tourists to Alanya, has changed course to Rhodes, while a total of 50,000 reservations have been canceled in Bodrum and Marmaris, the newspaper said.

Speaking to Vatan, Sururi Çorabatır, head of the Mediterranean Tourist Hoteliers Association, said another cruise carrying 850 tourists to Alanya is now heading toward Greek Cyprus.

The cancellations came after the Israeli Foreign Ministry advised its citizens not to travel to Turkey.

“In Bodrum, there were already few Israeli tourists due to political tensions,” Yüksel Aslan, the local director of Brontes, a travel company, told Doğan news agency.

“According to our talks with Israeli agencies, two planes per week were to land at Bodrum, for reservations that start on June 20.”

“The Royal Iris, a cruise that was carrying tourists to Marmaris, has canceled its trip,” Doğan quoted Şükrü Tugay, the managing director of the Marmaris Port, as saying. “A total of 20 other ships that were to come throughout the year have also canceled their trips.”

Tourism is only one of the economic casualties of Monday’s assault. Roughly \$20 billion of joint projects in energy, agriculture and water, including a pipeline to carry gas, electricity and fiber optic cables from Turkey via Israel as far as India, are at risk following the raid, Vatan newspaper said.

Meanwhile, Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül said Tuesday that he foresaw no problems in the delivery of the unmanned surveillance aircraft Turkey is purchasing from Israel, according to the private CNBC-e channel. Nonetheless, the Undersecretary of Defense has begun debating the pros and cons of canceling the joint TARP project.

The \$140 million project was planned as an enhancement of the capabilities of Turkey’s F-4 2020 and F-16 fighter jets.

Similarities between PKK, Israel attacks raise suspicions

The common characteristics of an assault carried out by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and an Israeli attack on a humanitarian aid convoy in international waters have raised suspicions over whether the two incidents are related.

A rocket attack by terrorists on a naval base killed seven soldiers and wounded six others in the southern province of Hatay’s İskenderun district on Monday shortly after midnight. After a couple of hours, Israeli commandoes attacked a six-ship convoy carrying hundreds of pro-Palestinian activists on an aid mission to the Gaza Strip and killed nine people and injured dozens.

Some Turkish politicians have speculated over a possible relationship between the two deadly incidents. “We don’t think the incident [İskenderun attack] was coincidental,” Justice and Development Party (AK Party) Deputy Chairman Hüseyin Çelik said, speaking to reporters at AK Party headquarters in Ankara on Monday.

“As the AK Party, we condemn the incidents strongly. Israel has torn down Gaza. They do not even let construction materials in. This will be a black mark on the history of humanity. An attack was carried out at our military unit in İskenderun. We condemn this, too. We do not think that it is a coincidence that these two attacks took place at the same time,” Çelik said.

The newly elected chairman of the Republican People's Party (CHP), Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, also said the similarity between the incidents is meaningful. Speaking at a press conference held at party headquarters on Monday, Kılıçdaroğlu recalled that some circles are concerned about whether the İskenderun attack is related to Israel. "We feel deeply sorry about the incident in İskenderun. We must pay attention to the killings of seven soldiers. At a time when the Israeli army continues military operations, it is meaningful that such an incident took place in Turkey," he said.

Felicity Party (SP) leader Numan Kurtulmuş reacted harshly during a press conference held at the İstanbul branch of the party. While pointing out the timing of both incidents, Kurtulmuş said he hoped the attacks were not related to each other. "Our soldiers were attacked in Turkey. I hope it was a coincidence that Israel began to attack the ship after a brutal attack on a Turkish Naval Forces base in İskenderun. May God bless the souls of those martyrs who died in this vicious attack," he said.

01 June 2010, Tuesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Turkey: Israel will pay the price for 'pirate' violence

Israel will have to "bear the consequences" after at least 10 pro-Palestinian activists were killed when Israeli commandos boarded the largest vessel in a convoy of aid ships heading to Gaza, Turkey said on Monday.

Ankara already stated many times that a return to normal bilateral relations is conditional on concrete steps by Israel to end the months-long humanitarian tragedy in Gaza, long before Israeli commandos stormed a ship with 700 people on board who were accompanying five other vessels carrying 10,000 tons of medical supplies, housing material and other aid to Gaza.

Yet Ankara appeared to have run out of patience after the move by Israeli naval forces, which Turkish officials labeled "piracy," while the first official reaction came early Monday morning from the Foreign Ministry through a harshly worded statement of condemnation.

"Israel has once again clearly demonstrated that it does not value human lives and peaceful initiatives through targeting innocent civilians. We strongly condemn these inhuman acts of Israel. This grave incident which took place in high seas in gross violation of international law might cause irreversible consequences in our relations," the ministry said, highlighting that Turkey "protests in the strongest terms the use of force by the Israeli Defense Forces against the civilians from many countries who want to transport humanitarian assistance to the people in Gaza."

"Whatever the motives might be, such actions against civilians who are involved only in peaceful activities cannot be accepted. Israel will have to bear the consequences of these actions which constitute a violation of international law," the ministry said.

Turkey also announced that it was withdrawing its ambassador to Israel, canceling three joint military drills and calling on the UN Security Council to convene in an emergency session about Israel.

While hectic diplomatic activity was conducted in Ankara, with Israeli Ambassador to Turkey Gabby Levy summoned to the Foreign Ministry headquarters, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan cut short an official visit to Latin America and was on his way

home. Similarly, Chief of the Turkish General Staff Gen. İlker Başbuğ cut short an official visit to Egypt and was on his way to Turkey.

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, who was accompanying Erdoğan in Latin America and was supposed to travel to Washington for talks with US officials on a fuel swap deal brokered by Turkey and Brazil with Iran, changed his plans and headed to New York to participate in an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council concerning the recent developments. Turkey is a non-permanent member of the council.

‘Send back injured ones, passengers; release ships’

Turkey’s demand of a detailed report on the incident, which includes information about passengers on the convoy -- that consists of citizens of 32 different countries including Turkey -- was verbally conveyed to Ambassador Levy by Ambassador Ünal Çeviköz, the deputy undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry.

Çeviköz also told Levy that Turkey expects to receive those injured as soon as possible in order for them to receive medical treatment here.

“We also expect the other passengers to be sent to their home countries as soon as possible exactly as we were told earlier [by Israeli officials],” Çeviköz told Levy, underlining once more the illegality of Israel’s confiscation of the ships in international waters and urging the immediate release of the ships.

“In response to what happened concerning said attacks, we reserve our rights, which stem from international law,” Çeviköz said.

Speaking at a press conference after chairing an emergency meeting, Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç called the Israeli attack “piracy,” while denying Israeli statements that some on the ships headed for the Gaza Strip were armed and had attacked Israeli soldiers.

Arınç stated that there would be no immediate action on the country’s defense cooperation with Israel.

Three of the ships were sailing under Turkish flags, including the main passenger ship, and the convoy was led by the Turkey-based Humanitarian Aid Foundation (İHH), a pro-Islamic Turkish aid group. Arınç said about 400 of the 581 passengers on the main ship, the Mavi Marmara, were Turks.

“I strongly condemn the use of force by Israeli military forces on an aid convoy,” he said. “This attack must not remain unanswered. “

“We are calling back our ambassador today,” he said. “We have also cancelled three military drills with Israel as well as calling back our under-18 soccer team from Israel.” He ruled out deploying Turkish warships to the Mediterranean. Two of the cancelled military drills were search and rescue exercises in the Mediterranean, and the third was a drill in Israel later this year.

He insisted that the Turkish government was not involved in the organization of the flotilla, saying it was coordinated by nongovernmental organizations.

But he disputed reports that the Israelis only opened fire after being attacked by activists with sticks, knives and live fire from weapons seized from Israeli commandos.

“Israel might be trying to defend itself or justify its actions,” Arınç said. “What we know is that the ships were totally unarmed and set sail for humanitarian purposes.”

Mobilizing international community

The ambassadors of EU member countries, Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) countries and UN Security Council countries accredited to Ankara were, meanwhile,

invited to the Foreign Ministry. Separate groups of ambassadors were each briefed by a deputy undersecretary both concerning the incident and reasons behind Turkey's reaction to the incident -- in particular its call on the UN Security Council to hold an emergency meeting.

Turkey cannot remain indifferent to this issue, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu told state-run broadcaster Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), as his plane refueled on an island en route from Brazil to New York.

Calling those people who were killed by Israeli forces "martyrs," Davutoğlu said he would personally discuss the issue with the UN secretary-general in New York. Noting that Turkey has been in contact with other countries whose citizens were on board the attacked ship, Davutoğlu said he was personally in contact with the foreign ministers of these countries.

Davutoğlu said that this is an international civilian initiative, adding that Turkey would raise the issue at several international platforms.

"No matter how it happened, this was an action of piracy even if only one person had been injured," Davutoğlu said, stressing that Israel's actions have been hurting the conscience of humanity as a whole.

"We hope that they take the necessary lessons from this. I want to stress once more that no country is above international law. Nobody can justify such an attack launched by any country against any other country's citizens. Additionally, [nobody] can justify the blockade of Gaza, either. The blockade of Gaza is illegal, and it is not legitimate, either, from an international standpoint."

01 June 2010, Tuesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN ANKARA

Turkish-Azerbaijani gas deal may foster exports

Thursday, June 3, 2010

MOSCOW - Bloomberg

HURRIYAT

Turkey and Azerbaijan will sign an agreement on natural gas from the Shah Deniz fields next week, Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yıldız said.

Azerbaijan President İlham Aliyev will visit for a signing ceremony on June 7 and Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin will join them a day later for talks on issues including energy, Yıldız said to reporters in Istanbul Thursday.

Azerbaijan and Turkey's planned gas accord will foster exports, aiding partners led by BP Plc and Statoil ASA to make an investment decision on a \$20 billion Caspian Sea project, the Azerbaijani state energy producer said.

The countries will need six to eight months to close commercial details, after signing a planned framework accord, said Murat Heydarov, adviser to the head of the State Oil Co. of Azerbaijan, or Socar. Azerbaijani President İlham Aliyev may sign a gas accord with Turkey during a visit on Monday and Tuesday, Anatolia news agency reported.

The Nabucco gas pipeline, a 7.9 billion-euro project led by OMV AG, is vying with links planned separately by Statoil and Edison SpA to bring Azerbaijani gas to Europe.

Russia's OAO Gazprom has also said it is ready to buy all the gas produced at the BP and Statoil-led Shah Deniz project in the Azerbaijani part of the Caspian Sea.

The gas supply and transit agreement will create “an open road” for exports to Europe, which has slowed a decision on the second phase of the Shah Deniz field, where Socar is a partner, Heydarov told reporters Thursday.

“We have been hugely encouraged over recent weeks at the progress that the Azerbaijani and Turkish governments have made toward reaching agreements on terms for Shah Deniz sales and transit,” Al Cook, BP’s vice president for Shah Deniz development, said today at a conference in Baku.

Initial output

Initial production from the field’s second phase is expected in 2016, Cook said. Shah Deniz’s second phase will pump almost 16 billion cubic meters of natural-gas a year within the two to three years after it starts, Heydarov said.

Azerbaijan aims to have 20 billion cubic meters of gas available for export in 2017, all but 4 billion cubic meters from Shah Deniz, Kamal Abbasov, who oversees gas marketing for Socar, said at the conference.

BP and Statoil each own 25.5 percent of the Shah Deniz production-sharing agreement. Socar, Russia’s OAO Lukoil, National Iranian Oil Co. and Paris-based Total SA each own 10 percent. Turkish Petroleum Overseas Co. owns 9 percent.

US presses Azerbaijan, Turkey on gas transit deal

Wednesday, June 2, 2010

BAKU - Agence France-Presse

HURRIYAT

A senior U.S. envoy urged Azerbaijan and Turkey on Wednesday to sign a long-awaited deal he said was crucial for retaining confidence in Western plans to reduce Europe's dependence on Russian gas.

Richard Morningstar, the U.S. Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy Issues, said the signing of a deal, two years in the making, would be essential to boost confidence in the European Union's ambitious Southern Corridor plan. The corridor would bypass Russia in bringing Caspian Sea gas through Turkey to Europe.

"We are encouraged by the recent progress in negotiations between Turkey and Azerbaijan," Morningstar said at a conference on Caspian Sea energy development in the Azerbaijani capital Baku.

"We are hopeful the two sides will reach an agreement sooner rather than later, so that confidence in the Southern Corridor is not undermined."

Energy-rich Azerbaijan is seen as a key potential supplier for the main component of the Southern Corridor plan to diversify gas supplies. The 3,300-kilometer Nabucco pipeline between Turkey and Austria was scheduled to be completed by 2014.

Other potential elements of the plan included possible Italy-Turkey-Greece and Trans-Adriatic pipelines.

The EU-backed pipeline would compete with Russia's South Stream pipeline project to meet gas demands in Europe, which already rely on Russia for a quarter of its gas supplies.

South Stream, which would channel Russian gas under the Black Sea to Bulgaria, is expected to be completed by the end of 2015.

The deal between Baku and Ankara is expected to cover the price of Turkish gas imports from Azerbaijan as well as the amount Turkey charges in transit fees for Azerbaijani gas to be delivered to Europe.

Turkish textile sector to grow with Syrian fair

Wednesday, June 2, 2010

ISTANBUL - Hürriyet Daily News

Turkish textile businesspeople are looking to expand their export destinations with the Istanbul Fashion Fair, or IFF, Aleppo, which will be held in Syria from July 22 to 25.

“We aim to revive the trade volume between Turkey and Syria,” said Nedim Örün, Turkish Fashion and Apparel Federation, or TMFH, president, speaking to journalists during a press conference in Istanbul Tuesday.

The fair will be organized by the Fashion and Apparel Federation and will be supported by Aegean Clothing Manufacturers Federation, or EGSD.

“We aim to be presented by 60 Turkish firms in Aleppo. We will offer Syria our apparel products,” said Örün.

Noting that in Middle East countries, Turkish apparel products are considered high end, Örün said: “Syria’s population is 5.5 million. It is close to Gaziantep and Kilis. Aleppo is the trade capital of the country.”

Örün said Turkish textile businesspeople are very hopeful of increasing trade volume between Syria and Turkey as IFF Aleppo will help develop Turkey’s apparel sector.

“Positive economic developments in Syria, the free trade agreement between the two countries and the removal of visa restrictions triggered an increase in trade volume,” said Örün, adding that he chose Syria for the IFF for that reason.

Syria is Turkey’s door to Middle East, according to Örün. “We started promotional activities to increase the market share of Turkish ready wear and the apparel sector in Syria. Currently, Syrian people are watching Turkish TV series and this affects the response toward Turkish products. Syrians are following Turkish fashion.”

Örün said, “We have to focus on niche markets and niche destinations and Syria is one of them.”

Noting that Turkey was also a very important destination for Syria, Örün said, “Turkey means a door to Europe for Syria.”

Contraction in European market

The European market is expected to contract, due to the effects of the crisis in Greece, according to Örün.

“We started to see the affects of the Greek crisis in Europe and this will reflect on our business,” he said, noting that there might be a contraction in Europe’s real sector.

“I suggest that my colleagues be careful on this issue,” he said. “I think we should look at other destinations rather than Europe.”

The eurozone region should be considered very carefully as Turkey needs to protect its potential in the European market, he said.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Hazelnut exports exceed \$1 billion

Turkey has earned \$1.1 billion from hazelnut exports in the first nine months of the export season that began in September 2009.

The Black Sea Hazelnut and Products Exporters' Association said on Wednesday that Turkey had exported 178,823 tons of hazelnuts between September 2009 and May 31, earning \$1.1 billion. Turkey exported 133,681 tons of hazelnuts to European Union member states, 20,504 tons to non-EU European countries and 24,638 tons to non-European countries.

In the first nine months of the previous season (September 2008-May 31, 2009), Turkey had exported 201,290 tons of hazelnuts for a total \$956.6 million. Turkey is the world's largest hazelnut exporter.

03 June 2010, Thursday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Turkish stocks tumble after Israel's brutal attack on flotilla

Turkish stocks had fallen more than 2 percent at the end of the first trading session of the İstanbul Stock Exchange (İMKB) on Monday with the news that Israeli navy commandos killed at least 10 activists aboard one of the ships in a Gaza-bound aid convoy, some of which were flying Turkish flags. İMKB-100 was down 1,199.94 points, or 2.17 percent, at the end of morning trading over Friday's close, standing at 54,033.74 points.

The second session, however, saw no fluctuation in the index as the market entered a wait-and-see mood. Commenting on the possible effects of the simmering tensions with Israel, Ata Investment chief economist Nurhan Toğuş said the lira would likely weaken more if tension escalates further. Investors may seek to shift to gold while at the same time increasing demand for the dollar, she noted, going on to say that all these developments would yield further declines on the bourse.

Toğuş said bond interest rates will also likely rise in the coming days, given that Turkey's relations with Israel are expected to worsen.

A dollar was being sold for TL 1.57 by mid-day, while a euro was trading for TL 1.93. European stock markets were mostly flat as investors shrugged off more sobering news of shaky government finances amid new signs that Asia's economies are pushing ahead with their recovery.

The CAC 40 index of leading French shares was down just over 4 points at 3,509.53 while Germany's DAX rose 22.27 points, or 0.4 percent, to 5,968.83. Oil, meanwhile, rose above \$74 a barrel, and the dollar gained against the yen and weakened against the euro.

Analysts characterized the markets as volatile and saw investors holding back as doubts remain the European Union can contain a debt crisis that has sent the euro to four-year lows.

The pan-European index is down 5.8 percent this month, on track for its worst monthly percentage loss since February 2009. Fitch Ratings cut Spain's debt rating by one notch to AA-plus with a stable outlook after European markets closed on Friday, pulling Wall Street lower.

The move by Fitch had largely been priced in by the markets, though Spain's Ibex 35 fell 0.7 percent, with Banco Santander down 0.8 percent and BBVA falling 1.6 percent. Standard & Poor's downgraded Spain's ratings by one notch to AA with a negative outlook on April 28.

The downgrade "was a following up of what we knew already. It was not as sanguine as the S&P was," said Valerie Plagnol, chief strategist at CM-CIC Securities in Paris. "The market is still wary of the situation and the euro remains under pressure."

The euro recovered slightly on Monday but it remained on the back foot as the downgrade served as a reminder about the euro zone debt crisis.

Over the weekend, France admitted that keeping its top-notch credit rating would be a stretch without some tough budget decisions, following German hints that Berlin may resort to raising taxes to help bring down its deficit.

Meanwhile, European Central Bank Governing Council member Axel Weber said the European Union needed stricter mechanisms for monitoring member states that receive financial aid from others, and a bankruptcy procedure should be looked at.

01 June 2010, Tuesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN WITH AP İSTANBUL

Turkish Exports Reach \$9 Bln In May 2010

Turkish exports increased by 24.8 percent to 9 billion U.S. dollars in May 2010 when compared to May 2009. The

Turkish Assembly of Exporters (TIM) announced on Tuesday the exports figures for May 2010. THE exports rose by 23.4 percent to 44.1 billion U.S DOLLARS in the first five months of 2010 over to the same period of last year. Turkish exports reached 105.4 billion US dollars in the last twelve months, TIM said.

Tuesday 1 June 2010

Turkish businessmen may take steps in Chile, Erdoğan

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said on Sunday that he believed Turkish businessmen could take significant steps in Chile.

Addressing the businessmen who accompany him during the visit to South America, Erdoğan said, "surface area of Chile is like Turkey but national income is more than Turkey because the population is lower than Turkey. Chile does not bring visa requirements to Turkey. Turkish businessmen may take significant steps in this country." Erdoğan said, "our businessmen, particularly the contractors, should be very active in Brazil because plans are underway in this country to construct more than 2 million houses. There is a serious ground there for our contractor sector. I believe that similar things may occur in Chile."

Erdoğan said, "there is 30 million USD exports to Chile. However, the imports is 200 million USD. There is a serious imbalance. I believe there are many items which Turkey can send to this country. We (the government) will do what is necessary to open the ways and you will walk through this path."

Commenting on relations with Brazil, Erdoğan said, "Brazil is a very active country and there is activity between Brazilian administration and Turkey. Brazil has very serious investment plans for future. There are opportunities on many areas. When you consider the foreign trade volume, a figure exceeding 2 trillion USD is in question."

31 May 2010, Monday

THE

ANATOLIA NEWS AGENCY SANTIAGO

Hürriyet buys Radikal daily for TL 5 million

The Doğan Media Group's Hürriyet Gazetecilik has announced it will soon acquire another Doğan daily, Radikal.

In a written statement to the Public Disclosure Platform (KAP) on Monday, Hürriyet said they would become the new owner of the Radikal daily along with its website for TL 5.09 million. The company said they expected to finalize the purchase of Radikal before the end of June. Hürriyet will pay the transfer price in cash. The Finance Ministry levied a fine of TL 22.57 million on Hürriyet for tax evasion in 2005. The company later reached a settlement with the Finance Ministry and agreed to pay TL 8 million for the sum of evaded taxes and penalties.

01 June 2010, Tuesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Fruit juice industry unscathed by global economic crisis

The fruit juice industry was only slightly affected by last year's global financial crisis, Metin Duruk, chairman of the leading fruit juice brand Aroma, has said.

Duruk, speaking to the Anatolia news agency on Monday, said the economic crisis caused only a minor dip in the beverage sector's growth rate. "It suffered from a contraction but continued to grow despite the recession. The fruit juice sector was affected even less," he said attributing this to the fact that people regard fruit juice as a healthy beverage and continue to consume it even during trying economic times.

With regard to the future of the sector in Turkey, Duruk stressed that fruit production should be increased, for which farmers should be supported and provided with necessary training. "We can increase fruit juice production, should demand rise in Turkey because we already have plants," Duruk said. Explaining one of the company's projects, he said more than 600,000 apple saplings were distributed to farmers in Karaman in order to boost apple production. This project turned out to be successful though it was slowed down last year due to the recession, he said. Aroma invested more on research and development during the crisis in order to expand the range of products it offers, Duruk stated, recalling that the company's recently established plant in Karaman "is among the largest investments made in the sector both in Europe and the world."

01 June 2010, Tuesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Private pension funds exceed TL 10 billion in Turkey

Cash accumulated in the coffers of private pension funds in Turkey has exceeded TL 10 billion, Anadolu Hayat Emeklilik General Manager Mete Uğurlu, who is also the head of the country's private pension fund watchdog, has said.

Moreover, the total number of participants in the system increased to 2.12 million, with only 2,320 of them eligible for retirement, Uğurlu said in a press release issued on Friday. Private pension funds were worth TL 9.906 billion as of May 7 and the number of participants 2.1 million. A private pension system was introduced in Turkey in October 2001 and has seen a quick rise in the number of contributors and the size of total assets. Still, the system draws massive criticism on the grounds that insurance companies are not fully informing their customers about minor but significant details. For example, experts on the Turkish insurance system say none of the companies offering individual pension

services have an individual insurance pension policy approved by the Treasury. Total assets were TL 299.9 million in 2004 and over \$2 billion in 2007.

29 May 2010, Saturday
TODAY'S

ZAMAN ANKARA

Turkey, Brazil cement strategic partnership with focus on trade

An ongoing strategic partnership between Turkey and Brazil was boosted with a series of prominent trade agreements sealed during Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visit to the country this week.

One of the most important deals signed during Erdoğan's visit was an agreement to prevent double taxation -- signed on Thursday -- which is expected to benefit and ease procedures for investors from both countries. Turkey and Brazil already enjoy a recently concluded free trade agreement (FTA) between Turkey and the four-nation trading bloc Mercosur, which includes Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. Another important portion of the visit was the First Turkey Export Goods Fair, organized by the İstanbul Chamber of Commerce (İTO) in Sao Paulo. Around 151 Turkish firms had the opportunity to promote their products to the Mercosur region at the fair, which took place this week.

Both members of the United Nations Security Council and G20, Turkey and Brazil have in the past few years intensified their quest to improve relations and contribute to global peace with enhanced political cooperation. The most recent example to this was a nuclear fuel swap deal signed between Iran, Turkey and Brazil. Economic relations between the world's 10th and 17th largest economies also benefited from such cooperation; Brazil's Petrobras has been carrying out joint oil research activities with the Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) in the Black Sea since last year.

Erdoğan, who started his official visit early on Wednesday, was accompanied by several Cabinet ministers and a group of Turkish businessmen. He participated in a forum of the Alliance of Civilizations hosted by his Brazilian counterpart, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The prime minister also participated in a Turkish-Brazilian Business Forum.

Erdoğan met with some of the leading business figures in Brazil, visited Embraer, the third biggest aircraft factory in the world, and attended the inauguration ceremony of Turkey's new Consulate General in Sao Paulo on Wednesday. Erdoğan is the first Turkish prime minister to visit Brazil.

Erdoğan said on Wednesday that "a new period starts between Turkey and Brazil today." "We are aiming to improve bilateral relations between Turkey and Brazil with this strategic partnership," Erdoğan said at a Turkey-Brazil business forum in Sao Paulo. Recalling that Turkey managed to overcome the global financial crisis last year with relatively little damage, the prime minister said active initiatives in foreign policy had positive reflections on foreign trade. "As Turkey served peace in its region with the 'zero problems with neighbors' approach, it gained the confidence of the neighboring countries as a resource of compromise and mediation. We have broadened the axis of foreign trade and commercial relations to a great extent," he explained. Erdoğan stressed the government has been endeavoring to boost cooperation with Latin America.

"Brazil is Turkey's main trade partner in Latin America. Turkey's trade volume with Brazil, which was \$1.7 billion in 2008, dropped to \$1.4 billion in 2009 with the impact of

the global financial crisis. The figures in question do not reflect the real potential. The Turkish and Brazilian governments are determined to increase bilateral trade volume,” Erdoğan said.

Erdoğan also said the government is content with developing cooperation in energy with Brazil.

Addressing Brazilian businessmen, Erdoğan said Turkey, which has a central geographical position where one can reach over 52 countries in a three-hour flight, offers vast business opportunities. “Thanks to the direct Turkish Airlines [THY] flights from Sao Paulo to Istanbul which started last year, transportation to markets in Turkey’s region has become easier for Brazilian businessmen than in the past. I also believe that the construction sector will play an important role in boosting economic and commercial cooperation between our countries,” Erdoğan said.

Following his address, Erdoğan was presented with a medal by the Sao Paulo Industry Federation for his contributions to industry.

Çağlayan: Turkey, Brazil not competitors but partners

Foreign Trade Minister Zafer Çağlayan , who accompanied Erdoğan to Brazil, on Wednesday said that Turkey and Brazil were not competitors but two countries which had numerous sectors that complemented each other.

Speaking in Sao Paulo, Çağlayan said they had the opportunity to discuss the most promising fields of investments between Turkey and Brazil during the visit. Noting that last year’s crisis caused a 20 percent decrease in the two countries’ foreign trade, Çağlayan said: “The diplomatic cooperation between Turkey and Brazil should benefit economic ties as well. Turkish and Brazilian businessmen could cooperate in economic areas in third countries.”

Çağlayan said the foreign trade volume between Turkey and Brazil did not reflect the real potential, adding that free trade agreements were of great importance for an improvement of economic relations.

Brazil’s Minister of Development, Industry & Trade Miguel Joao Jorge Filho said the two countries could improve their relations in many areas, noting their ties had become significantly stronger during the last year. Filho listed potential areas of cooperation including the energy, infrastructure, aviation, automotive and foodstuff sectors.

Turkish firms eye boost in investments in Brazil

Encouraged by the “opening of a new page” in relations with Brazil, Turkish entrepreneurs said they expect to increase the volume of their investments.

Turkey’s Aktas Group, a manufacturer of air suspension systems and bellows, is one of these companies; it aims to raise its investments in Brazil to \$15 million. Aktas Group Chairman Şahap Aktas told the Anatolia news agency that the group had \$5 million of investments in Brazil and it expected to raise this to \$15 million over the next three years.

“We established a factory in Brazil two years ago with an investment of \$5 million to produce air suspension bellows for busses and cargo trucks,” Aktas told Anatolia.

Also speaking to Anatolia, Çimsa General Manager Huseyin Ozkan said the company earned \$6 million from its exports to Brazil in 2009 and aimed to raise this figure to \$8 million this year.

“We want to grow more by opening new factories in the Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa,” he said.

A leading Turkish furniture firm, Çilek Mobilya A leading Turkish furniture firm, Çilek Mobilya, is another Turkish company investing in Brazil. It recently signed an agreement with Brazilian furniture chain Etna. “Etna has almost 70 shops in Brazil and our products will now be sold in these shops,” Çilek Mobilya official Okan Çekmegeli said. Kerem Vaizoğlu from Turkey’s Ekinciler Iron and Steel Company said the company started exporting to Brazil in 2009, becoming the first company to export construction iron to Brazil. Vaizoğlu said the company earned \$40 million from its exports to Brazil in 2009 and wanted to raise that figure to \$60 million this year.

Turkey’s Akkim chemical company is also investing in Brazil. Sadullah Altuntaş, the sales director of the company, said Akkim wanted to establish an office in Brazil and aimed to have annual turnover of \$1 million.

28 May 2010, Friday
TODAY’S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Turkey creates legal basis for military hardware cooperation with Saudis

Turkey and Saudi Arabia have signed a military as well as technical and scientific cooperation agreement that has created the legal basis for Turkey to enter the Saudi defense market, which relies heavily on off-the-shelf arms bought mainly from Western countries.

Turkey has been making vigorous efforts to boost its still poor defense industry market through joint manufacturing projects and to increase the ability of its domestic defense market to manufacture its own products.

Turkey and Saudi Arabia signed the agreement on May 24 in Ankara to cooperate in military training as well as in technical and scientific fields. Turkish Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül said he was pleased the two countries had signed a military agreement after a long period of negotiation.

The agreement was signed by Turkish Chief of General Staff Gen. İlker Başbuğ and visiting Saudi Arabian Deputy Minister of Defense and Aviation Prince Khalid Bin Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

Gönül talked to Today’s Zaman about the prospects of defense industry cooperation with Saudi Arabia following the signing of the agreement. Three subcommittees between local Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI), Aselsan and the Turkish Mechanical and Chemical Industry Corporation (MKE) and their Saudi counterparts will be set up to explore the possibilities of defense industry cooperation, he said.

“It is too early to say specifically on which projects the two countries will cooperate. Subcommittees will explore the options. But at least the newly signed agreement has set up the legal basis for cooperation,” he added.

Although Saudi Arabia earmarks a high budget for defense, Gönül said, Jeddah has mostly bought military hardware off the shelf from Western countries.

A cooperative project has been in operation for two years between Saudi Arabia and Turkey involving the modernization of several hundred US-made M113 Armored Personnel Vehicles (APV) by the Turkish company FNSS at a plant built in this country, the Turkish defense minister said.

“For example, another model is TAI’s modernization of F-16 fighters for Jordan. Some of those jets are upgraded at TAI in the presence of Jordanian engineers. The remaining F-16s are modernized in Jordan. Therefore, Jordanian engineers have learned how to maintain and upgrade F-16s. We want to apply a similar model in Saudi Arabia, too. It

does not necessarily have to be the F 16 project as with Jordan but in any project on which the Turkish-Saudi subcommittees agree,” said Gönül.

The military cooperation agreement will also enable the joint training of Turkish and Saudi officers, Gönül said.

Prince Al Saud stated that a good cooperation strategy had been set up between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, describing the beginning of military cooperation between the two countries as very important.

29 May 2010, Saturday

TODAY’S ZAMAN ANKARA

SOCIAL NEWS

Turkey to give weight to international Asian group

Thursday, June 3, 2010

BARÇIN YİNANÇ

Turkey will attempt to give new breath to an international organization in Asia that has so far not been able to play an effective role in increasing security in the region, a Turkish official said Thursday.

The Turkish government, which will assume the presidency of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, or CICA, will try to revive the military and political dimensions of the organization by emphasizing confidence building measures, according to the official.

Speaking ahead of the summit of CICA heads of state taking place next week in Istanbul, Ambassador Bülent Tulun said Turkey would accord priority to strengthening political dialogue among members to take CICA forward as an efficient organization.

Tulun spoke at a conference organized by the Turkish Asian Center for Strategic Studies, or TASAM, ahead of the third summit of CICA, which will be attended by Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, among others.

Turkey will aim to reverse the current tendency within CICA and aim to make it a more economic and culturally coherent organization.

Relations between countries are elementary in building security, said Tulun, adding that it would thus be wrong to ignore and put aside interstate relations, implying Turkey's objection to some member countries efforts' to make CICA more of an economic and cultural organization.

New approach

Turkey will work to strengthen the concept of cooperative security, which is a newly emerging approach in international relations, said Tulun. Cooperative security differs from former security concepts, as it develops in the absence of an “enemy.”

In 2004 a document on military-political confidence-building measures were adopted, yet was put aside in later years, he said.

“Our main priority will be to work on the confidence-building measures in political-military fields. We can set up working groups to take the already-existing catalogue on confidence building measures forward,” said Tulun.

“Obviously it will not be an easy job, since CICA is a special organization in the sense that its members include countries which have totally contradicting interests and opposing views on many issues,” he said.

Dialogue is one of the main tools for confidence-building measures, said Tulun, who will lead the task force during Turkey's two-year presidency. "Countries who sit at the same table under the roof of U.N. are also members of CICA. That itself is a confidence-building measure," said Tulun. Pakistan, India, Palestine, Iran and Israel are among the members of CICA.

"The 21st century will be the century of Asia and we need to take into consideration this fact when thinking about the future of CICA," said Tulun.

Turkey to host Putin, Ahmadinejad

Enter Google and you will not find too much about CICA, confessed Turkish Ambassador Bülent Tulun, even though it has been 18 years since it first emerged as a concept and eight years since it became an organization.

The idea of convening CICA was first proposed in 1992, by Nursultan Nazarbayev, the president of Kazakhstan. Unlike other parts of the world, Asia did not have such a structure for ensuring peace and security regionally.

Member states include Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Palestine, South Korea, Russia, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Uzbekistan.

The third summit of heads of state will be held for the first time outside Kazakhstan, which has asked Turkey to assume the presidency for the next two years. Next Tuesday, Turkey will host Nazarbayev, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Afghan President Hamid Karzai, and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Ukraine's newly elected president, and the leader of Macedonia, which is now heading the Council of Europe, will both attend the summit as Turkey's special guests. An official from Israel will also attend the summit.

ISTANBUL - Hürriyet Daily News

Turkey spends 15 billion USD for cigarette annually

Turkey spends 15 billion USD annually for cigarette. Yeşilay (Green Crescent) Director General Prof. Sefa Saygılı told Anatolia news agency on Monday that although campaigns were carried out against smoking in many countries of the world, many people were still addicted to cigarettes. Saygılı added that the world spent 400 billion USD for cigarettes annually.

Also, 600 billion USD was spent annually to cure the diseases caused by cigarette, he noted. Saygılı said that the age of smokers dropped to 11 in Turkey, and boys were smoking two times more than girls.

According to figures of Cigarette & Health National Committee (SSUK), smoking was on the second row in causes of death in the world, and one of every ten adults was dying because of smoking.

31 May 2010, Monday

THE ANATOLIA NEWS AGENCY ANKARA

Amnesty notes little progress on human rights in Turkey

Amnesty International (AI) has noted little progress made on enhancing human rights protections in Turkey, accusing Turkey of failing to address increasing human rights abuses in various areas.

In its 2010 annual report on the global state of human rights, AI complained of the persistence of reports of torture and other mistreatment as well as criminal prosecutions limiting the right to freedom of expression.

According to AI, the legitimate work of human rights defenders was hampered by excessive administrative scrutiny and judicial harassment. In many cases, the report noted, alleged human rights violations by state officials were not investigated effectively and the chances of bringing law enforcement officials to justice remained remote.

The report said protracted and unfair trials persisted in Turkey, especially of suspects prosecuted under anti-terrorism legislation. Children were prosecuted under the same procedures as adults and convicted under unfair laws on the basis of unsubstantiated and unreliable evidence for their alleged participation in sometimes violent demonstrations. Discrimination in law and practice, the report concerned, continued against people based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. Five transgender women were murdered, and in only one case was a conviction secured.

Applauding a new state-owned radio and television channel launched in January 2009 to provide Kurdish-language broadcasting, AI criticized restrictions on the use of languages other than Turkish in political affairs and public and private education for children that remained in force.

The human rights group said people who expressed non-violent but dissenting opinions -- particularly criticism of the armed forces or of the status of Kurds and Armenians in Turkey -- faced criminal investigation and prosecution. Among those frequently prosecuted were writers, journalists, Kurdish political activists and human rights defenders.

The group cited in its report the example of Mehmet Baransu, a journalist working for the Taraf daily, who was brought to court under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code (TCK). The case was based on an article about an alleged armed forces plot to destabilize the government.

Complaining of the status of women in Turkey, the report said the number of shelters available for women survivors of domestic violence remained woefully inadequate and far below the one for every settlement of 50,000 people required by domestic law. The report, however, welcomed a government protocol signed to facilitate greater cooperation between state institutions in protecting survivors of domestic violence.

Meanwhile, Claudio Cordone, interim secretary-general of AI, noted in a foreword to the 2010 report that although 110 states had ratified the Rome Statute to the International Criminal Court (ICC) by the end of 2009, only 12 of the G20 countries had done so.

Among others, China, India, Indonesia, Russia, Turkey and the US have remained aloof from, if not deliberately undermined, international justice efforts.

Cordone also noted that after travelling freely around countries not party to the Rome Statute, Sudanese President Al Bashir was then invited to Turkey, Nigeria, Uganda and Venezuela. The report failed to mention Denmark, which also invited the Sudanese president for the Copenhagen Climate Summit.

28 May 2010, Friday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

COMMENTARY

A look at Turkish-Israeli economic relations after the crisis

HASAN KONBOLAT

03 June 2010, Thursday

We should analyze the economic dimension of Turkish-Israeli relations, which are experiencing a downturn again after an Israeli raid on a Turkish humanitarian aid vessel en route to Gaza on Monday.

In recent years, Israel has been the side damaging economic ties between the two countries. Thus, Turkish firms operating in Israel have been facing a number of obstacles and problems, ranging from difficulties in the extension of work visas to increasingly difficult working conditions since the “one minute” crisis in Davos.

The tension existing between the two countries has also been reflected in tourism. Turkey used to be the second-most popular destination for Israeli tourists, while it was also among three countries that the Israeli media promoted as a tourism destination. In 2007, the number of Israeli tourists visiting Turkey was up by a stunning 41 percent over 2006, reaching 511,535, a figure which rose even further to 558,183 in 2008. Following the “one minute” crisis, the number of tourists coming to Turkey from Israel fell dramatically. In 2009 the number of Israeli tourists to Turkey dropped by 44 percent to reach 311,000. Consequently, travel agencies started to charge their Israeli customers only \$200 for a one-week trip to Turkey trip last year, down from an average of \$600 in previous years. In 2010, however, these figures started to recover.

Following aid flotilla crisis, the Israeli Foreign Ministry advised its citizens to avoid travel to Turkey. Calling back its tourists in Turkey, the Israeli government also wanted tours to be cancelled for an indefinite period of time. It is for this reason that the bookings of 130,000 Israeli tourists who were set to come to Turkey as of June (15,000 to Bodrum, 35,000 to Marmaris, 80,000 to Antalya) were put on hold. As Israeli tourists cut short their trips in Turkey, “crisis desks” were established in Turkish hotels hosting these tourists. As a result of these developments, ships carrying Israeli tourists changed course, travelling to south Cyprus and Rhodes instead. Travel agencies began organizing tours to bolster the morale of fearful and anxious Israeli tourists who stayed on in Turkey. The real drop in figures is expected to become apparent in the July-August period of the year, the Turkey’s tourism sector’s high season.

Economic cooperation between Turkey and Israel was boosted on March 14, 1996, when the two countries signed a free trade agreement, which was put into force in May 1997. After lifting customs duties imposed on nearly 200 goods, the trade volume between the two countries grew by 658 percent from \$446 million in 1996 to \$3.38 billion in 2008. However, this figure declined to \$2.52 billion in 2009. Of this figure, \$1.07 billion comprises Turkey’s imports, which are predominantly in the defense industry and technology. The cost of the modernization of 54 F-4 aircrafts exceeded \$1 billion, up from the previous estimate of \$632 million. The modernization of 170 M60 tanks cost \$670 million. Ten Heron Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) were purchased from Israel for \$188 million.

Israel won the tender for synthetic aperture radar (SAR) systems, which enable F-4 aircraft to detect moving objects, for \$160 million. Israel won the Datalink 16 tender, a system for transmitting pictures of F-4 and F-16 aircrafts, for \$120 million. Turkey’s

BMC gave the highest bid at the tender for the “Walking Fortress” land vehicles for protection against land mines. In the manufacture of the vehicles, BMC will cooperate with Israel’s armed vehicles manufacturer Hatehof.

Turkey’s exports to Israel account for \$1.53 billion and are mainly concentrated in the textile, automotive and iron and steel sectors. Israel is one of those rare countries that Turkey has a trade surplus with. While there are nearly 250 Israeli companies operating in Turkey. Their investments in the country are worth around \$300 million. So far, Turkish construction firms have assumed projects worth of \$583 million in Israel. Despite the fact that Israel’s share in Turkey’s overall trade volume is currently only 1 percent, taking into consideration Israel’s comparatively small population (7.2 million), along with the absence of a common land frontier between the two countries, it might be said that economic relations between Israel and Turkey were in fact going quite well. Also, bilateral trade volume was expected to exceed \$3 billion in 2010. However, as the crises come one after one, it is clear that businessmen from the two countries will have to determine their commercial and investment strategies in line with political decisions made by their governments. It is for this reason people continue waiting anxiously. Long-term investment plans are being influenced adversely due to the ongoing clashes and current instability.

Turkey’s statesmanship in the Israeli crisis

LALE KAMAL

TODAYS ZAMAN

Turkey rightly distinguished between the Israeli people and the current Benjamin Netanyahu government when Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan leveled unprecedented criticism at the deadly raid by Israeli commandos on a Turkish flagged aid ship early Monday morning.

Erdoğan called on the international community to punish Israel after a thorough investigation over its raid on the flotilla carrying humanitarian aid while warning against anyone trying to test Turkey’s patience. Erdoğan, however, stressed Turkey’s abidance by the rule of law and diplomatic means in dealing with Israel’s latest move.

The Turkish prime minister also described the deadly raid as a turning point and said Ankara’s relations with Israel will never be as they were. This is a clear message that Turkish relations will not be normalized in the foreseeable future or at least unless Israel lifts the blockade around Gaza as stated by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu yesterday. More importantly, Turkish-Israeli relations will never be normalized unless the Netanyahu government goes.

Turkish-Israeli cooperation in the military and in the defense industry has long been a driving force behind a flourishing relationship between the two, expanding later to non-military fields such as tourism and trade. According to 2007 figures, about \$1.8 billion of a total of \$2.6 billion in trade volume consisted of Turkey buying military equipment; the balance of trade is in Israel’s favor.

However, since Israel’s assault on Gaza in December 2008 and January 2009, Turkish-Israeli military cooperation, if not defense industry cooperation, has declined considerably due to the Turkish government’s unprecedented reaction to Israel’s violence in Gaza and its ongoing blockade of this Hamas-dominated city. At the last minute,

Turkey cancelled Israel's participation in a multinational Anatolian Eagle exercise that took place in October in the Central Anatolian town of Konya. Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç announced last Monday, among other things, the cancellation of three joint military maneuvers planned with Israel in retaliation to its raid on the ship which killed nine, including four Turks. Turkish-Israeli cooperation in the defense industry had already slowed since the Israeli assault on Gaza in December 2008, while Tel Aviv has lately begun to impose a partial arms embargo on Turkey, examining each Turkish request on case-by-case basis. The current state of Turkish-Israeli relations is expected to further deteriorate and will have serious negative repercussions in both countries in general and in the Middle East in particular. Turkey will lose its credibility as an honest peace broker, while Israel will lose a strong strategic partner. Israel, however, under current Prime Minister Netanyahu's government, has more to lose as its latest, rather banditry act will play into the hands of radical groups such as Hamas. Overall, the injury inflicted on the TurkishIsraeli strategic partnership will also have a negative impact on the already volatile Middle East.

03 June 2010, Thursday

Kurdish problem or PKK problem?

SAHIN ALAPAY
TODAYS ZAMAN

President Abdullah Gül a year ago said that “whether you call it terrorism, the Southeast or the Kurdish problem, it is Turkey's number one problem, and it has to be solved. ... All are well aware of the problem. ... This opportunity must not be missed. ...” (May 9, 2009).

A few days ago, Gül once more stated that Turkey's most important problem is the “Kurdish problem” and that “it has to be solved, and terrorism has to come to an end” (May 23, 2010). Gül's recent statement appeared to be a warning to the government that efforts towards the solution of the problem should continue.

A day later, Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (TÜSİAD) Chairwoman Ümit Boyner said: “We have to solve the Kurdish problem. ... Turkey can move closer to solving this problem by getting rid of its deficit of democracy. ...” There is no doubt that these warnings, coming from the top of the state and from one of the foremost representatives of civil society, are most pertinent.

It is clear that the escalation in clashes between security forces and Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants with the advent of spring, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government's preoccupation with the constitutional amendments, the Peace and Democracy Party's (BDP) opposition to those in response to imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's calls in that direction, and the consequent failure of the amendment which would have made closure cases against political parties dependent on Parliament's approval, and certain other developments, leave the impression that efforts towards solving the Kurdish problem have stalled.

It needs to be considered, however, that if the Kurdish problem means the denial and suppression of Kurdish identity, and if its solution means unfettered expression and enjoyment of that identity and culture, Turkey has moved a considerable way in

addressing the Kurdish problem, although more reforms are necessary. The ban on the Kurdish language was lifted in 1991, opening the way for publications in Kurdish. With the reforms between 2001 and 2004, aimed at fulfilling the Copenhagen political criteria of the European Union, broadcasting and courses in Kurdish were legalized. State television channel (TRT-6) started broadcasting round the clock in Kurdish starting in January of last year. The first private television channel to broadcast in Kurdish is soon to open. In the context of the AKP government's "democratic initiative," the first play in Kurdish was staged at the Diyarbakır Municipal Theater last February. Artuklu University in Mardin, in preparation for teaching Kurdish language and culture, is starting a course in Kurdish instruction this summer. More importantly, with the first joint initiative of the AKP and BDP parliamentary groups, the election law was amended in April to allow for political campaigning in Kurdish.

It also needs to be considered that since 2004 pro-Kurdish parties have been in power in many of the municipalities in the predominantly Kurdish east and southeast regions. The BDP, which replaced the Democratic Society Party (DTP) after it was banned by the Constitutional Court last December, still has a group in Parliament. A most important step towards solving the Kurdish problem now on the agenda is the amendment of the election law to either lower the 10 percent threshold for parties to gain seats in Parliament or, better, to introduce an election system similar to the French one in order to secure a fair representation of the electorate. The AKP government, which is attempting to make substantial changes to the Constitution in the direction of broader democracy, should not fail to lower the 10 percent threshold, which is surely an important element of the bureaucratic tutelage system introduced by the military regime that came to power in 1980.

The BDP's demands to lower the threshold, state financial aid to parties who garner more than 3 percent of the national vote and legal amendments to provide full freedom of expression to non-violent and non-racist views are certainly most justified. Since even Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the newly elected leader of the Republican People's Party (CHP), has promised to work to lower the threshold, the AKP government can take the lead. And since Interior Minister Beşir Atalay and BDP leaders recently agreed to do so, they should continue with their dialogue and cooperate to move further with the democratic initiative.

The solution of the Kurdish problem does not, unfortunately, mean the solution of the problem posed by the armed rebellion led by the PKK. The ethnic Kurdish member of the Danish parliament, Özlem Sara Çekiç, was absolutely right when she recently declared that "the Kurdish problem and the PKK problem are two separate problems. In Turkey important measures are being introduced to solve the Kurdish problem. The PKK, however, is obstructing the solution of the problem." For the solution of the PKK problem, it is necessary that the way for the PKK to lay down its arms and engage in legal political work is opened. Considering the statement by Öcalan promising not to be in any way involved from May 31, 2010, onwards, it should be possible for the AKP and the BDP to begin to cooperate in leading towards the solution of the PKK problem.

31 May 2010, Monday
