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THE NIGHT THAT SHOOK A NATION:

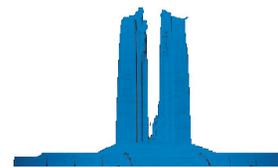
THE 2016 TURKISH MILITARY COUP - WHAT HAPPENED AND WHY IT FAILED

CHRISTOPHER KILFORD

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THE NIGHT THAT SHOOK A NATION:
THE 2016 TURKISH MILITARY COUP - WHAT HAPPENED AND WHY IT FAILED

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“It is the wish and order of the Turkish Armed Forces for this statement to be broadcast on all channels of the Turkish Republic. The valuable citizens of the Turkish Republic have systematically been subject to constitutional and legal infringements threatening the basic characteristics and vital institutions of the state, while all state institutions including the Turkish Armed Forces have undergone attempts to be redesigned based on ideological motives, rendering them unfit for purpose. Fundamental rights and freedoms as well as the secular democratic legal structure based on the separation of powers have been abolished by the heedless, misguided, and even treacherous president and government officials.”

The opening paragraph of the coup plotters’ Martial Law Declaration, read live on state-run television on 16 July 2016.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chris Kilford served in the Canadian Armed Forces for 36 years, his last post as the Canadian Defence Attaché to Turkey from July 2011 until August 2014. He retired in September 2014. In addition to his military service, he completed a PhD in history at Queen's University in 2009. Today, he is an External Fellow with the Queen's Centre for International and Defence Policy, a Research Fellow with the Conference of Defence Associations Institute, a member of the national board of the Canadian International Council and president of the Victoria Branch, and a sessional professor with the Royal Military College of Canada and the Canadian Forces College teaching distance learning courses focused on political geography and global powers and institutions. His articles and opinion pieces on Canadian defence and foreign policy issues, plus Turkish and Middle Eastern matters, have appeared in numerous Canadian and international publications.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Turkey has been a vital member of NATO since 1952 and remains the anchor of NATO's southeastern flank. What happens there is important. And during the late evening hours of 15 July 2016, a group of senior military officers attempted, but ultimately failed, to overthrow the Turkish government. Dubbing themselves the "Peace At Home Council", their aim was to remove President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan from power and, according to their declaration, reinstate constitutional order, human rights and freedoms, the rule of law, and general security. The coup attempt was not the first time the Turkish military had interfered in Turkish politics. The first military coup took place just eight years after Turkey joined NATO. Other successful coups followed in 1971, 1980 and 1997.

As far as the Turkish government was concerned, the 2016 coup attempt was carried out by supporters of Turkish Islamic scholar Fethullah Gülen who has been living in the United States since 1999. If the coup had been successful, said Turkey's Justice Minister Bekir Bozdağ in July 2017, Gülen "would have come to Turkey from Pennsylvania like Ayatollah Khomeini landed in Tehran." On the other hand, Gülen and his followers were quick to say that the coup attempt was really a false flag operation contrived by President Erdoğan to give him a free hand to silence his opponents once and for all.

With some coup trials now over it is clear that the scope and scale of the military uprising went far beyond a false flag operation. Indeed, a substantial portion of the Turkish armed forces attempted to topple the government in July 2016. Why did the coup attempt fail? The most important reason was that the coup plotters were forced to commence their operations six hours ahead of schedule after realizing that the Turkish intelligence services had been tipped off.

In the aftermath of the coup attempt, the government engaged in some hurried coup-proofing reforms such as closing major military bases near Ankara and Istanbul. To enhance civilian control and oversight of the armed forces, it was also announced the chain of command and organizational structure of the Turkish military would be shaken-up. Whether or not these post-coup reforms and structural changes will be enough to prevent future coup attempts will undoubtedly be the subject of analysis and study for many years to come.

In the meantime, this Vimy Paper provides an extensive overview of what happened on the night of 15-16 July 2016 based on the author's personal visits to Turkey, especially in May 2017, when he met with Turkish journalists, retired Turkish military officers, foreign diplomats and foreign military officers serving in Turkey in various capacities. Furthermore, it draws on recent academic works plus Turkish and foreign media analyses of events that night. The author was also the Canadian military attaché to Turkey from 2011-2014.



THE NIGHT THAT SHOOK THE NATION

In late December 1957, Major Samet Kuşçu reported to his chain of command that he had recently joined a secret military cell in Istanbul plotting to overthrow the Turkish government led by Prime Minister Adnan Menderes. Kuşçu, however, was now having second thoughts about his decision to join the cell, and would soon begin pointing the finger at his co-conspirators.

Kuşçu and eight other officers went on trial in May 1958 in front of a military judge, but in an ironic twist, everyone but Kuşçu was acquitted. He was sentenced to two years in jail. Yet when a faction of the Turkish military did overthrow the government in May 1960, all of the acquitted were directly involved. As for Menderes, after a show trial, he was hanged on 17 September 1961.

Almost 60 years after Major Kuşçu made his decision to come forward, so did another Turkish officer in similar circumstances. This time, however, Major Osman Karaca knew well enough not to trust his military chain of command. It was, he likely thought, impossible to know who was conspiring against the government and who was not. Instead, he hopped into one of Ankara's many yellow taxis and headed as fast as he could to Turkey's national intelligence headquarters.

During the late evening hours of 15 July 2016, a group of senior military officers attempted, but ultimately failed, to overthrow the Turkish government. Dubbing themselves the “Peace At Home Council”, their aim was to remove President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan from power and, according to their declaration, reinstate constitutional order, human rights and freedoms, the rule of law, and general security.¹

As far as the Turkish government was concerned, the coup attempt was carried out by supporters of Turkish Islamic scholar Fethullah Gülen who has been living in the United States on a 25-acre estate in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania since 1999. If the coup had been successful, said Turkey's Justice Minister Bekir Bozdağ in July 2017, Gülen “would have come to Turkey from Pennsylvania like Ayatollah Khomeini landed in Tehran.”² On the other hand, Gülen and his followers were quick to say that the coup attempt was really a false flag operation contrived by President Erdoğan to give him a free hand to silence his opponents once and for all.³

With some coup trials now over and following the release of a Turkish parliamentary investigation into the coup attempt, it is clear that the scope and scale of the military uprising went far beyond a false flag operation.⁴ Indeed, a substantial portion of the Turkish armed forces attempted to topple the government in July 2016 as they successfully did in May 1960.⁵

In the months leading up to the coup attempt, rumours that the military, or a portion of the military, might attempt to overthrow the government were rife. On 16 March 2016, Michel Rubin penned an article for the *American Enterprise Institute* with the title, “Could there be a coup in Turkey?” “Turks — and the



Turkish military — increasingly recognize,” said Rubin, “that Erdoğan is taking Turkey to the precipice...I make no predictions, but given rising discord in Turkey as well as the likelihood that the Turkish military would suffer no significant consequence should it imitate Abdel Fattah el-Sisi’s game plan in Egypt, no one should be surprised if Turkey’s rocky politics soon get rockier.”⁶

On 27 March, the pro-government newspaper *Daily Sabah* claimed that 50% of Turkey’s F-16 fighter pilots were pro-Gülenist.⁷ In response, the Turkish General Staff (TGS) issued a statement on 31 March noting that it was: “inconceivable to think that the TGS would tolerate any illegal phenomenon or action that would digress from the chain of command. We have initiated legal action against those who spread such news and comments, which have absolutely no legal and logical basis and which contravene media ethics.”⁸

According to Turkish prosecutors, on 9 November 2015, businessman Serkan Aydın rented a three-storey house located at Ahmet Taner Kışlalı Mahallesi 2880 Sokak, in Ankara, Turkey’s capital. The house, for the next nine months, would serve as the headquarters for the coup plot.⁹



AN IMPRESSIVE STATUE OF MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK LOCATED ON THE GALLIPOLI PENINSULA. HE WAS THE FOUNDER OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY AND SERVED AS ITS FIRST PRESIDENT FROM 1923 UNTIL HIS DEATH IN 1938. PHOTO CREDIT: CHRIS KILFORD

It is not clear when the idea to overthrow the Turkish government first came about, but planning likely began in late 2013 or early 2014 when it was clear that Erdoğan and Gülen, former political allies, had definitely parted ways. By this point, Gülen’s supporters were well entrenched in the police and judiciary, and every effort was being made by them to expose high-level corruption in the Turkish government as a means to ultimately sink Erdoğan’s political ambitions. However, Erdoğan, a street-wise politician by nature, fought back. Private and lucrative university exam cram schools (*dershanes*) run by Gülen supporters were forced to close, Gülenist businesses and media outlets such as the newspaper *Zaman* were taken over and the police purged. In due course, Erdoğan gained the upper-hand.

As for the armed forces, the number of Gülen supporters in the ranks remained a mystery. Historically, the TGS had been very adept at purging officers deemed to be

overly religious. Former Chief of the TGS, General Necdet Özel, had been briefed by his staff in 2015 that they believed “an early and immature coup attempt could be undertaken” by a faction within the military. But, lacking any concrete proof, he decided not to investigate further.¹⁰

The catalysts that likely caused the coup plotters to finally take action included Erdoğan’s Justice and Development Party (AKP) winning an absolute majority in a November 2015 parliamentary snap election. It was a major victory compared to the June 2015 election when the AKP lost its majority status for the first time since coming to power in 2002 and was unable, or more so unwilling, to enter into a coalition partnership. With the November 2015 win, “hopes for political change [in Turkey] were dashed.”¹¹ In addition, it was becoming clear to the coup plotters that many military officers suspected of being Gülenist supporters would be purged during the August 2016 promotion and retirement board. Indeed, in an article that appeared on *OdaTV’s* Turkish news website in March 2016, Osman Başbüyük suggested that “the expulsion of Gülenist officers might even be brought forward in order to prevent them being able to launch a coup attempt.”¹² That did not happen, but a few days before the coup attempt, the newspaper *Sabah* disclosed that a list of suspected Gülenist officers had been given to the TGS by Turkey’s National Intelligence Organization (MİT) presumably so they could be purged.¹³

In late 2015 and early 2016 the coup plotters carefully refined their plans, avoided detection, and finally settled on a day and time for the coup: Saturday, 16 July 2016 at 0300 hours. But, as the selected day and time drew closer, so did the risk of exposure. People and equipment had to be moved into place and final briefings delivered.¹⁴ Moreover, according to Turkish prosecutors, Fethullah Gülen had to give the green light to proceed.

It was Dr. Adil Öksüz, a close confidant of Fethullah Gülen and also the Gülen movement’s “imam of the Air Force,” who was, said the same Turkish prosecutors, the leader of the civilian arm of the coup attempt.¹⁵ Öksüz, added professor Hakan Yavuz in his recent book, *Turkey’s July 15th Coup*, had “travelled to the United States 109 times between 2002 and 2016 and always met with Gülen.”¹⁶ According to the prosecutor’s indictment, Öksüz left Istanbul for New York on 11 July, days before the coup attempt, with Kemal Batmaz, a former manager of the Gülen-controlled publishing company Kaynak. Once in the United States, the two allegedly met with Gülen and his associates and were told to proceed. Two days later they returned to Turkey.¹⁷

General Hulusi Akar replaced General Özel as Chief of the TGS in August 2015. As he sat in his office on the day before the planned coup attempt, he and his deputy, General Yaşar Güler, were completely unaware that pro-coup officers in the TGS Headquarters had begun assembling down the corridor. According to Akar’s aide-de-camp, Lieutenant-Colonel Levent Türkkan, senior officers first gathered in Major-General Mehmet Dişli’s office on the afternoon of 15 July. Dişli, head of strategic transformation, discussed the final coup plan and told everyone he would declare the coup to General Akar at his home on 16 July at 0230 hours. The coup attempt would begin 30 minutes later. Türkkan, in his testimony, added that Akar would



be asked to lead the coup. If he refused, he would be arrested.¹⁸

While Dişli briefed his co-conspirators, others began gathering at the Akıncı 4th Main Air Base (Akıncı) just outside the capital, Ankara. Among them was General Akin Öztürk, the former commander of the air force and now a member of the Turkish Supreme Military Council (YAŞ).¹⁹ He, according to prosecutors, was the leader of the military arm of the coup attempt. Dr. Öksüz also arrived at Akıncı along with civilians Kemal Batmaz, Harun Biniş, Nurettin Oruç, and Hakan Çiçek, the alleged “imam of the army.”²⁰

²¹ Elsewhere on the base, Lieutenant-Colonel Hakan Karakuş commenced an operations brief for pro-coup pilots at 1800 hours.²²

President Erdoğan was on holiday with his family, staying in the Hotel Grand Yazici Club Turban in Marmaris on the Aegean coast. According to the coup plan, at precisely 0300 hours on 16 July, commandos would take him into custody at his hotel. Hakan Fidan, the head of Turkey’s intelligence services, MİT, would be detained. The parliament and presidential compound in Ankara, key media outlets, bridges over the Bosphorus, the two Istanbul airports, the Turkish stock exchange, and many other strategic locations were all to be seized.



A YOUNG AIR FORCE SOLDIER STANDS ON GUARD AT ATATÜRK'S MAUSOLEUM (ANITKABİR) IN THE CAPITAL, ANKARA. PHOTO CREDIT: TUNA ÖLGER

On 15 July 2016 at 1420 hours, Major Osman Karaca arrived by taxi at MİT Headquarters, entered the building and told initially skeptical investigators that a coup attempt would soon take place. At 1620 hours, certain that Major Karaca was telling the truth, Hakan Fidan called General Güler and by 1830 hours was in General Akar’s office.²³ Fidan and Akar then contemplated their next moves but decided not to warn the president or prime minister in case the whole situation was simply a false alarm. Instead, and as a precautionary measure, General Akar issued orders grounding all military air traffic. In addition, General Salih Zeki Çolak, the Army Commander, was instructed to visit the Ankara Army Aviation School Command, which Karaca said was another coup hub.²⁴

Since the coup attempt, Fidan and Akar’s decision to not immediately inform the government has been criticized by many senior Turkish officials, including Turkey’s prime minister.²⁵ Fidan, “acting on incomplete information” had tried to contact President Erdoğan but seemingly was

unable to do so.²⁶ Then again, a sense of urgency may have been missing on their part as few really believed a faction of the armed forces would attempt to overthrow the government. It is likely both men thought that they could sort out whatever was transpiring on their own and inform the government later. Although in hindsight Fidan and Akar were wrong that night, the actions they did take were enough to alarm the coup plotters.²⁷

Aware that the coup plot had been discovered, at 2121 hours, Brigadier-General Mehmet Partigöç released three messages over the Turkish Armed Forces Message and Document Delivery System that launched the coup approximately six hours ahead of schedule. The first message, “Appointments”, assigned and promoted coup officers to new positions. The second message, “Participation”, confirmed which pro-coup units should do what and when. The third message was a “Martial Law Directive” stating that the “Peace At Home Council” had seized power in Turkey.²⁸

Just prior to Partigöç’s messages, Major-General Dişli entered General Akar’s office at 2100 hours. According to Akar’s post-coup testimony, Dişli came right to the point, telling him: “My commander, the operation is about to start, we are going to apprehend everyone, battalions, brigades have set on the roads, you will see shortly.”²⁹ He then tried to convince him to lead the coup. When Akar refused, he was handcuffed along with General Güler. Both men were then taken to Akıncı by helicopter at 2330 hours.

As Partigöç sent his messages, at 2145 hours a *WhatsApp* group for pro-coup Istanbul-based units came to life and direction was given to seize the following key locations:

- The Bosphorus Bridge (or First Bridge)
- The Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge (or Second Bridge over the Bosphorus)³⁰
- Taksim Square
- The Disaster Coordination Center
- Atatürk International Airport
- Sabiha Gökçen International Airport
- Istanbul Police Headquarters
- Istanbul Riot Police Headquarters
- Kuleli Military High School
- The Istanbul Stock Exchange
- The Istanbul Governor’s office
- The Sakarya Governor’s office



- The Justice and Development Party (AKP) provincial office
- The Turkish Radio and Television Corporation in Istanbul
- The Istanbul Logistics Support Base
- The War Colleges Command
- 1st Army Command Headquarters
- Üsküdar Mobile Force Headquarters
- Ümraniye Avea and Acıbadem Telekom buildings³¹

Around the country, other units moved into position including pro-coup troops who headed towards the parliament and presidential complex in Ankara where they were engaged by troops loyal to the government. Over the capital, pro-coup F-16 fighter jets repeatedly broke the sound barrier, creating loud and terrifying sonic booms. At Incirlik Air Force Base, 400 kilometers south-east from Ankara, the base commander readied at least two air-to-air refuelling tankers that would later support pro-coup fighter jets. Other officers prepared an A400 transport aircraft and Transall C-160 cargo planes to be used for transporting pro-coup troops and their supplies where needed.³² Meanwhile, at the 12th Air Transportation Main Base Command in Kayseri, eight Hercules C-130 transport aircraft took off between 2330 hours and 0200 hours. Their mission was to fly to different parts of Turkey and bring pro-coup commando forces to Ankara.³³ At 2200 hours, Brigadier-General Semih Terzi attempted to take over the Special Forces Command Headquarters in Gölbaşı, Ankara with a group of 20 to 30 soldiers. He was shot and killed by Master Sergeant Ömer Halisdemir on the express orders of Special Forces Commander Lieutenant-General Zekai Aksakallı.³⁴

In Istanbul, Air Force Commander General Abidin Ünal was enjoying himself at a wedding party at the Moda Sea Club and unaware a coup attempt was underway until approximately 2351 hours. But on hearing of the coup attempt, he managed to send out a key order before being captured by pro-coup troops: “The Air Force Operation Center (AFOC) has been overtaken. The orders coming from there are not legal and should not be given attention. All orders are to be given by the Air Force Commander at the Eskişehir Operation Center. Legal action will be taken against all who act otherwise.”³⁵

Crucial at this point was that the Eskişehir Operation Center was still in government hands. Aware that a coup attempt was underway, Colonel İsmail Üner, the Chief of Staff Operations, arrived at the Combined Air Operations Center (BHBM) at 2225 hours in Eskişehir where Brigadier-General Recep Ünal was present and seemingly doing nothing to prevent the movement of pro-coup aircraft. An argument ensued and Colonel Üner had the senior officer removed. Immediately, orders were issued to stop the movement of pro-coup aircraft.³⁶



Before his capture, Ünal was able to issue one more vital order that would eventually take the AFOC in Ankara off-line. “I called Colonel Alper Ketencioğlu,” said Ünal, “and I ordered him to blind the operation center. In other words, I ordered him to cut the electricity, the computer systems and the telephones.”³⁷ At midnight, runways at the Akıncı Air Base were bombed by pro-government aircraft to prevent F-16s used by the coup plotters from taking off.³⁸

While the battle as to who would control the skies continued, pro-coup troops on the ground were taking over the state-run television studios (TRT) in Ankara. Having done so, at 0013 hours, news anchor Tijen Kardeş was told at gunpoint to read the Martial Law Declaration:

It is the wish and order of the Turkish Armed Forces for this statement to be broadcast on all channels of the Turkish Republic. The valuable citizens of the Turkish Republic have systematically been subject to constitutional and legal infringements threatening the basic characteristics and vital institutions of the state, while all state institutions including the Turkish Armed Forces have undergone attempts to be redesigned based on ideological motives, rendering them unfit for purpose. Fundamental rights and freedoms as well as the secular democratic legal structure based on the separation of powers have been abolished by the heedless, misguided, and even treacherous president and government officials.

Our state has lost its rightful international reputation and has become a country governed by an autocracy based on fear and where fundamental human rights are overlooked. The wrong decisions taken by the political elite have resulted in the failure to combat growing terrorism, which has claimed the lives of several innocent citizens and security forces that have been fighting against terror. The corruption and pilferage within the bureaucracy have reached serious levels, while the judicial system throughout the country has become unfit for purpose. In these circumstances, the Turkish Armed Forces, that founded and has guarded to this day the Turkish Republic under extraordinary sacrifices, established under the leadership of the Great Atatürk, has in order to continue the country's indivisible unity in the wake of the Peace at Home, Peace in the World ideal, to safeguard the survival of the nation and the state, to eliminate the threats our Republic's victories face, to eliminate the de facto obstructions to our justice system, to stop corruption that has become a national security threat, to allow efficient operations against all forms of terrorism, to bring forward fundamental and universal human rights to all our citizens regardless of race or ethnicity and to re-establish the constitutionally enshrined values of a secular democratic social and legal state, to regain our nation's lost international reputation and to establish stronger relations and co-operate for international peace, stability and serenity, taken over administration.

*The governance of the State will be undertaken by the established Peace at Home Council. The Peace at Home Council has taken every action to ensure that it fulfils the obligations set by all international institutions, including the United Nations and NATO. The government, which has lost all its legitimacy, has been dismissed from office.*³⁹



If the coup plotters envisioned the reading of the Declaration as a decisive moment in their attempt to overthrow the government that night, they would be sorely mistaken. Given the seriousness of the situation, at the very least a senior pro-coup Turkish general should have been assigned to this task. Instead, Lieutenant-Colonel Ümit Gençer was dispatched to the TRT studios with his full-dress uniform in a black clothes bag. Once there he changed out of his combat uniform, put on his dress uniform, and prepared for what would likely be the biggest moment in his life.⁴⁰ Then, as he paced back and forth inside the studios, his cell phone rang. He picked up. On the other end, the caller, possibly from Akıncı, told him to hand the Declaration to a civilian presenter instead.

The teleprompter ready, a shaken Tijen Kardeş had a quick drink of water and gave a thumbs-up to the cameras that she was ready to begin. Despite the circumstances, her voice was strong and clear. Perhaps the last minute idea to have a civilian read the Declaration had been a good one after all? Then again, over her left shoulder, viewers could plainly make out a bank of six flickering monitors. On the most central, a soccer match was underway. Whatever gravitas the reading of the Martial Law Declaration might have had was surely lost at that point.⁴¹



LIGHT ARMOURD VEHICLES BELONGING TO THE TURKISH ARMY PASS BY THE REVIEWING STAND IN ANKARA ON 30 AUGUST 2013. THE ANNUAL PARADE MARKS THE TURKISH VICTORY AGAINST GREEK FORCES AT THE BATTLE OF DUMLUPINAR, THE FINAL BATTLE IN THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE IN 1922.

PHOTO CREDIT: CHRIS KILFORD



Commencing the coup attempt on a Friday night and six hours ahead of schedule would undercut months of careful planning and secrecy. At 2200 hours, Hakan Fidan, who had left the TGS Headquarters before the coup plotters could detain him, was finally able to reach President Erdoğan to inform him that a portion of the military was carrying out a coup.⁴² At 0115 hours on 16 July, a helicopter whisked Erdoğan and his family from their hotel to Dalaman, the nearest airport. Just before departing though, he was able to address the country in a video call from the Grand Yazici Mares Hotel where he had been taken by his security team.^{43, 44}

President Erdoğan's appearance on television was confirmation that he was safe and had not been captured or killed. After Major Karaca's confession, Erdoğan's appearance was undoubtedly a second crucial turning point that night. In an interview with *Die Zeit*, Hande Fırat, a top anchor with CNN Türk in Ankara, recounted that after leaving work on the afternoon of 15 July, a colleague had informed her on *WhatsApp* that odd military manoeuvres were taking place in Istanbul. Fırat immediately called her sources within the government but they were unable to confirm what was happening. It was instinct, she said, that told her to go back to the CNN Türk studios where she remained.⁴⁵

At 2330 hours, Fırat was finally able to reach Erdoğan's private secretary who confirmed that the president was safe. Some 30 minutes later, as events continued to unfold in Istanbul and Ankara, she called again and offered to interview the president live via FaceTime. Much to her surprise, at 0026 hours her smartphone rang. On the small screen she could see President Erdoğan. "Mr. President, we can hear you," Fırat would say.⁴⁶

For the next five minutes, with the smartphone's small screen held up in front of the cameras, President Erdoğan addressed the nation. Today's events, he said, were "an unfortunate attempt...by a small minority of the Turkish Armed Forces subservient to the parallel state's mastermind," which was a clear reference to Fethullah Gülen.⁴⁷ Turks, he continued, should head to the streets to protect their democracy.

Shortly after, at 0052 hours, the 1st Army Commander (Istanbul), General Ümit Dündar, confirmed on television that the coup was not led by the TGS. Indeed, his actions on 16 July constituted the third crucial turning point that ultimately prevented the coup from succeeding. When his staff first alerted him to General Partigöç's three messages, he had immediately questioned their legitimacy and unsuccessfully tried to reach Generals Akar and Güler.⁴⁸

While General Dündar reached out to the media, Turkey's 80,000 mosques called on the people over their loudspeakers to take to the streets to defend democracy.⁴⁹ At about the same time, the telephone company Turkcell released a text message to its customers ostensibly from President Erdoğan that read: "To the esteemed children of the Turkish nation! This movement in Ankara and Istanbul was carried out on the part of a small cadre by means of extortion, armored vehicles and weapons belonging to the state. I call on you to take to the streets and take care of your nation. Take care of your country."⁵⁰ Mosques and cell phones that night acted as the final nail in the coup plotters' coffin. By the early morning hours of 16 July,



the coup plot was beginning to unravel, but was still not quite over.

At 0235 hours, the Turkish parliament building, presidential complex, and MİT Headquarters in Ankara came under air attack.⁵¹ Elsewhere, it appeared some had kept to the original coup timetable or been delayed. At 0300 hours, for example, helicopters carrying pro-coup troops arrived at the Hotel Grand Yazici Club Turban in Marmaris where President Erdoğan had been staying since 11 July with his wife, daughter and several relatives. They were too late.⁵² Also at 0300 hours, Captains Erdal Şeker, Süleyman Ahmet Kaya and Mehmet Akif Aslan, along with two non-commissioned officers and 14 privates, attempted to take over the Doğan Media Center in Istanbul, home to the newspapers *Daily Hürriyet*, the *Hürriyet Daily News* and television channels CNN Türk and Kanal D.⁵³

Even when it was clear the coup attempt had failed, some were simply unwilling to give up. At 0619 hours, Lieutenant Müslim Macit dropped two bombs in front of the presidential palace killing 15 people.⁵⁴ It was a pointless act. At 0600 hours, General Öztürk and Major-General Dişli had both been taken into custody at Akıncı. At 0940 hours, 900 soldiers finally surrendered to the police in Ankara and a few hours later 200 more pro-coup soldiers barricaded in the TGS Headquarters gave up.

In the immediate aftermath of the coup attempt, the Turkish government declared a state of emergency, which is still in effect at the time of writing. Those associated with Fethullah Gülen were labelled as members of what the Turkish government called FETÖ or the Fethullahist Terrorist Organization and purged from their places of work. According to the Turkish military, over 8,000 military personnel were identified as having “organic ties” to FETÖ and were dismissed, including 87 of 202 army generals, 30 of 67 air force generals, and 32 of 56 admirals. In addition, 4,630 officers, 2,167 sergeants, 1,210 specialized sergeants and privates on contract were dishonourably discharged.⁵⁵ On 22 May 2017, 221 alleged coup plotters, including Akin Öztürk, Mehmet Dişli and Mehmet Partigöç, went on trial in Ankara.⁵⁶ As for Fethullah Gülen, he was listed *in absentia* as the primary defendant.

Those on trial, by and large, have continued to vehemently deny being members of FETÖ or having anything to do with Gülen.⁵⁷ For example, during his trial, which commenced on 11 August 2017, Dişli rejected having any links to Fethullah Gülen. In his defence he said: “I faced the same conditions as General Akar and was forced to go to Akıncı at gunpoint. I fulfilled the duties of a secretariat for the Chief of the General Staff. I never played an intermediary role or put pressure on the Chief of the General Staff to participate in the coup attempt.”⁵⁸ His testimony directly contradicted General Akar’s, causing the pro-government newspaper *Daily Sabah* to comment that “Dişli’s denial of his role in the coup despite evidence to the contrary is part of what plaintiffs call a defense strategy based on repeated denial and blatant lies.”⁵⁹

As for the civilian component of the coup attempt, Dr. Öksüz was captured by the gendarmerie in an open field close to Akıncı at around 1100 hours on 16 July. He claimed he was in the area near the base only to look at buying farmland. In his statement, given soon after his capture, Öksüz added that he had “never had a connection, a bond of communion or a relationship based on self-interest in my personal or



academic life. I have no connection with Fethullah Gülen or the FETÖ organization or the parallel state structure.”⁶⁰ However, photos were soon produced by the prosecution showing Öksüz and Gülen together at different times. Prosecutors also noted that Öksüz, his wife, his brother, and his brother-in-law had used the Gülen-associated encoded messaging app *ByLock* and that family members worked for Gülen associated companies.⁶¹

Even though a key figure in the coup plot had been quickly detained by the gendarmerie, Öksüz would not be in custody for long and was soon set free by Judge Çetin Sönmez. After that, Öksüz went on the run, and his whereabouts are still unknown today. As for Sönmez, he was later arrested and confessed to being a follower of Fethullah Gülen. In the aftermath, the Turkish Interior Ministry placed a 4 million Turkish Lira bounty (\$1.36 million Canadian dollars) on Öksüz’s head.⁶²

Kemal Batmaz was also caught by the gendarmerie near Akıncı in the early morning hours on 16 July 2016. He stated that one of his friends was looking for real estate and he had been there to help him. However, security cameras had recorded him walking through the base on the night of the coup and consulting with soldiers.⁶³

As far as proof linking the coup plot to Fethullah Gülen, it is the evidence against Batmaz that was the most revealing. According to his testimony given on 18 October 2016, Batmaz stated that he did not know Gülen at all and that: “I only know him through the media. I see him as a ringleader of a movement that was sincere at first but became secular and thus, problematic in time.”⁶⁴ But, according to a document sent to the Ankara chief prosecutor’s office from the United States Department of Homeland Security on 7 September 2017, Batmaz was not telling the truth. Indeed, noted the document, Batmaz had been pulled aside for a secondary interview when he entered the United States on 1 January 2016. During his interview he told airport security officials he would be “staying with Imam Fethullah Gülen in Pennsylvania.” What he did not know was that the interview was being recorded.

Along with Batmaz, Harun Biniş was also caught in the same village and stated that he was only in the area to look at real estate with a friend. Nurettin Oruç had a similar story when he was seized by the gendarmerie on the morning of 16 July 2016, telling his captors he was in the vicinity to film a documentary about tending livestock. Hakan Çiçek was also discovered nearby. In his defence, Çiçek told investigators that he had been invited by Colonel Ahmet Özçetin, the base operations commander, to attend a social activity at the base.⁶⁵ However, when the Air Force Commander, General Ünal, was taken to Akıncı from Istanbul he was, according to General Ünal’s testimony, met by the colonel who told him that he was part of the coup plot and “trying to readjust what is out of order.”⁶⁶ Özçetin, it is alleged, is also the officer who gave orders to bomb the parliament building, presidential complex, the Gölbaşı police special operations building and the Ankara police headquarters.

There is no question the coup attempt that began in the evening of 15 July was a full-fledged attempt to overthrow a democratically elected government. And, as the plotters sensed events conspiring against them, they were ruthless in their attempts to take back the initiative, killing some 250 civilians and wound-



ing thousands more. The coup attempt, one assumes at this point, was carried out by a group of senior officers that were all Gülenists. If there were non-Gülenists present, which is unlikely given the secretive nature of the movement, one possible explanation is that they could have been duped into believing their co-conspirators were not Gülenists at all but secular neo-Kemalists.⁶⁷ Such a scenario, however, begs the question of what would have happened if the coup had succeeded and the ideological leanings of all those involved were finally exposed. As Halil Berktaş wrote in *History and Memory – TRT World in the Face of the 15 July Coup*:

Whether hierarchical or factional, all previous coups in Turkey had been carried out within the penumbra of Kemalism -- under the aegis of the military-bureaucratic establishment's civilizing self-perception and tutelage (or guardianship) ideology. This created a pattern, a habitus of army takeovers in the name of saving the country. It also conditioned the West, too, into seeing Turkey purely in terms of this army-vs-Islamism dichotomy. If there was some kind of coup brewing in Turkey, once more it had to be the staunch Kemalist old guard trying to defend the ramparts of civilization against Islamic reaction (now represented by the AK Party).⁶⁸



IN BURSA, A DISPLAY OF PHOTOGRAPHS OF THOSE KILLED BY PRO-COUP SOLDIERS. IN THE CENTRE IS MASTER SERGEANT ÖMER HALISDEMİR WHO SHOT AND KILLED BRIGADIER-GENERAL SEMİH TERZİ ON THE NIGHT OF 15 JULY AS TERZİ ATTEMPTED TO TAKE OVER THE SPECIAL FORCES COMMAND HEADQUARTERS IN ANKARA. HALISDEMİR WAS THEN SHOT DEAD BY THE SOLDIERS ACCOMPANYING TERZİ. PHOTO CREDIT: CHRIS KILFORD



Ideological leanings aside, why did the coup attempt fail? The most important reason was the simple fact that the coup plotters were forced to commence their operations six hours ahead of schedule and therefore when ordinary Turks were still awake and aware of what was happening. Starting six hours earlier than planned also created a high degree of confusion amongst the coup supporters. It is a well-worn military adage that plans seldom go to plan once you cross the start-line. In this case the start-line had not even been crossed. It also has to be borne in mind that coup attempts, even in Turkey, are not an everyday occurrence. Those involved were gambling with their lives and their futures. An abrupt change in timings would have caught many off-guard. As a result, some were undoubtedly slow to react while others decided to sit on the fence and see how events would play out. Other military officers not involved in the coup decided along similar lines, turning off their cell phones and turning on their televisions. In due course, their questionable loyalties would result in widespread dismissals.

In military garrisons across the width and breadth of Turkey, those for and against the coup found themselves in heated verbal and physical exchanges as one side tried to gain the upper-hand over the other. On the day of the coup, in one high-level headquarters, officers sensed something was amiss when off-duty colleagues, who were part of the coup attempt, appeared at work dressed in civilian clothes. Elsewhere, officers and senior non-commissioned officers initially unaware of the coup plot, raced back to their units once they heard troops were mobilizing and tried to stop them. Some senior officers were told by their subordinates that if they came to the garrison they would be detained or shot.⁶⁹ All in all, across the Turkish military, confusion reigned. To make matters worse, the simple day-to-day facts of life in Turkey also took their toll on pro-coup troops, especially those based in Istanbul who struggled to reach their objectives on a busy, traffic-congested Friday night.

Another key factor contributing to failure was that leading government figures were not captured right from the outset. Certainly, the coup plotters had plans to lay their hands on the president, the prime minister and the Turkish head of intelligence, but because the coup attempt was launched earlier than planned, they failed to do so.

The next mistake was not taking charge of the media, which included not only traditional television and radio stations, but also social media. The coup plotters were not unaware of the importance of social media—in fact, they were relying on various social media platforms to support their own operations—however, because the CNN Türk studios in Ankara were not in the hands of the coup plotters, President Erdoğan was able to speak to the nation by smartphone. Social media also became a tool in the hands of the Turkish people who used Twitter and Facebook to share information and mobilize. After the coup attempt, the newspaper *Yeni Şafak* noted that on the night of the coup attempt one of the most searched for items on Google was “Tank nasıl durdurulur?” or “how to stop a tank?”⁷⁰

The coup plotters also underestimated the level of public support President Erdoğan had. Even those who do not support him had little appetite for a military-led government or one potentially led by Fethullah Gülen and his supporters. Importantly, Turkey’s opposition parties quickly sided with the government. Nevertheless, as Soner Cagaptay recently wrote in his book, *The New Sultan – Erdoğan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey*, the coup attempt did confirm the tremendous fissures present in Turkish society. Moreover:



The president's most visceral nightmare, that the military might again oust an Islamist government, materialized [on the night of the coup attempt]. As the plane that Erdoğan had been sneaked onto hung in the air, his life's work hung in the balance. Abject fear must have permeated his mind, not only for his own life, but also for the fate of the dreams he had long cherished. He had worked tirelessly to become Turkey's most powerful leader and now his erstwhile allies might kill him.⁷¹

Although many Turkish military personnel have now been given life sentences for their role in the coup attempt, it is still not clear who was actually in charge. General Öztürk, whose trial has yet to conclude and who was the most senior officer tied to the coup plot, appeared to not want this role. Major-General Dişli's attempt to convince General Akar to take over was also soundly rebuffed. This leadership vacuum is another important factor as to why the coup ultimately failed. During the 1960 coup, the plotters were in a similar situation. But in their case they were able to convince the recently retired and popular former army commander, General Cemal Gürsel, to step in. It was a crucial moment and one that allowed the coup to succeed. In 2016, however, there was no General Gürsel waiting in the wings. And when the Peace at Home Council's Declaration was read out on national television, it was done so by a civilian news anchor. The coup plotters were faceless. Turks simply concluded they were shameful and cowardly.

Like previous coups in Turkey, the events of 15-16 July 2016 will be the subject of analysis and study for many years to come. For now, however, suffice to say as Lars Haugom noted in *The Turkey Analyst*, the coup attempt was a humiliation for the Turkish military. Indeed, he added, it demonstrated "a fateful lack of internal control on [the] part of the military leadership, but also – if the official story is to be believed – that the military organisation had been colonised by a religious fraternity determined to seize state power."⁷² Certainly, if the coup had been successful, ideological differences in the armed forces alone would have likely resulted in palace and counter-coups, much like what happened after the 1960 coup.

The humiliation aside, is this the last we will see of the Turkish military in politics? In the aftermath of the coup attempt, the government engaged in some hurried coup-proofing reforms such as closing major military bases near Ankara and Istanbul. The four military high schools were also shut down, along with the existing military academies. This was followed by an announcement that a new National Defense University would eventually be stood-up under the Ministry of National Defense. The result of closing these important educational institutions was that 4,090 cadets from the military high schools, 6,140 cadets in the non-commissioned officers' colleges and 6,179 cadets in university-level military schools were dismissed, likely over fears in the government that many of these young people were Gülen followers.⁷³

To enhance civilian control and oversight of the armed forces, it was also announced the chain of command and organizational structure of the Turkish military would be shaken-up. The chief of the general staff and the TGS were to be attached to the presidency instead of the prime minister's office, and the commanders of the land, air and sea forces placed under the Ministry of National Defense. However, based on the TGS website and mission statement, the chief of the general staff is still reporting to the prime minister and the



three service chiefs are still reporting to the TGS.⁷⁴ Another indication of how announced post-coup changes appear to have been watered down concerns the Presidential Guard. Immediately after the coup attempt, Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım announced that the 2,500-man military unit, with their distinct light blue uniforms, would be disbanded when 283 members of the unit were taken into custody for their alleged involvement in the coup attempt.⁷⁵ However, when Russian President Vladimir Putin recently arrived in Ankara for talks, the Presidential Guard was everywhere to be seen.

Will post-coup reforms and structural changes be enough to prevent future coup attempts? One hopes so. But so far the record has been a poor one and as Kılıç Kanat noted in his recent book, *Understanding the July 15th Failed Coup*, “in a sense, the history of Turkish democracy has been a constant struggle between the military and civilians to control the government and the state.”⁷⁶ With this in mind, there are two important reasons why Turkey’s current government is likely to remain wary of its own military for some time to come.

The first reason concerns two trials. In 2012, 331 retired and serving officers were sentenced to lengthy prison sentences for taking part in alleged coup plotting in 2003. This trial, given the codename *Balyoz (Sledgehammer)* tore at the very heart of the armed forces, and while the trials were underway, General Işık Koşaner, the Chief of the TGS, along with the army, navy and air force commanders, resigned *en masse* in July 2011. Koşaner, in his farewell address, said “it was impossible to continue in his job as he could not defend the rights of men who had been detained as a consequence of a flawed judicial process.”⁷⁷

Then, in August 2013, 275 defendants including the former Chief of the TGS, İlker Başbuğ, were convicted as part of the *Ergenekon* investigation of belonging to a terrorist organization and working towards overthrowing the government.⁷⁸ Başbuğ, like most others, received a life sentence. Even though all those convicted in both trials were released in 2015 and 2016, once it became clear that the Gülen network had played a large part in fabricating evidence or obtaining it illegally, there can be no doubt that Turkey’s senior officers will not forget the ardent anti-military stance the government and pro-AKP media took during both trials. President Erdoğan may have admitted in March 2015 that he had been deceived “in the Balyoz and Ergenekon trials by the ‘parallel state’ led by the exiled cleric Fethullah Gülen,” but memories remain long in Turkish politics.⁷⁹

Second, the country continues to be polarized between supporters and opponents of President Erdoğan, and this leaves plenty of room for concern that any future unrest in the country, economic or otherwise, could create the conditions that have been used in the past as an excuse for military-led interventions of one sort or another. Certainly, in the aftermath of recent internal upheavals in the military, it is not difficult to imagine the leadership returning to its roots and fostering a Kemalist revival – a revival imperceptible to those on the outside but one that might revive the historical guardianship role.

Of course, in 2018, it seems unimaginable that another coup in Turkey will ever take place. The country has changed in many ways and largely for the better. But, on a more ominous note, the failed 2016 coup did offer up an abundance of lessons learned for any future would be coup plotters. Most militaries are resistant to change, and with the above in mind, the Turkish military is no different in this regard.



NOTES

1. *Haber3*, “Asker TRT binasında: İşte ‘darbe’ bildirisi,” 16 July 2016, <https://www.haber3.com/guncel/asker-trt-binasinda-iste-039darbe039-bildirisi-haberi-4401863#ixzz4EiESTako>.
2. *Hurriyet Daily News*, “Elements other than Gülenists also supported coup attempt: Justice Minister Bozdağ,” 6 July 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/elements-other-than-gulenists-also-supported-coup-attempt-justice-minister-bozdag.aspx?pageID=238&nID=115179&NewsCatID=338>.
3. Robert Siegel, “Turkish Cleric Denies Involvement In Coup Attempt,” *National Public Radio*, 11 July 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/07/11/536595603/turkish-cleric-denies-involvement-in-coup-attempt>.
4. For example, in late October 2017, Ankara’s 14th High Criminal Court sentenced eight former soldiers and five civilians to life sentences for their role in trying to cut Turkish satellite operator TURKSAT’s signal feed. Two TURKSAT workers were killed in the attempt. When the signal feed was not cut, pro-coup F-16 fighter jets dropped four MK-82 bombs on the TURKSAT facility. See Aylin Sirikli and Ferdi Turkten, “Turkey: 13 get heavy life sentences over coup bid,” *Anadolu Agency*, 23 October 2017, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/july-15-coup-bid/turkey-13-get-heavy-life-sentences-over-coup-bid/945600>.
5. The 1960 coup was successfully carried out by a small portion of the military. It was a ‘coup from below.’ The Turkish General Staff also succeeded in ousting governments in 1971, 1980, and 1997.
6. Michael Rubin, “Could there be a coup in Turkey?” *American Enterprise Institute*, 16 March 2016, <http://www.aei.org/publication/could-there-be-a-coup-in-turkey/>.
7. Metin Gurcan, “Military wipes its hands of Turkish politics,” *Al-Monitor*, Turkey Pulse, 4 April 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/04/turkey-armed-forces-coup-statement.html>.
8. Ibid.
9. Christian Fuchs et al., “Surrender. Or Flee!” *Zeit Online*, 13 July 2017, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2017-07/turkish-coup-d-etat-attempt-2016-military-recep-tayyip-erdogan>. For example, in his post-coup trial testimony, Gendarmerie Colonel Hakan Bıyık said that he had gone to a three floor villa-type house in Ankara on 6 July 2016 where a group of senior officers were meeting. A civilian and key figure in the coup plot, Adil Öksüz joined them and they all prayed together. Bıyık added that Öksüz told the group that he had spoken with Fethullah Gülen a few moments beforehand, talked about the coup plan and the date for the coup attempt and that he would soon visit the United States. See Sedat Ergin, “July 15 and Akıncı Air Base (9): Gülen rebutted Öksüz’s defense,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, 23 July 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/july-15-and-Akinci-air-base-9-gulen-rebutted-oksuzs-defense.aspx?PageID=238&NID=115871&NewsCatID=428>.



10. Anadolu Agency, *FETO's Coup Attempt: A Timeline* (Istanbul: Anadolu Agency Publications #30, 5 August 2016).
11. Fuchs *et al.*, "Surrender. Or Flee!"
12. John Butler, "The disappearing Imam: Gulen and uncovering the mysteries of Turkey's coup operation," *War on the Rocks*, 3 August 2017, <https://warontherocks.com/2017/08/the-disappearing-imam-uncovering-the-mysteries-of-turkeys-coup-operation/>.
13. Kılıç Kanat, "Understanding the July 15th Failed Coup," in *Turkey's July 15th Coup – What Happened and Why?* Eds., Hakan Yavuz and Bayram Balcı (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2017), 144.
14. According to the Turkish newspaper, *Yeni Şafak*, just prior to the coup attempt, a planning meeting was held at the 2nd Armored Brigade barracks in Istanbul by Brigadier-General Özkan Aydoğdu. Allegedly, 30 high-ranking officers were present including the 1st Army Commander Chief of Staff Brigadier-General Eyüp Gürler, Kuleli Military High School Commander Colonel Mürsel Çıkrıkçı and 5th Armored Brigade Deputy Commander Staff Colonel Uzay Şahi. See *Yeni Şafak*, <http://www.yenisafak.com/en/15-july-coup-attempt-in-turkey/ozkan-aydogdu-itiraflar-en>.
15. Butler, "The disappearing Imam."
16. Yavuz and Balcı, *Turkey's July 15th Coup*, 311.
17. Maximilian Popp, "Revisiting Turkey's Failed Coup Attempt," *Spiegel Online*, 6 July 2017, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/turkey-coup-a-chronology-of-events-a-1155762.html>.
18. Anadolu Agency, *FETO's Coup Attempt*.
19. General Öztürk commanded the Turkish Air Force from 30 August 2013 until 4 August 2015. Turkish senior generals are often much older than their Canadian counterparts. At the time of the coup attempt, he was 64 years old.
20. Sedat Ergin, "A social activity with F-16s on the night of the coup attempt," *Hurriyet Daily News*, 22 July 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/a-social-activity-with-f-16s-on-the-night-of-the-coup-attempt.aspx?pageID=449&nID=115764&NewsCatID=428>.
21. Butler, "The disappearing Imam."
22. *Hurriyet Daily News*, "Order for the coup came on night of July 14," 29 July 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/order-for-the-coup-came-on-night-of-july-14.aspx?pageID=238&NID=116084&NewsCatID=428>.
23. After the failed coup attempt, Major Karaca was moved to the National Intelligence Organization



(MİT) and prevented from talking to anyone. In Turkey, he was given the codename 'OK'.

24. Alican Uludağ, "The enigma of the coup tip-off officer," *Cumhuriyet*, 18 May 2017, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/english/743431/The_enigma_of_the_coup_tip-off_officer.html#.
25. The head of the Parliamentary Investigation Committee, AKP Deputy Reşat Petek, noted that the lack of any intelligence about the coup plot pointed to an intelligence failure and overall incompetence in MİT. See *Daily Sabah*, "Turkish parliamentary inquiry confirms FETÖ, Gülen involvement in failed coup," 26 May 2017, <https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2017/05/26/turkish-parliamentary-inquiry-confirms-feto-gulen-involvement-in-failed-coup>.
26. Halil Berktaş and Pinar Kandemir, "History and Memory – TRT World in the Face of the July 15 Coup," TRT World Research Centre, July 2017, 41.
27. Fidan and Akar, surprisingly, never testified before the Turkish Parliamentary Committee examining the coup attempt.
28. *Hurriyet Daily News*, "The moment the coup attempt started to fail," 13 July 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/the-moment-the-coup-attempt-started-to-foil.aspx?PageID=238&NID=115452&NewsCatID=409>.
29. Sedat Ergin, "How did Major General Dişli get arrested at the Prime Ministry?" *Hurriyet Daily News*, 18 July 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/how-did-major-general-disli-get-arrested-at-the-prime-ministry.aspx?pageID=449&nID=115623&NewsCatID=428>.
30. A third bridge over the Bosphorus, the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge, opened in August 2016.
31. According to the testimony of accused coup plotter Brigadier-General Özkan Aydoğdu: "I sent two tanks and two armored personnel carriers to the Fatih Sultan Mehmet and also the Bosphorus bridge. Four tanks, two armored personnel carriers, and two armored combat vehicles to Sabiha Gökçen Airport. Four armored personnel carriers for the security of the 1st Army Command. Four armored personnel carriers for the security of Acıbadem Telekom, and eight tanks, two armored personnel carriers and two armored combat vehicles to Üsküdar Mobile Force Headquarters." See *Yeni Şafak*, <http://www.yenisafak.com/en/15-july-coup-attempt-in-turkey/ozkan-aydogdu-itiraflar-en>.
32. Sedat Ergin, "July 15 and İncirlik Air Base (1): 'ASENA' in the sky," *Hurriyet Daily News*, 17 August 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/july-15-and-incirlik-air-base-1-asena-in-the-sky.aspx?pageID=449&nID=116824&NewsCatID=428>.
33. Sedat Ergin, "Aerial wars on the night of the coup attempt," *Hurriyet Daily News*, 23 August 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/aerial-wars-on-the-night-of-the-coup-attempt.aspx?pageID=449&nID=117064&NewsCatID=428>. Due to the actions of pro-government forces, only one of



the transport aircraft was able to land at its intended destination. The others were turned away.

34. Berktaç, "History and Memory," 49. Master Sergeant Halisdemir was shot and killed by pro-coup troops.
35. Sedat Ergin, "The critical moment that changed the tide in the July 15 air wars," *Hurriyet Daily News*, 1 September 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/the-critical-moment-that-changed-the-tide-in-the-july-15-air-wars.aspx?pageID=449&nID=117471&NewsCatID=428>.
36. Sedat Ergin, "July 15 and Akıncı Air Base (7): The general on Adil Öksüz's phone records," *Hurriyet Daily News*, 21 July 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/july-15-and-Akinci-air-base-7-the-general-on-adil-oksuzs-phone-records.aspx?pageID=449&nID=115816&NewsCatID=428>.
37. Sedat Ergin, "The critical moment."
38. *Hurriyet Daily News*, "Turkey's key coup attempt trial kicks off Aug 1," 30 July 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-key-coup-attempt-trial-kicks-off-aug-1.aspx?pageID=238&nID=116117&NewsCatID=509>.
39. *Haber3*, "Asker TRT binasında: İşte 'darbe' bildirisi."
40. *Yeni Şafak*, "TRT Oran Office under occupation," *YouTube* video, 5 June 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zz7bBi8Zr4s>.
41. Aykut Karaaslan, "TV Declaration of Coup in Turkey 15 July 2016," *YouTube* video, 16 July 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDFDgufsjsk>.
42. Maximilian Popp, "Revisiting Turkey's Failed Coup Attempt"
43. Sözcü, "Erdoğan'ın kaldığı oteldeki çatışmanın yeni görüntüleri," 6 November 2016, https://www.google.ca/search?q=translate&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&client=firefox-b&gfe_rd=cr&dcr=0&ei=cdRM-Wr3uOdHf8geCiqn4Aw.
44. In the early morning hours of 16 July 2016, President Erdoğan and his family boarded the president's jet, a Gulfstream IV, for a flight to Istanbul. The pilot changed the aircraft's call letters from TC-ATA to THY 8456, a civilian designation, to confuse the coup plotters. The president's jet was pursued by at least one F-16 jet. It was later reported that because of confusion as to the identity of the aircraft it was not fired upon. President Erdoğan's aircraft reached Istanbul at 0320 hours, but the entire airport was not completely recaptured until 0415 hours on 16 July.
45. Fuchs et al., "Surrender. Or Flee!"
46. Berktaç, "History and Memory," 32.



47. Ibid., 41.
48. From 0652 hours until 1037 hours, 16 July 2016, Turkish 1st Army Commander, General Dündar, was appointed Acting Chief of the General Staff.
49. Soner Cagaptay and Oya Rose Aktas, “How Erdoganism Is Killing Turkish Democracy,” *Foreign Affairs*, 7 July 2017, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2017-07-07/how-erdoganism-killing-turkish-democracy?cid=sso-link>.
50. Fuchs *et al.*, “Surrender. Or Flee!”
51. Popp, “Revisiting Turkey’s Failed Coup Attempt.”
52. Ibid.
53. *Daily Sabah*, “Gülenists get life for raid on CNN’s Turkish affiliate,” 22 March 2018, <https://www.dailysabah.com/investigations/2018/03/23/gulenists-get-life-for-raid-on-cnns-turkish-affiliate-1521752008>.
54. Sedat Ergin, “Coup pilots’ radio conversations reveal how Turkish Parliament, police HQ were bombed,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, 14 August 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/coup-pilots-radio-conversations-reveal-how-turkish-parliament-police-hq-were-bombed-.aspx?page-ID=238&nID=116729&NewsCatID=509>.
55. *Hurriyet Daily News*, “Turkish General Staff to recruit over 40,000 personnel as compensation for post-coup attempt dismissals,” 2 January 2018, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-general-staff-to-recruit-over-40-000-personnel-as-compensation-for-post-coup-attempt-dismissals-125103>. In early 2017, the Turkish Armed Forces (army, air force and navy) were comprised of 153,000 professionals and 215,000 conscripts. As a point of note, some conscripts were involved in the coup attempt, but it was led by the professionals. Although the post-coup attempt purge of senior officers was significant, the higher echelons in the Turkish military were top heavy and this offered a degree of redundancy. In August 2016, for example, the Turkish military was still able to conduct Operation Euphrates Shield, a cross-border operation into Syria resulting in the Turkish occupation of a portion of northern Syria.
56. Other high ranking officers arrested included: Lieutenant-General Metin Iyidil (Commander Land Forces Doctrine and Training Command); 49th Commando Brigade Commander, General Yunus Kotaman; and 2nd Commando Brigade Commander, General Ismail Guneser.
57. Brigadier-General Gökhan Şahin Sönmezateş, who was charged for setting-up and commanding the team that was sent to capture President Erdoğan, admitted to taking part in the coup attempt but denied having any links to the Gülen movement. See Ersan Atar, “Coup financed by money syphoned from Air Force Command,” *Daily Sabah*, 18 September 2018, <https://www.dailysabah.com/investigations/2017/09/19/coup-financed-by-money-syphoned-from-air-force-command>.



58. *Hurriyet Daily News*, “I have never been a Gülen follower, says top suspect in coup case,” 11 August 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/i-have-never-been-a-gulen-follower-says-top-suspect-in-coup-case-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=116647&NewsCatID=509>.
59. *Daily Sabah*, “Coup plotter who abducted army chief says he was ‘misunderstood,’” 11 August 2017, <https://www.dailysabah.com/investigations/2017/08/12/coup-plotter-who-abducted-army-chief-says-he-was-misunderstood>.
60. Ergin, “July 15 and Akıncı Air Base (9).”
61. Since 2014, members of the Gülen movement had been using an encoded messaging app called *ByLock*. MIT decoded *ByLock* in December 2015. At that point, the movement started using another encoded application for their communications named *Eagle*.
62. *Hurriyet Daily News*, “Judge who released key coup figure Öksüz confesses to Gülen links,” 25 May 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/judge-who-released-key-coup-figure-oksuz-confesses-to-gulen-links.aspx?pageID=238&nID=113536&NewsCatID=509>.
63. Popp, “Revisiting Turkey’s Failed Coup Attempt.”
64. Sedat Ergin, “Kemal Batmaz stayed with Fethullah Gülen in Pennsylvania,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, 5 October 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/sedat-ergin/kemal-batmaz-stayed-with-fethullah-gulen-in-pennsylvania-120385>.
65. *Hurriyet Daily News*, “Civilian coup suspect: I was at the air base for happy hour,” 3 August 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/civilian-coup-suspect-i-was-at-the-air-base-for-happy-hour.aspx?pageID=238&nID=116306&NewsCatID=509>.
66. Mehmet Acet, “FETÖ head at Akıncı Air Base,” *Yeni Şafak*, 10 August 2017, <http://www.yenisafak.com/en/columns/mehmetacet/feto-head-at-akinci-air-base-2039506>.
67. Kemalism, as an ideology for the new Turkish state, was introduced by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. There are six fundamental pillars: Republicanism, Populism, Nationalism, Secularism, Statism (Turkish), and Reformism.
68. Berktaş, “History and Memory,” 11.
69. The details here were compiled from the author’s talks with Turkish and foreign officers serving in Turkish units at the time of the coup attempt.
70. *Yeni Şafak*, “Tank nasıl durdurulur?,” 20 July 2016, <https://www.yenisafak.com/teknoloji/%E2%80%9Ctank-nasil-durdurulur%E2%80%9D-2496719>.



71. Soner Cagaptay, *The New Sultan: Erdogan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2017), 182.
72. Lars Haugom, “The Turkish Armed Forces Restructured,” *The Turkey Analyst*, 30 September 2016, <https://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/566-the-turkish-armed-forces-restructured.html>.
73. Turkish Minute, “Defense minister: 22,920 dismissed from Turkish military to date,” *Turkey-Purge*, 18 March 2017, <https://turkeypurge.com/defense-minister-22920-dismissed-from-turkish-military-to-date>.
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76. Kanat, “Understanding the July 15th Failed Coup,” 133.
77. Constanze Letsch, “Turkey military chiefs resign over Sledgehammer ‘coup plot’ arrests,” *The Guardian*, 30 July 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jul/30/turkey-military-chiefs-resign-sledgehammer>.
78. David Tittensor, “Secrecy and Hierarchy in the Gulen Movement and the Question of Academic Responsibility,” in *Turkey’s July 15th Coup – What Happened and Why?* Eds., Hakan Yavuz and Bayram Balci (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2017), 221.
79. Ibid, 222.



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