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# TURKEY'S FIGHT AGAINST DAESH

MURAT YEŞİLTAS, RIFAT ÖNCEL, BİLGEHAN ÖZTÜRK







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## ABSTRACT

This report aims to analyze Turkey's fight against DAESH, with an emphasis on the processes of continuities and ruptures on the side of DAESH, and the responses given to it that were witnessed. The report firstly explains the evolution of the DAESH threat up until the airport attack. In the second part, it analyzes the fundamental features of the airport attack, underscoring the new tactics DAESH implemented. The third part assesses the security measures Turkey has taken and their effectiveness before and after the airport attack. Finally, the fourth and the last part points out how the wedding attack ended Turkey's patience, how the implications of foreign policy change affect the struggle with DAESH, and the objectives and the possible outcomes of the Euphrates Shield Operation.



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## INTRODUCTION

Turkey has recently faced serious challenges to its national security as a result of the rapid emergence and spread of terrorist organizations around the borders of the country. The hyper-localization and radicalization of the armed conflict in Syria are the main driving forces behind the increase and intensification of this new terror phenomenon. While Turkey has sought to deal with the root causes, the major world powers have failed to reach any consensus on the issue. As a direct neighbor of the civil war and with many terror groups harboring in the border areas Turkey has suffered major damage. One of the most significant of these troubles has been DAESH, the salafi/takfiri terrorist organization<sup>1</sup>, which has executed several devastating suicide bombings in major locations within the country. Thus, DAESH had come to the fore as a prominent issue that must be resolved as quickly as possible both for Turkey and the international community.

Turkey's fight against DAESH has from the beginning been constituted of four essential components. These are the legal measures in order to prevent travel of foreign terrorist fighters (FTF)

and to cut off the financial activities of DAESH, police raids within the homeland, physical security measures along the border, and finally the national contribution of Turkey to the international coalition against DAESH at the regional level.<sup>2</sup> These measures have not been fixed and have evolved according to the changing character of attacks and threats in the context of a volatile conflict, the Syrian Civil War. In the process, it has become clear that the DAESH attacks against Turkey and the long-term dangers the organization presents have become more sophisticated and aggravated. As Turkey has adapted to these emerging dangers by gradually increasing its harsh stance against the terror group, DAESH has changed its political approach and military strategy vis-à-vis Turkey. The country has progressed in the perspective of DAESH from being an ambiguous *Other* to an overt enemy and the organization has started to implement a strategy of punishment which has also been an inseparable piece of its recruitment strategy within Turkey.

The sophistication of the DAESH attacks in Turkey reached their peak with the hybrid attack at Atatürk International Airport on 28th June 2016, and the bombing of a wedding ceremony at Gaziantep on 20th July 2016, where more than 100 people died and nearly 300 were wounded. These were clearly indicative of Turkey's vulnerability and the government realized that a change was needed therefore resolving to move forward to a higher stage. It was determined that as long as the DAESH presence along the Turkish-Syrian border exists, providing proper security within the country is an impossible objective. This approach with the newly emerged foreign policy cooperation led to the initiation of Operation Euphrates Shield which involves the Free Syrian Army (FSA) with the support of some elements of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK).

1. Graemw Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants?", *The Atlantic*, March 25 Issue, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>

2. Murat Yeşiltaş, "Türkiye'nin DAİŞ'le Çok Boyutlu Mücadelesi", *Anadolu Ajansı*, <http://aa.com.tr/tr/analiz-haber/turkiye-nin-daesh-ile-cok-boyutlu-mucadelesi/577528>

This report aims to make sense of Turkey's fight against DAESH, with an emphasis on the processes where continuities and ruptures within DAESH, and the given responses to them, were witnessed. The report firstly explains the transformation of the DAESH threat leading up to the airport attack. In the second part, it analyzes the fundamental features of the airport attack by underscoring the new tactics implemented by DAESH. The third part assesses the security measures Turkey has taken and their effectiveness before and after the airport attack. Finally, the fourth and the last part points out how the wedding attack ended Turkey's patience, how the implications of foreign policy change affect the struggle with DAESH, and the objectives and the possible outcomes of the Euphrates Shield Operation.

## TRANSFORMATION OF THE DAESH THREAT AGAINST TURKEY

As the airport and the Gaziantep attacks have both shown, DAESH has emerged as an urgent problem to be dealt with immediately and it became evident that the terrorist group has long term objectives for Turkey. It can be argued that two essential developments prepared the ground for DAESH to become a critical threat to Turkey, one that could no longer be tolerated and must be immediately eliminated. While the first one is the changing character of the attacks the group militants perpetrated, the second one is the ambitious strategy of gaining infrastructure and ground in Turkey by establishing and expanding cells committed to the organization.

### The Changing Character of the Attacks

Understanding the first development involves the consideration of three aspects of DAESH's attacks which have recurred as well as evolved: the type of target, tactics and terrorist profiles.

Assessment of all nine DAESH bomb attacks in Turkey demonstrates some of the crucial changes in the targets selected, the tactics used and the profiles of the perpetrators. It should be noted that these changes have unfolded in the context of the shifting conflict in the region between DAESH and the PYD/PKK, not to mention Turkey's domestic issues such as PKK terrorism. DAESH had targeted specific groups in their initial attacks in Turkey to spread its clashes with the PKK into Turkey in fulfilling revanchist motives against the latter while also seeking to destabilize Turkey by harming its ethnic cohesion at a very sensitive time. Moreover, DAESH's anti-PKK campaign has also been a vital part of its recruitment strategy towards conservative Kurds in Turkey who traditionally have had deep displeasure against the terrorist organization. Since many Kurds joined into the DAESH ranks, the strategy seemed to be a success.<sup>3</sup> In this context, the Diyarbakir attack of June 5 2015, the Suruç attack of July 20 2015, and the Ankara (Ulus) Attack of 10 October in the same year were attempts to carry the Syrian DAESH-YPG conflict into Turkey. The method employed was suicide bombing by an individual, the target was a specific group and the bombers were Turkish citizens who were radicalized in the small cells in Turkey where DAESH propaganda was expounded. The three bombers of Diyarbakir, Suruç and Ulus had close ties with each other: two were brothers and the third was their friend. They travelled to Syria together and joined DAESH there shortly before the attacks.

3. Even though the number of Kurds who joined the war in Syria along side DAESH is not known, according to the estimation of the intelligence's sources more than 1000 pro-DAESH Kurds joined DAESH in Syria. For a detail information see Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens and Ranj Alaaldin, "The Kurds of ISIS: Why Some Join the Terrorist Group", *Foreign Affairs*, August 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2016-08-08/kurds-isis>; Mahmut Bozarslan, "Kürtlerle savaşıyan IŞİD'in Kürt savaşıları", *Al Monitor*, 25 June 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/originals/2015/06/turkey-syria-kurdish-is-militants-fight-brethren.html>

At that stage the group had begun to target foreign tourists to create a perception in the international community that Turkey is neither a safe nor a stable country, thus aiming to harm Turkey's economy and prestige. The Sultanahmet attack of January 12, 2015, and the Taksim attack of March 19, 2015, highlighted a change in terms of the targets and the terrorist profiles. The first attacker was a Syrian national who fought in DAESH ranks and undertook bomb training. He carried out the attack with the help of DAESH cells in Turkey and specifically targeted foreigners. Clearly this was a definite shift in target types and it was also the first collaboration of a foreign attacker with local cells in the planning and execution.<sup>4</sup> Taking these assaults into consideration, we have seen a shift in target selection towards attacking tourists in Turkey, and the beginning of the engagement of foreign nationals in DAESH suicide attacks. Following this on May 1 2016, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) attack on the Gaziantep Turkish Police Directorate was committed. It was the first incident in which DAESH targeted Turkish security personnel with a suicide bomber, which can be taken as an indication that the group had declared open war against Turkey.<sup>5</sup>

DAESH, through the attack at Atatürk Airport, which can be understood as a declaration of all-out war, desired to punish Turkey as a substantial enemy because of the increasingly solid measures taken by the latter against them in Iraq and Syria. The Atatürk airport attack was a milestone for the DAESH strategy against Turkey. The target was more strategic, the message was more global, the tactics were hybrid and the attackers were multinational foreign terrorist fighters. The transformation of tactical planning and

performing from solitary suicide bombing towards the "suicide warrior" model is particularly clear. This model is based on creating panic, attacking with assault rifles and the attacker blowing himself up with the essential aim of causing as much damage as possible. The attackers, from three different countries, had most likely been in the Syrian Civil War as foreign terrorist fighters. These indications made the attack a turning point for Turkey and it began to reconsider the methods it was employing to fight with this new terrorist organization.<sup>6</sup>

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Finally, the explosion at a traditional henna night at Gaziantep once again proved that DAESH is following a brutal hybrid war strategy against Turkey with the intention of creating instability, harming social cohesion, provoking delicate ethnic-religious issues, disrupting international image & standing, and killing as many people as possible. Furthermore, this hybrid strategy has also been a crucial part of the group's recruitment strategy within Turkey. Taking all these developments into consideration, the attitude towards Turkey in DAESH publications *Dabıq* and *Konstantiniyye* have also transformed from an ambiguous one into an overt hostility during this process, indicating that DAESH strategy on the levels of thoughts and actions are consistent; cementing and complementing each other.<sup>7</sup>

4. "As It Happened: ISIL suicide attack kills 10, injures 15 in Istanbul's Sultanahmet", *Hurriyet Daily News*, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/as-it-happened-isil-suicide-attack-kills-10-injures-15-in-istanbul-sultanahmet.aspx?pageID=238&nID=93736&NewsCatID=341>

5. "Turkey: 'IS' link to deadly Gaziantep blast", *BBC*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36181138>

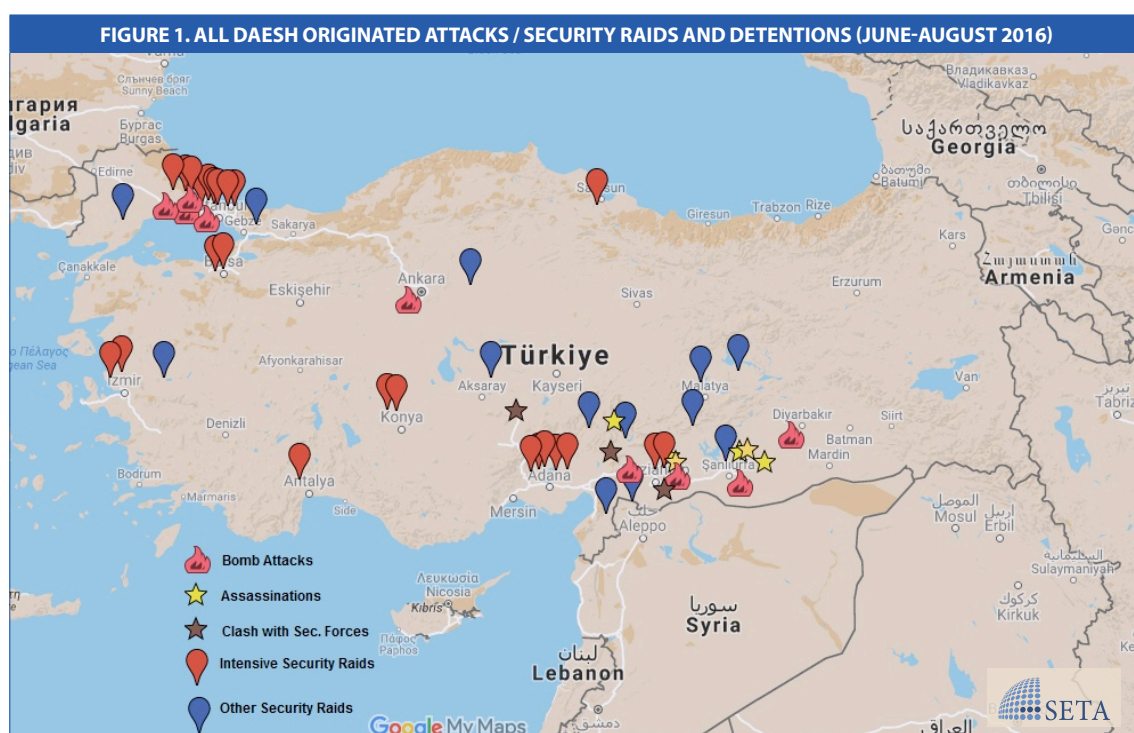
6. Murat Yeşiltaş, "Turkey's ISIS Problem", *The New Turkey*, <http://setav.org/en/turkeys-isis-problem/opinion/40765>

7. Murat Yeşiltaş at all, Sınırdaki Düşman: Türkiye'nin DAİŞ ile Mücadelesi, *SETA Report*, June 2016

## The Localization & Decentralization Strategy

The second indicator of DAESH's transformation into a strategic problem for Turkey is the group's decentralization strategy from its core areas in Syria and Iraq towards moving deep into Turkey. Turkey is not the only country in which DAESH is trying to transform its strategy of micro-mobilization of the terror. In this way, DAESH aims at localizing itself in Turkey not in the form of controlling a territorial part but in the way of consolidation of the pro-DAESH discourses. In this vein, the organization has been trying to establish and spread cells throughout the country, evidence of which can be seen through the distribution of Turkish security forces' intensive raids against them in many locations all over Turkey. This highlights the possibility of future autonomous attacks due to the lack of strict command and control structures such as those of the central leadership in Syria and Iraq, potentially leading to a dramatic increase in the number of attacks, specifically lone wolf attacks beginning to occur in Turkey as well.

The decentralization strategy of DAESH constitutes a new threat at the crossroads of three problems. The first problem is the existence of Turkish fighters in the DAESH ranks, which are crucial for DAESH's localizing strategy in Turkey. There is a risk of the transformation of these terrorists into future attackers back home in Turkey, although it is not known how many have been killed on the battlefield, have returned or will return to Turkey from the conflict areas. The second problem is the non-Turkish FTFs within DAESH who may want to flee or return from the conflict areas, potentially posing a high level of risk if they view Turkey as their principle destination. The risk of these returnees embedding into the organization's cells in Turkey could cause a rapid spread of DAESH infrastructure and logistics in Turkey as well as influence the radicalization particularly among the youth from different segments of Turkish society. Police raids after the airport attack show that a significant number of non-Turkish FTFs are trying to control and command local cells within Turkey under the direction of DAESH



central command. The third problem is that the FTFs' existence in Turkey, sociologically, will feed another radical fundamental deep wave that eventually could transform the strategies of sympathizers amongst the Turkish Citizens. The existence of FTFs in Turkey might accelerate and augment the radicalization process of current sympathizers and a susceptible audience turning them into terrorists. This sociological, yet unstructured deep wave has shown itself in all DAESH attacks to date. In particular, recent detentions and security operations at the heart of Turkey show that DAESH elements have gradually developed a multinational character, thus raising the danger of a deep radicalization wave.

## ATATÜRK AIRPORT ATTACK

The Atatürk Airport Attack of June 28, 2016 was a turning point for DAESH's terrorism against Turkey and demonstrated that the threat to Turkey from them had escalated up to a critical level. The attack has shown that DAESH terror against Turkey had reached its peak in terms of sophistication evidenced by the usage of a combination of Kalashnikovs, Glock pistols, hand grenades and TNT embedded suicide vests which were strengthened by ball bearings; the past tendency of selecting specific targets with definable goals was replaced by all-out war, against all and by all means. The militant profile from one of recruits who have generally only taken suicide-bomb training was transformed into one of more professional, experienced veteran foreign fighters.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the Atatürk Airport attack is potentially the most destructive terrorism act by DAESH against Turkey until today and clearly indicates how possible future DAESH acts in Turkey may take place.

8. Istanbul bombers 'from Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan', *Al Jazeera*, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/06/turkey-13-held-istanbul-ataturk-airport-attack-160630084124747.html>

## Organizational Chain of Command

The first and foremost feature of the Istanbul Atatürk Airport attack is the multi-national character of the perpetrators' profiles, encompassing FTFs from Dagestan to Chechnya. The veteran multi-national character of the militants can be seen both in the organizational chain of command and at the perpetrators level.<sup>9</sup> The organizational chain of command and the planning process in the airport attack was tight and high level. The planner of the Airport Attack was Ahmet Çatayev, a veteran DAESH militant who has engaged in radical movements from Chechnya to Syria for decades.<sup>10</sup> He was a prominent member of the Al-Qaeda affiliated Caucasus Emirate and aide to leader Doku Umarov. He became a DAESH member in 2014 and took responsibility for the attacks against Turkey as the Istanbul 'Emir'.<sup>11</sup> After the Suruç Bombing of 20 July 2015, Yakup İbrahimov and Abdullah Abdullayev, assistants to Çatayev who were responsible for DAESH recruitment from the North Caucasus, were detained by Turkish police. They confessed that Ahmet Çatayev was the ringleader who conducts and monitors the recruitment processes.<sup>12</sup> Çatayev is also considered to have had ties with DAESH's 'Minister of War' Abu Omar al-Shishani who was killed by a US airstrike in Syria in March 2016. Moreover, it is said that the Caucasus structure within DAESH is a special operations unit which executes the dirtiest works of the organization like the PKK affiliated Teyrêbazên Azadiya Kurdistan (TAK) terrorist structure in

9. Istanbul bombers 'from Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan', *Al Jazeera*, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/06/turkey-13-held-istanbul-ataturk-airport-attack-160630084124747.html>

10. Kim bu 'Tek Kol?', *Hürriyet*, 1 July 2016, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/kim-bu-yilanin-basi-tek-kol-40124850>

11. Havalimanı saldırısının organizatörü Ahmet Çatayev Irak'ta saklanıyor, *A Haber*, 5 July 2016, <http://www.ahaber.com.tr/gundem/2016/07/05/havalimani-saldirisinin-organizatoru-ahmet-catayev-irakta-saklaniyor>

12. Ferit Zengin, Çember daralıyor, *Sabah*, 2 July 2016, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2016/07/02/cember-daraliyor>

Turkey.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Çatayev is also said to be a person who was used by Russian and Georgian state intelligence units as a source of information and for conducting reconciliation. Therefore, he is a person who has had significant ties with foreign governments and foreign terrorist fighters from the Caucasus as well as DAESH's top leadership.

Since the major threats are emanating from the violent non-state armed actors who employ both conventional and asymmetric warfare strategies, the traditional bureaucratic cumbersome measures for border security now appear inadequate

### The Profiles of the Terrorists

The perpetrators of the attack have not yet been identified completely as only three of a total of seven attackers took action during the incident, which complicates the narrative about the real motives behind the planning. Two of the three airport attackers were identified by Turkish authorities as being 24 year old holders of Russian passports: Vadim Osmane from Dagestan and Rakim Bulgakov from Russia. They rented an apartment in the Fatih district of Istanbul and lived there until the day of the attack. Turkish criminal officials stated that traces of chemicals that can be used in making explosives were found in the militants' house.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the attackers might have planned to take a large number of hostages in order to force the Turkish government into a position for bargaining.<sup>15</sup> Turkish security sources

13. Atatürk Havalimanı saldırısını Çeçen Ahmet Çatayev organize etti Özel Kafkas Hücresi gerçekleştirdi, *Karar*, 30 June 2016, <http://www.karar.com/gundem-haberleri/katlimin-organizatoru-ahmet-catayev-174978>

14. Biri Rakim biri Vadim, 2 July 2016, *Hürriyet*, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/biri-rakim-biri-vadim-40125525>

15. Two of the Istanbul terrorists 'had Russian passports' and were planning to take 'dozens' of hostages during airport massacre, *Daily Mail*, 1 July 2016, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3670219/Two-Istanbul-terrorists-Russian-passports-planning-dozens-hostages-airport-massacre.html>

assessed that the airport attack was conducted by 7 DAESH members, thus there were 4 more terrorists involved in the incident along with 3 main attackers. Some reports suggest 2 of the remaining DAESH militants fled to the Turkish-Syrian border and hid in a forest waiting to transit to Syria.<sup>16</sup> This suggests that the real intention of the attack was more complex than what actually transpired on the day, it being the quick thinking actions of the security staff at the airport entrance which thwarted the full plan from being realized.

## TURKEY'S FIGHT AGAINST DAESH BEFORE THE AIRPORT ATTACK

Turkey's struggle with DAESH has from the beginning consisted of two essential components: First are the measures taken at a national level which aim to prevent damage that would originate from DAESH. The second are the measures taken at an international level which aim to contribute to the Global Anti-DAESH Coalition politically, militarily as well as judicially. On the other hand DAESH originated threats to Turkey unfolded at two major levels: the foreign terrorist fighter problem and threats to security filtering through the substantially long and porous Turkish-Syrian border. Turkey has become a transit country for DAESH when moving its members into Syria. At the same time, Turkey is also vulnerable to the possibility of returning FTFs from the conflict zone which rapidly escalates the danger of sensational attacks within the country. Furthermore, returning foreign fighters may stay low, silently establishing and expanding the DAESH infrastructure in Turkey through the sleeper cells. In terms of the border security problem, the major obstacle for full protection

16. İki terörist sınır hattında, *Yeni Şafak*, 6 July 2016, <http://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/iki-terorist-sinir-hattinda-2490857>

is the length of the Turkish-Syrian border. Although DAESH had lost most of its control of areas bordering Turkey, another terrorist organization, namely PKK affiliated PYD/YPG, filled the gap. Since PKK restarted its terror in Turkey last year, the flow of terrorists, weapon systems and illegal financial activities across the border have been conducted by both terror groups. As a result Turkey has been forced to take measures all along the Syrian border except for the small area controlled by the Free Syrian Army, from which Turkey does not perceive any danger. Another challenge for border security is a structural one, updating the traditional border protection mechanisms of Turkey. Since the major threats are emanating from the violent non-state armed actors who employ both conventional and asymmetric warfare strategies, the traditional bureaucratically cumbersome measures for border security now appear inadequate.<sup>17</sup>

### The Struggle against Foreign Terrorist Fighters Travels

Turkey's military and political struggle with DAESH has three major components which are: preventing FTFs from travelling through the country, enhancing border security and conducting large-scale security raids at home. Firstly, Turkey has adopted measures against the threats directed by FTFs and the related challenges which have emerged at the borders. In terms of the struggle with FTFs, the Turkish approach has four stages: 1) Preventive measures that must be taken by the FTFs country of origin; 2) Establishing Risk Analysis Units at Turkish airports to prevent FTFs from entering into Turkish soil; 3) Making intensive security raids within Turkey to eliminate the terrorists who have somehow managed to enter; 4) Strengthening the physical border security by deployment of more personnel and technological-

ly advanced systems to prevent FTFs from crossing into or returning from Syria. In the past, it was seen that the countries of origin of FTFs did not take the necessary measures which left all the burden of responsibility on the shoulders of Turkey, harming global efforts to destroy DAESH by disrupting coordination and collaboration among the members of the anti- DAESH coalition.<sup>18</sup>

### Consolidating the Security along the Border

Secondly, ensuring and maintaining the safety of the 900 km long Turkish-Syrian border, which has generally obstructed and complicated the maximum security, necessitates hybrid measures that will support and complement each other. In the light of this Turkey has put a new border project into effect which includes building trenches, constructing concrete bases for fence wires, concrete walls, bastion barriers, patrol roads and border lighting. Furthermore, improving the quantity of military personnel and armored vehicles as well as establishing advanced technology systems and modernizing infrastructure alongside the border have also been major objectives.<sup>19</sup> The completion of this ambitious project requires massive resources, both in terms of materials and man-power, as well as a sufficient time period, however the benefits will be seen in the long-term. It will not only become a strong obstacle and a blow against DAESH but also a major barrier for other terrorist organizations operating around Turkey's extensive borders.<sup>20</sup>

18. Ibid., p. 52

19. "Turkey's border security to be boosted by concrete wall, AA, <http://aa.com.tr/en/todays-headlines/turkeys-border-security-to-be-boosted-by-concrete-wall-/639435>; In numbers: Turkey's Syrian border security, *Hurriyet Daily News*, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/in-numbers-turkeys-syrian-border-security-.aspx?pageID=238&nid=92233>

20. Murat Yeşiltaş, "Neighboring A Civil War Turkey's Border Security with Syria", *SETA Policy Report*, October 2015, [http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20151028162016\\_analysis\\_17.pdf](http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20151028162016_analysis_17.pdf); See also Turkey's Contributions's to Anti-Deash Coalition, *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey\\_s-contributions\\_s-to-anti\\_deash-coalition.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-contributions_s-to-anti_deash-coalition.en.mfa)

17. Murat Yeşiltaş at all, Sınırdaki Düşman: Türkiye'nin DAİŞ ile Mücadelesi, *SETA Report*, June 2016, pp. 45-48

### Investigating and Raiding the DAESH Cells & Infrastructure in Homeland

Thirdly, Turkey by conducting large-scale security raids at home has neutralized multiple DAESH elements, including top level members and possible suicide attackers. Thanks to the unceasing and widespread police raids, many significant DAESH cells have been uncovered and some prominent DAESH leaders, such as Yunus Durmaz, were neutralized. The major aims of the operations were to eliminate possible attackers and prevent recruitment efforts in Turkey. The largest cities, İstanbul and Ankara, the border cities of Kilis and Gaziantep as well as the conservative Adıyaman and Bingöl, are the major areas where the group has sought to establish itself.

Before the airport attack, DAESH had proven that it had sufficient capabilities to conduct a catastrophic act of terrorism. After the event, Turkish police immediately reinvestigated a raid that had been conducted ten days previously to discover new connections.<sup>21</sup> Turkish police captured 3 important DAESH members before the airport attack in İstanbul on 18th June 2016. Two of the militants were Chechen and the other a Turkish national who is considered to be the henchman of a DAESH Emir in Iraq. The reports said that the Emir sent the group to perpetrate a sensational attack in Turkey. Security officials seized large amounts of military equipment and many suicide vests in the cell where the militants had stayed. Involvement of foreign nationals (especially veteran Chechens) with a top level organizational chain of command, the existence of critical military equipment, and discovery of DAESH operatives in places such as Pendik and Başakşehir districts of İstanbul is quite telling. Therefore it is clear that the Turkish security and intelligence were aware of the imminent danger posed by DAESH.

21. Beylikdüzü bağlantısı araştırılıyor, *Milliyet*, 1 July 2016, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/beylikduzu-baglantisi-arastiriliyor-gundem-2271492/>; Dehşet planını mont bozdu, *Sabah*, 30 July 2016, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2016/06/30/dehset-planini-mont-bozdu>

Furthermore, Turkish media reported that, thanks to the intelligence sharing by MIT with other institutions, two previous attacks were prevented while casualties in the last one were significantly reduced.<sup>22</sup> The reports stated that the perpetrators in İstanbul were the third suicide team DAESH sent to Turkey recently following the neutralization of the first two teams. According to this, the militants captured on June 18 2016 were the first team and they were planning to attack the LGBT parade in İstanbul on June 19. The second team which consisted of six Iraqis travelled to İstanbul from Mersin where they escaped from police at a check point. Following the combining of intelligence among security officials they were able to co-ordinate their action more effectively resulting in militants being captured in İstanbul with suicide vests, ball bearings and explosive materials.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, at the end of the day, DAESH evidently had alternative plans showing that it has the capacity to rapidly adapt itself to emerging conditions.

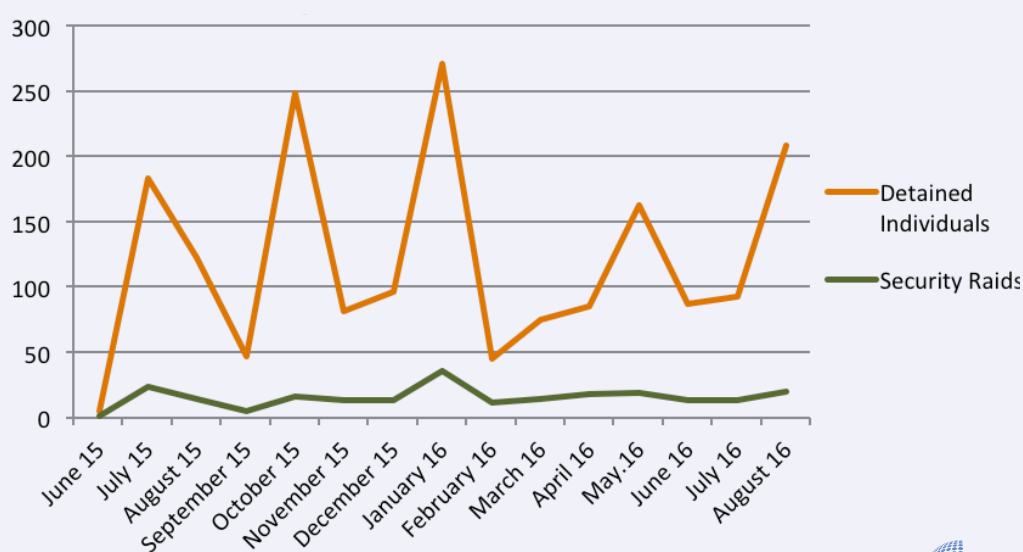
### Contributions to the Global Coalition to Counter DAESH

Before the Atatürk Airport attack, DAESH operatives near the Turkish border and within Turkey were extremely constrained due to the intensive measures taken by the Turkish authorities. Along the Turkish-Syrian border the flow of DAESH militants, equipment and money were pretty much prevented by the Turkish Armed Forces which enhanced its facilities and capacities to control the area. Along with these measures, Turkey has also opened Incirlik Air Base to Anti-DAESH Coalition war planes to operate from when making air strikes. This has a crucial

22. İstihbarat 20 gün önce uyarılmış, 29 June 2016, *CNN Türk*, <http://www.cnntrk.com/turkiye/istihbarat-20-gun-once-uyarmis>; Abdülkadir Selvi, 'Abi hırsıza benziyo takip mi etsek', *Hürriyet*, 30 June 2016, [http://sosyal.hurriyet.com.tr/yazar/abdulkadir-selvi\\_615/abi-hirsiza-benziyo-takip-mi-etsek\\_40123968](http://sosyal.hurriyet.com.tr/yazar/abdulkadir-selvi_615/abi-hirsiza-benziyo-takip-mi-etsek_40123968)

23. Nazif Karaman, Dehşet planını mont bozdu, *Sabah*, 30 June 2016, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2016/06/30/dehset-planini-mont-bozdu#>

FIGURE 2. NUMBER OF SECURITY RAIDS AND DETENDIONS (JANE 15-AUG 16)\*



\*The numbers given are based on media scan and may diverge with official data



importance for the international air campaign because of its close proximity to conflict zones in Syria and the effectiveness of coalition air strikes considerably improved after the jets began taking off from Incirlik.<sup>24</sup> A senior Obama administration official defined the opening of Incirlik as a “game-changer” development. The US deployed its Reaper unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), which have integrated weapon systems, to Incirlik and many F-16 fighter jets and more personnel were transferred from other countries to Turkey. For example, six F-16s and 300 personnel were transferred there from Aviano Air Base in Italy.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the US military personnel in Incirlik have been increased from 1300 to

2500.<sup>26</sup> Before the agreement, coalition war planes were taking off from bases in the Persian Gulf such as al-Udeid in Qatar and al-Dhafra in United Arab Emirates which were too far to the conflict zones and the planes were only able to fly for relatively short periods because of the supply needs, while burning substantially more fuel. With the opening of Incirlik, flight times were significantly increased thanks to the easier refueling logistics while close air support supply capacities to ground forces was also enhanced.<sup>27</sup> Therefore Turkey’s efforts, in particular, rapidly increased the effectiveness of the air operations and in general gradually enhanced the strength and efficiency of the Anti-DAESH coalition, which has confirmed Turkey as a cornerstone country for dismantling and destroying DAESH.

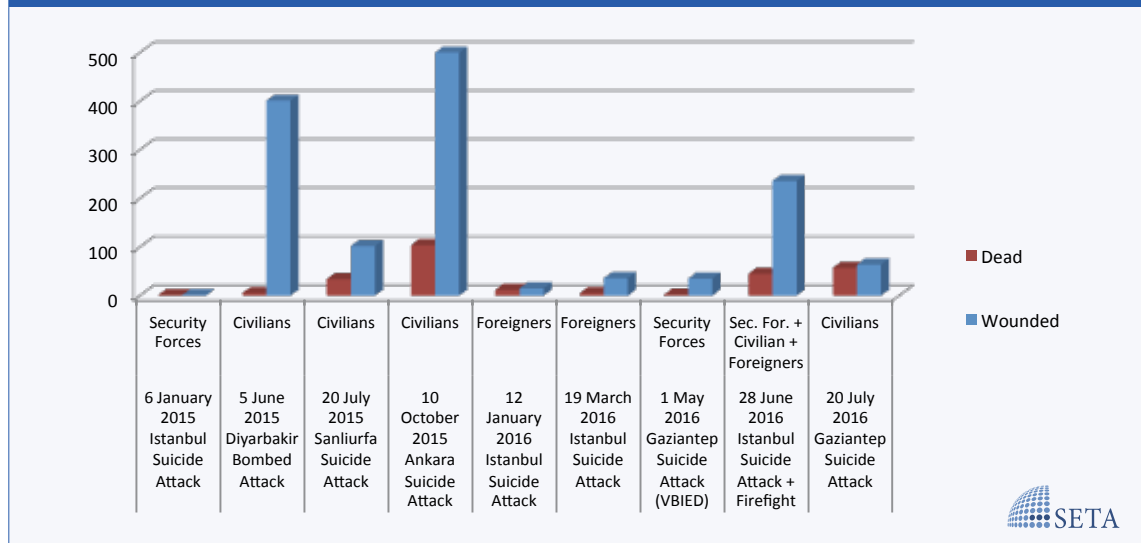
24. Liz Sly and Karen DeYoung, “Turkey agrees to allow U.S. military to use its base to attack Islamic State”, *The Washington Post*, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/turkey-agrees-to-allow-us-military-to-use-its-base-to-attack-islamic-state/2015/07/23/317f23aa-3164-11e5-a879-213078d03dd3\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/turkey-agrees-to-allow-us-military-to-use-its-base-to-attack-islamic-state/2015/07/23/317f23aa-3164-11e5-a879-213078d03dd3_story.html); Verda Özer, “We really can’t succeed against ISIL without Turkey: US”, *Hurriyet Daily News*, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/we-really-cant-succeed-against-isil-without-turkey-us.aspx?PageID=238&NID=86993&NewsCatID=510>

25. Micah Zenko, Is Flying Out of Turkey a “Game-Changer” in Destroying ISIS?, *Newsweek*, 29 August 2015, <http://europe.newsweek.com/flying-out-turkey-game-changer-destroying-isis-332233?rm=eu>

26. Analysts: Turkey Unlikely to Follow Through on Threat to Close Coalition Airbase, VOA News, 23 February 2016, <http://www.voanews.com/a/analysts-turkey-unlikely-to-follow-through-on-threat-to-close-coalition-airbase/3203689.html>

27. Tracy Wilkinson and W.J. Hennigan, Straddling East and West, Turkey is a critical U.S. ally in fight against Islamic State, *Los Angeles Times*, 15 July 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-turkey-us-importance-20160715-snap-story.html>; Micah Zenko, Is Flying Out of Turkey a “Game-Changer” in Destroying ISIS?, *Newsweek*, 29 August 2015, <http://europe.newsweek.com/flying-out-turkey-game-changer-destroying-isis-332233?rm=eu>

FIGURE 3. ISIS BOMB ATTACKS IN TURKEY



## TURKEY'S RESPONSE AFTER THE ATATÜRK AIRPORT ATTACK AND THE DAESH THREAT TODAY

### The Danger of Suicide Bombers

The emergence of DAESH as an immediate critical threat for Turkey reverberates along some crucial developments. First and foremost, the risk of more suicide attacks is high given the details of deciphered DAESH cells in Turkey where large amounts of TNT explosives as well as suicide vests have been captured. On June 30 2016, 8 DAESH militants, belonging to a cell in İzmir and who had been in the Syrian civil war, were arrested. The cell was recruiting online, conducting activities in prayer rooms, collecting financial aid at meetings and trying to transport food from Turkey to DAESH controlled areas in Syria. The leader of the cell Cuma Tombul, was running a bakery which shows how well the militants hide themselves.<sup>28</sup> On 3 July 2016, the risk analysis units, established by Turkey at the airports to implement the no-entry list that

was created to prevent foreign terrorist fighters entering into Turkish soil, took 2 suspects coming from the Ukraine into custody. Among the seized materials from the suspects were thermal scopes for snipers, military camouflages, passports belonging to others and fake IDs.<sup>29</sup> On 9 July in Şanlıurfa, the Turkish military captured two foreign nationals with 15 kg TNT explosives during a routine road control.<sup>30</sup> On 12 July, a significant cell was deciphered in Şanlıurfa where 4 Syrian DAESH militants, along with many suicide vests that were strengthened by ball bearings, TNT explosives, silenced pistols, an AK-47, encrypted phones and fake IDs, were captured. It was argued that the militants were about to carry out a huge attack.<sup>31</sup> As these operations show DAESH somehow continues to acquire sophisticated military equipment necessary for sensational acts in Turkey. Therefore, the risk of suicide attacks is and will be high despite many of the perpetrators being systematically neutralized by Turkish Security Agencies.

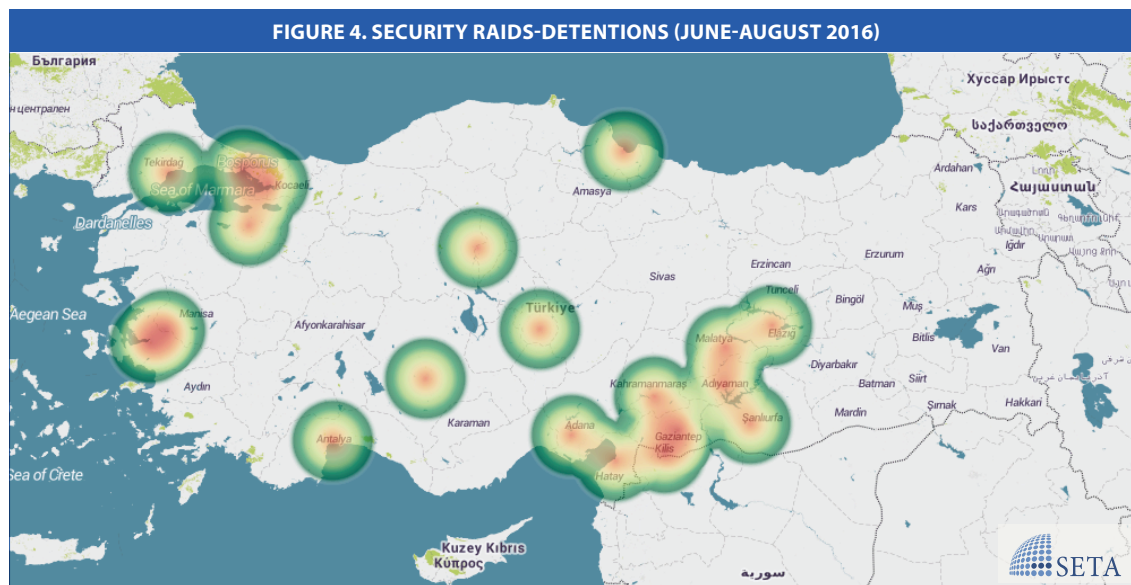
28. DAESH hücrelerine büyük baskın, *Star*, 1 July 2016, <http://haber.star.com.tr/guncel/daesh-hucrelerine-buyuk-baskin/haber-1122324>; İzmir merkezli IŞİD operasyonunda 9 gözaltı, *Habertürk*, 30 June 2016, <http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/1260897-izmir-merkezli-isis-operasyonunda-9-gozalti>

29. Atatürk Havalimanı'nda IŞİD operasyonu, *Gazete Vatan*, 3 July 2016, <http://www.gazetevatan.com/havalimaninda-isis-ci-yakalandi-963303-gundem/>

30. Turkish Armed Forces Chief of Staff, Important Domestic Events, 9 July 2016, <http://www.tsk.tr/OnemliYurticiOlaylar>

31. Şanlıurfada eylem hazırlığındaki 4 IŞİD üyesi yakalandı, 12 July 2016, *NTV*, <http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/sanliurfada-eylem-hazirligindaki-4-isis-uyesi-yakalandi,0iK55ONbg0GL4yb2fARvVQ>

FIGURE 4. SECURITY RAIDS-DETENTIONS (JUNE-AUGUST 2016)



### Threat of Assassinations of Civilians including Public Figures

Secondly, DAESH continues to kill Syrian civilians in Turkey and may begin to target Turkish public figures and high-level bureaucrats. According to the Turkish media, an assassination list which includes the names of politicians and public figures was found in the materials seized from detained DAESH members. On 12 July, 2 DAESH militants assassinated Syrian journalist Ahmed Abülkadir living in Şanlıurfa.<sup>32</sup> He was the editor in chief to *Ayn Vatan* newspaper at the time, covering Raqqa with an anti-DAESH posture. His brother İbrahim Abdülkadir, who also worked in the same newspaper was shot dead by DAESH militants in October 2015. A total of 5 assassination attacks have been carried out by DAESH in Turkey, all against anti-DAESH and anti-regime Syrian activists publishing in Arabic. Interestingly, DAESH has claimed responsibility for all these assassinations in stark contrast to its other acts in Turkey including catastrophic suicide bombings for which it has not claimed any responsibility. On the other

hand, the seizure of an execution list on 14 June from two DAESH militants carrying silenced pistols, intercepted as they were attempting to cross from Syria to Turkey, indicates a new danger. Turkish media reported that the list includes the names of members of parliament and publicly known prominent journalists. According to Turkish media, security sources emphasized that this was the first time silenced pistols were captured as a result of the raids, therefore may signal a shift over DAESH' strategy because of deciphered cells and the consistent elimination of potential suicide bombers.<sup>33</sup>

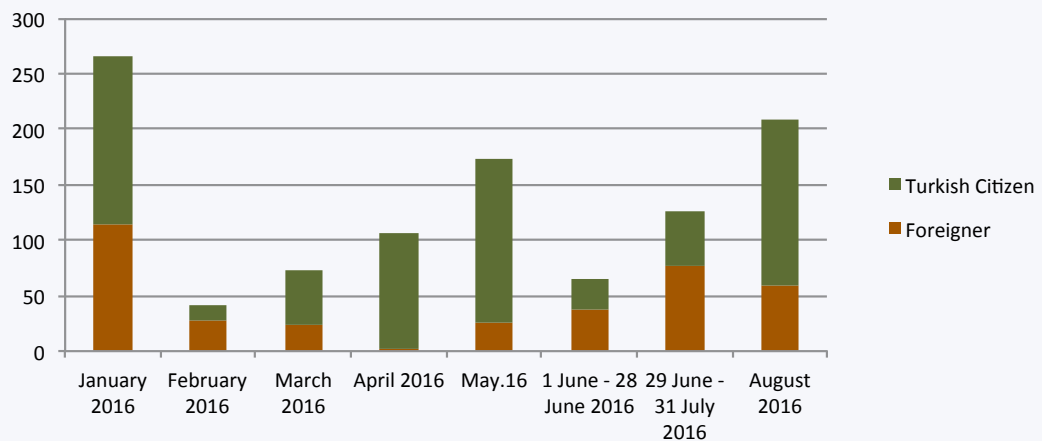
### The Significance of Istanbul

Thirdly, in terms of the location of attacks as well as the facilities and capabilities, it seems that DAESH has intensified its focus on Istanbul. The group's initial attacks were not in Istanbul but implemented in the context of target selection motivation. DAESH chose its attack locations according to where group activities, which it perceived to be pro-PKK, were taking place; namely on 5 June in Diyarbakır, on 20 July in Suruç / Şanlıurfa, and on 10 October in

32. Şanlıurfada Suriyeli Gazeteciye Saldırısı IŞİD Üstlendi, *Milliyet*, 13 June 2016, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/sanliurfa-da-suriyeli-gazeteciye-silahlı-sanliurfa-yerelhaber-1422708/>

33. IŞİD'in infaz timi yakalandı, *Yeni Şafak*, 14 June 2016, <http://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/isidin-infaz-timi-yakalandi-2480149>

FIGURE 5. DETENTIONS BY MILITANT NATIONALITY (JAN-AUG 2016)\*



\*Militants whose country of origin data unavailable counted as Turkish citizen.



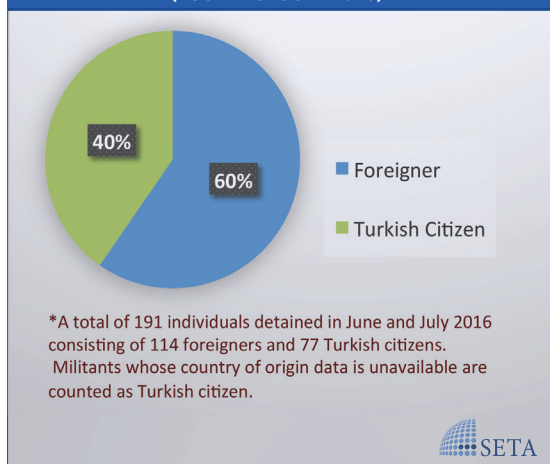
Ulus / Ankara, all in 2015. After these events Istanbul became the symbol of transformation of DAESH motivation when choosing targets. Beginning with the Sultanahmet Bombing on 12 January 2016, DAESH moved from choosing PKK as a target and began to attack foreigners, more specifically tourists, in Turkey. In time, this transformed into an all-out war strategy. Subsequent to the airport attack, Istanbul has once again become the main center of security operations where a total of 61 people have been detained suspected of having links with DAESH. In Istanbul, the Başakşehir district is striking because 4 out of 5 security raids in the city took place there. Although it was already known to be a religiously conservative Istanbul district in which DAESH has been trying to establish itself, the rapid intensification of operations in the town in July may indicate a preparatory process of a new attack by the terrorist group. Most of the detained individuals in Başakşehir are foreign nationals, exceeding the ratio of foreigners taken into custody in other locations, which in turn clearly demonstrates the vulnerability of the area and increases the likelihood that more attacks will be directed from there.

### The Aggravating Problem of Foreign Terrorist Fighters

Fourth, DAESH has begun to send more and more terrorist fighters of a foreign origin into Turkey rather than using Turkish citizens for its attacks and other illegal activities. The number of detained foreign nationals skyrocketed after April 2016 from 3 in April to 25 in May, 38 in June, and 76 in July. Suspects from Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Dagestan, Chechnya, Azerbaijan and Syria are among those detained by Turkish police since the terror incident, pointing to Caucasus connections and possible infrastructure. As a result of this remarkable trend, the balance of foreign national / Turkish citizen terrorists operating in Turkey has substantially changed in favor of the former. The development is said to be for two major reasons, one is domestic and the other is regional. Firstly, the elimination of many significant Turkish DAESH members and their cells following intensive security operations, severely compromising their ability to operate in Turkey. Secondly, DAESH has fallen into a difficult situation both in Iraq and Syria where Raqqa and Mosul Operations are on-going, forcing the organization to seek ways out or adapting to new

conditions at least. In that context DAESH, as its sphere of control is narrowing, may try to dissipate its members throughout the close geography, notably Turkey, Egypt, or Afghanistan.

**FIGURE 6. DETENTIONS BY MILITANT NATIONALITY  
(1 JUNE - 31 JULY 2016)\***



### DAESH Operatives in Southern Turkey

Fifth, DAESH accelerated its efforts to gain ground in Turkey both materially and spiritually. Şanlıurfa, a border city in southern Turkey, has come to attention recently as DAESH is trying to establish and expand its infrastructure there. In Şanlıurfa, police captured large amounts of TNT explosives along with highly sophisticated weapons such as assault rifle AK-47, silenced pistol and suicide vests in July.<sup>34</sup> DAESH has lost its previous capacity in its traditional operating bases of Gaziantep, Adıyaman and Kilis, although they still have some presence there; thus it is adapting to the changing environment by pursuing new 'breeding grounds' in Turkey such as Şanlıurfa while distracting focus from traditional zones to find an opportunity to reestablish itself as soon as possible.

34. Şanlıurfada DAESH üyesi yakalandı, *Anadolu Ajansı*, 5 July 2016, <http://aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/sanliurfada-daes-uyesi-yakalandi/603034>; Turkish Armed Forces Chief of Staff, Important Domestic Events, 9 July 2016, <http://www.tsk.tr/OnemliYurticiOlaylar>; Şanlıurfada DAESH suikastçıları ve canlı bomba yakalandı, *Sabah*, 12 June 2016, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/webtv/turkiye/sanliurfada-daes-suikastcilar-ve-canli-bomba-yakalandi>;

On the other hand, one of the most important pillars of the DAESH threat to Turkey has recently been contained and eliminated. Persistent DAESH attacks with Katyusha missiles against Kilis, the southern city of Turkey which is neighboring northern Aleppo, have been halted with joint efforts between TAF and the International Coalition. The Turkish Chief of Staff has made several of announcements since the end of May that many DAESH strongholds and operatives who were about to attack from Syria to Turkey have been identified and destroyed as a result of joint operations which consisted of Turkish artillery pounding and Anti-DAESH Coalition air strikes.

## FROM KILLING THE MOSQUITOS TO DRAINING THE SWAMP: OPERATION EUPHRATES SHIELD

### The Coup Attempt

The Coup Attempt in Turkey on July 15 disrupted Turkey's military struggle against DAESH at home and abroad for a short period of time. The breakdown of army chain of command, the deployment of all police forces against a possible new military attempt against the government, and the shutdown of Incirlik Air Base for a few days to air operations due to the security controls caused a standstill in the fight. However, after some 10 days, Turkish police and TAF restarted domestic raids and shelling alongside the border, as coalition jets also returned to conducting their strikes in Syria. Yet, the problems related with the extradition of Fetullah Gülen and the US rejection to step back over supporting PKK affiliated PYD in Syria are extremely jeopardizing Turkey's national security and territorial integrity, inhibiting the amelioration of Turkish-US relations.

The 15th July coup attempt and the subsequent developments in Turkey's foreign relations may lead to new dynamics over the struggle against DAESH. Unfading doubts within Turkish society over the US role in the coup attempt, Western inaction to positively support the Turkish government, and the Western media's general attitude toward the coup and aftermath purge cast a shadow over Turkey's relations with the West. Turkish-NATO relations, Incirlik Air Base and the massive nuclear weapons cache deployed there came into question among some circles both in Turkey and in the West. In this context, whether Turkey's cooperation with the Anti-DAESH Coalition will be influenced by these problems or not will be closely related with finding a common ground where significant sensitivities of Turkey should be ensured. In the current climate the Jarablus initiative will test this.

While tensions are rising with the allies in the West, the gap between Turkish and Russian positions over Syria and Iraq are starting to be narrowed. Previous to the coup attempt, Turkish-Russian relations were already in a rising trend when rapprochement took place after Turkish President sent a letter to his Russian counterpart, stating that Turkey was "sorry" about the shooting down of Russian SU-24 on September 24, 2015.<sup>35</sup> On the night of 15th July, Vladimir Putin was the first foreign leader to call President Erdogan, stating his support to the Turkish government against the putschists. Following this Erdogan, as Putin's invitee, visited St. Petersburg and met with him on 9 August when the two leaders discussed cooperation opportunities on varying issues from security to the economy.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, Turkey has asked Russia for cooperation against the "common enemy" DAESH in Syria as

well as granting Turkish jets safety over Syrian air space which was closed to them by highly capable S-400 missiles after the crisis of 24 September.<sup>37</sup> This was a major positive step given the high risk of conflict between the two countries until recently and regarding how different Turkish and Russian views are of the anti-DAESH fight currently going on in Syria.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, as Turkey has regained the ability to conduct air strikes in Syria, its own efforts against DAESH and with the Anti-DAESH Coalition will be accelerated. The Turkish backed FSA hybrid operation into Syria demonstrates that relations between Turkey and Russia as well as Iran have shifted towards a more positive footing.

### **Gaziantep Wedding Attack: Change Becomes Urgency**

The ruthless attack at a traditional henna night in Gaziantep was the last stage of DAESH attacks to provoke and divide Turkish society, spreading its war from the state towards society to create an outrage both at governmental and societal levels. Therefore, Turkey understood that the current fight against the terror group was insufficient to prevent attacks and protect the public and it moved up to a higher level of activity to eliminate all the threats coming from outside the country.

The Gaziantep attack, rather than following with the trend of DAESH attacks in Turkey, indicated a return to the initial attack motivation of the group, targeting the societal harmony of Turkey, since Kurdish citizens with different viewpoints<sup>39</sup> were chosen as the target. The or-

35. "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'dan Putin'e mektup", *NTV*, [http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/cumhurbaskani-erdogandan-putine-mektup,dAYuoHnC3kuIipJzh\\_fn2A](http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/cumhurbaskani-erdogandan-putine-mektup,dAYuoHnC3kuIipJzh_fn2A)

36. "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan-Putin görüşmesi", *Sabah*, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2016/08/10/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-putin-gorusmesi>

37. Turkey offers Russia joint operations against ISIL, Al Jazeera, 11 August 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/turkey-offers-russia-joint-operations-isil-160811110213077.html>

38. Burhanettin Duran, "Turkey's New Russian Policy", *Daily Sabah*, August 13, 2016, <http://www.dailysabah.com/columns/duran-burhanettin/2016/08/13/turkeys-new-russian-policy>

39. While People's Democratic Party (HDP) said the attack was against the wedding of their members, it is stated that the groom's father is a member of Justice and Development Party (AK Party). See: Süruç'la aynı bomba, *Yeni Şafak*, 23 August 2016, <http://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/surucla-ayni-bomba-2515695>

ganizational decision to realize the attack seems to have been debated long before and the target was selected specifically. The contents of the indictment into the Ankara Bombing of 10 October 2015 includes messages between top level DAESH members about “appropriate” attacks in Turkey, indicating that DAESH operatives in Turkey are engaged in a tight chain of command with the group leaders in Syria or Iraq. Yunus Durmaz, who was considered to be one of the ringleaders of Diyarbakır, Suruç and Ankara bombings and who blew himself up in police raid on May 19, asked his “Emir” about making sensational attacks in weddings as he underlined that many “pro-PKK weddings” were happening at the time. He further pointed out that although many people attend weddings because of family ties, most of the participants are PKK members and in the weddings PKK songs and anthems were being sung.<sup>40</sup> The selection of perceived pro-PKK groups by DAESH with the motivation of attacking PKK in the past has demonstrated that when DAESH thinks the right time has come it will attack within a specific context. The perpetrator and the network in which they were involved for this particular attack has yet to be identified, in contrast to the rapid resolving of previous attacks, therefore it is not known clearly whether the perpetrator(s) are professional or have been in Syria. Although some of the witnesses stated otherwise<sup>41</sup>, President Erdoğan underscored that the bomber was a child, 12-14 years old.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, the possibility of the exploitation of children by DAESH, as suicide attackers in Turkey, indicates

how the group has embraced the most brutal methods and emphasizes the increased and more complex requirements on the side of the security institutions to be able to deal with these dangers. On the other hand, the type of the attack was suicide bombing, the 8th in Turkey by DAESH and the bomb mechanism was same as the mechanisms used in the Suruç and Ankara Bombings. More specifically the usage of C-4 explosives which were made more lethal by embedding 2-3 cm iron pieces and nails, while also adding glycerin into the mechanism to expand the fire range originated by the bomb.<sup>43</sup>

**The possibility of the exploitation of children by DAESH, as suicide attackers in Turkey, indicates how the group has embraced the most brutal methods and emphasizes the increased and more complex requirements on the side of the security institutions to be able to deal with these dangers.**

### Turkey to Take the Lead in Northern Syria

Operation Euphrates Shield is the culmination and the latest phase of Turkey's fight against DAESH. In a sense, the operation materialized out of Turkey's desperation to ensure its national security against the terror threats posed by both DAESH and PKK. Turkey suffered eleven bombings undertaken by both DAESH and PKK in the last year alone, which have together claimed more than three hundred lives.<sup>44</sup>

40. Ankara Bombing Indictment, 2016, Turkish Attorney General of the Republic for Ankara

41. Damadin annesi: Canlı bomba çocuk değil yetişkindi, *Timeturk*, 17 Ekim 2016, <http://www.timeturk.com/damadin-annesi-canli-bomba-cocuk-degil-yetiskindi/haber-262074>

42. Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, blamed on Islamic State and said had been carried out by a child of between 12 and 14 years old. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/20/several-dead-in-suspected-terrorist-blast-at-wedding-in-turkey>

43. “Turkey: Suicide bomber kills more than 50 at wedding”, Al Jazeera, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/injured-blast-hits-wedding-hall-gaziantep-160820204150494.html>

44. “Ankara saldırısını yine TAK üstlendi”, *Hürriyet*, 17 March 2016, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ankara-saldirisini-yine-tak-ustlendi-40070802>; “Ankara saldırısını TAK üstlendi”, *Hürriyet*, 19 February 2016, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ankara-saldirisini-tak-ustlendi-40057700>; “Davutoğlu: Sultanahmet'teki saldırının faili yabancı uyruklu DEAŞ üyesi”, BBC Türkçe, 12 January 2016, [http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/01/160112\\_sultanahmet\\_patlama](http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/01/160112_sultanahmet_patlama).

Two of the bombings, namely Atatürk International Airport and Gaziantep attacks, were especially important, as they radically transformed the dimension of the threat posed by DAESH to Turkey's national security. In a way, these two attacks increased the urgency of Turkey's active military engagement with DAESH in Syrian territory, the assessment of Turkey's security institutions established that the perpetrators of both attacks were found to be connected to DAESH in Syria.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, what also made the current military operation indispensable was the inefficacy of the crackdown on DAESH cells within Turkey, it was not enough to bring DAESH attacks to an end in the country. Turkey aims to eliminate the threat of attacks from DAESH, which are posed through multiple dimensions, by undertaking Operation Euphrates Shield. One of these threats has been towards the border security of Turkey.

### Two of the bombings, namely Atatürk International Airport and Gaziantep attacks, were especially important, as they radically transformed the dimension of the threat posed by DAESH to Turkey's national security

DAESH has been violating the border between Turkey and Syria in order to secure its own foreign fighter flow, smuggle weapons and explosives for its terror attacks inside Turkey and also for its logistical purposes. For a while

Turkey shared a borderline with DAESH, approximately 100 kilometer long, before Free Syrian Army (FSA) units backed by Turkish artillery started a series of offensives against DAESH from Azaz towards Jarablus. This series of offensives achieved very limited success, since the FSA units could only clear a modest part of the borderline between Azaz and Jarablus of DAESH before the Operation Euphrates Shield. In this pre-Euphrates Shield period, the FSA units could not fully consolidate their control over the territories captured from DAESH because of the latter's relentless blowbacks and it took months for the former to capture those territories. On the other hand, thanks to Turkey's latest campaign, Turkey is more than ever closer to clearing its border areas of DAESH. Along with FSA units, the Turkish army has consolidated its control over Jarablus and surrounding villages and also in one week cleared around a 20 kilometer length of the border from DAESH control.

Turkey is also aiming to push DAESH southwards as far as possible after clearing its border with Operation Euphrates Shield because another threat posed by DAESH to Turkey is its periodical rocket attacks into Turkey's border towns and deliberate attacks on border posts.<sup>46</sup> Thus Turkey had to distance DAESH militants and their armed presence from its border in order to exceed the range of the latter's weapons. DAESH has fired more than twenty rockets into Turkey's border towns and targeted the latter's border posts more than ten times.<sup>47</sup> DAESH carried out these attacks in order to deter Turkey from both being a part of international anti-DAESH

45. "Gaziantep'te terör saldırısı", Aljazeera Türk, 22 August 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/gaziantep-te-teror-saldirisi>; "Havalimanı saldırısını düzenleyen 2 teröristin kimliği belirlendi", Habertürk, 2 July 2016, <http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/1261762-havalimani-saldirisini-duzenleyen-2-teroristin-kimligi-belirlendi>; Burcu Purtul Uçar, "Havalimanı saldırısı: 1 numara Suriye'ye kaçmış", *Hürriyet*, 5 July 2016, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/havalimani-saldirisi-1-numara-suriyeye-kacmis-40130859>.

46. Selin Girit, "Roket saldırısı altındaki Kilisli: Sesimizi duyan yok mu?", BBC Türkçe, 9 May 2016, [http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/05/160509\\_kilis\\_roket](http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/05/160509_kilis_roket); "İŞİD'den Gaziantep Karkamış'ta sınır karakolu yakınına havanlı saldırı", *Karar*, 28 April 2016, <http://www.karar.com/gundem-haberleri/karakola-havan-topu-104219>.

47. Murat Yeşiltaş et al. "Sınırdaki Düşman: Türkiye'nin DAİŞ'le Mücadelesi", *SETA Report*, 9 June 2016, <http://seta.org.tr/sinirdaki-dusman-turkiyenin-dais-ile-mucadelesi/rapor/39457>.

coalition and also as retaliation for the crack-down on DAESH cells within Turkey and Turkey's support to FSA units fighting DAESH in Syria. Turkey has not been able to prevent these attacks so far despite a number of security measures undertaken on the border.<sup>48</sup> Even on the fifth day of Operation Euphrates Shield, Turkey's border towns were targeted by DAESH rockets apparently in retaliation for the operation.<sup>49</sup> It is clear that these attacks will not halt until the DAESH armed presence is distanced enough from the border, confirmed by a recent rocket attack of DAESH on Turkey's border town Kilis, which caused the death of one policeman and injury of two soldiers.<sup>50</sup> This attack came on the fortieth day of the Operation Euphrates Shield, because despite the progress achieved by Turkish armed forces and rebels; DAESH has still not been pushed away sufficiently far from the Turkish border, hence they are still capable of firing rockets into Turkish border towns.

As of now, although Turkey could not find a determinate solution to stop DAESH's rocket attacks altogether, it has succeeded in eliminating a considerable part of the threats posed by DAESH. Since Turkey cleared its border of DAESH completely, border violation by DAESH, be it in the form of foreign fighters or weapons and other equipment, is and will no longer be an issue. On the other hand, in order for Turkey to stop DAESH's rocket attacks for good, it has to take al-Bab, which is at a distance from which Katyusha-type rockets could not reach Turkish territory. Thus, until Turkey and the rebels take al-Bab, DAESH' rocket attacks can be expected to continue.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was seen that Turkey's increasingly harsh measures against DAESH have been the foremost reason for DAESH attacking Turkey. On the other hand Turkey has been successful in strictly constraining DAESH operatives within Turkey and along the Turkish-Syrian border. Before the airport attack, Turkish security and intelligence officials, to a certain extent, were aware of the likelihood of a catastrophic DAESH attack, as the police raids in June showed. In the process, Turkey neutralized many significant DAESH cells and members in the country, however it could not completely eliminate all DAESH operatives who have the capabilities to undertake such sophisticated attacks. Since the perpetrators of the airport attack entered into Turkey shortly before the incident, it is not possible to say whether prospective DAESH sleeper cells were involved in the attack or not. The airport attack affirmed that the DAESH threat against Turkey has reached a critical peak. The organizational planning of the attack was new. The profiles and connections of the perpetrators and the ringleaders have demonstrated that the organizational chain of command was very tight, compared to the previous attacks. Thanks to the heroic effort of Turkish airport security, the terrorists were not able to implement their real plan which probably included hostage taking besides throwing grenades, firing with AK-47s and Glockes as well as blowing themselves up in more crowded zones of the airport. On the other hand, it is striking that the evolution of the features of DAESH's Turkey attacks and the conceptualization of Turkey in DAESH magazines *Konstantiniyye* and *Dabıq* are expressive. They endorsed and complement each other, indicating the acts of the organization were deliberative and well-studied. In the aftermath of the airport attack, Turkish security raids rapidly increased, tripling the number of detained peo-

48. "Kilis, 'Serhat' ve 'Korkut'a emanet", *Milliyet*, 22 May 2016, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/kilis-serhat-ve-korkut-a-emanet-gundem-2249488/>.

49. "İŞİD Kilis'i roketle vurdu: 2'si çocuk 6 yaralı", *Cumhuriyet*, 29 August 2016, [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/592576/ISiD\\_Kilis\\_i\\_roketle\\_vurdu\\_\\_2\\_si\\_cocuk\\_6\\_yarali.html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/592576/ISiD_Kilis_i_roketle_vurdu__2_si_cocuk_6_yarali.html).

50. "Kilis'e roket mermisi atıldı", *Al Jazeera Türk*, 2 October 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/kilise-roket-mermisi-atildi-0>.

ple from 65 in June to 191 in July. Istanbul is the main center of security raids targeting DAESH. In these operations, Turkish police have seized large amounts of TNT explosives and suicide vests, lessening DAESH's capabilities for making future attacks. Furthermore, DAESH seems to be pursuing a new infrastructure in Turkey. Close to Turkey's border with Syria, the city of Şanlıurfa may become a place where DAESH is trying to establish a new infrastructure to direct the attention away from its traditional hotbeds of activity, Gaziantep and Kilis.

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### **Operation Euphrates Shield aims at eliminating the multi-dimensional threats posed by DAESH to Turkey and it has the potential to do so.**

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Launching irritating, rather than lethal, missile attacks from northern Aleppo towards Kilis was an important instrument in the hands of DAESH to provoke Turkey to intervene into Syria at inappropriate times. However, these attacks were halted at the end of the May through the joint efforts of TAF and coalition jets. In terms of foreign policy, the lack of reaction of Turkey's NATO allies as well as the Western media against the coup attempt of 15th July and the subsequent attitude of the West created disappointment and disillusionment in Turkey's so called allies. On the other hand, a rapid rapprochement has occurred between Russia and Turkey. Together, these developments may change the nature of Turkey's fight against DAESH and shift the dynamics in the Syrian civil war. Finally, DAESH, by bombing a wedding ceremony in Gaziantep, once again put its classic strategy in place in Turkey where it is targeting a real or perceived

ethnic group in order to harm Turkey's stability and recruit among anti-PKK Kurds. DAESH has tried Turkey's patience with the Gaziantep attack which led the government to clearly understand that struggle with DAESH must rise upto a new level, intervention to Jarablus. Operation Euphrates Shield is the latest phase of Turkey's long fight against DAESH. Security measures undertaken by Turkey so far such as physical security measures on the border and police operations within the country against DAESH cells could not fully eliminate the threats posed by DAESH. Operation Euphrates Shield aims at eliminating the multi-dimensional threats posed by DAESH to Turkey and it has the potential to do so.

Turkey's fight against DAESH is not limited to its own national boundaries and Syria anymore. Its fight against DAESH has now reached a regional level and Turkey's willingness to join the Mosul Operation confirms this. Therefore, Turkey is increasingly getting involved in a regional fight against DAESH both on the national scale and in the Iraqi and Syrian theatres of war.

### **Recommendations**

- As Turkey gradually increases its struggle with DAESH, it should be noted that this provokes the latter to attack the former. In particular Turkey's military engagement into the war against DAESH on the ground may rapidly escalate the risk the group exposes to Turkey. Therefore, all the preventive measures must be taken as soon as possible against likely aggressions by DAESH.
- It was seen that Turkish intelligence discovered much of DAESH infrastructure and movement of operatives, however not all of it. In that context, intelligence efforts must be improved to provide maximum protection.
- Turkey must thoroughly investigate whether DAESH sleeper cells exist in the country. Those discovered must be immediately eliminated.

- The features of the airport attack have demonstrated that DAESH may realize catastrophic attacks against Turkey with hybrid tactics (combination of bombs, assault rifles, grenades, and hostage-taking) in the coming period.
- The Airport Attack has proven that the organizational chain of command in DAESH originated suicide attacks in Turkey has been tight and high level. Thus, cutting the communication channels between militants and leadership is essential for inhibiting further attacks.
- It appeared that DAESH attacks in Turkey have remarkable similarities and continuities with their published Turkish language journal *Konstantiniyye*. Thus, carefully analyzing the journal – to understand their evolving motivation, as well as target and location selection - may provide predictions and insights about possible forthcoming attacks of the group in Turkey.
- Security raids in and around İstanbul must be made more often, while intelligence efforts around the city must be improved, since both hosting the most attacks and the large-scale security raids, İstanbul has obviously been the primary target of DAESH to establish infrastructure, expand it with a decentralization strategy from Syria, and make devastating attacks in the city.
- Turkey must take necessary measures at locations where outdoor activities such as meetings, protests, or weddings are being held. In this context, increasing the controls at the entrances, restricting these activities to be conducted at specified safe locations and creating awareness within the participants of these activities may help hindering future brutal attacks like the one in Gaziantep.
- Complete elimination of DAESH originated missile threat into Turkish soil requires clearing of the group from the border back to a certain distance. Operation Euphrates Shield must ensure this as one of its primary aims.
- The US must cooperate by all means with the Turkish Armed Forces and the Free Syrian Army within the Operation Euphrates Shield. It is only in this way that dismantling and destroying of DAESH without precipitating new troubles can be a realistic goal.
- The remaining DAESH -held area between Jarablus and Cobanbey (Al-Rai) should be cleared by the FSA units backed by the Turkish Army as soon as possible for DAESH threats to border security to be avoided.
- Al-Bab should be captured by the FSA units backed by the Turkish Army as soon as possible in order to keep the DAESH armed presence away from the Turkish border. Thereby DAESH rocket attacks into Turkey's border towns and border posts can be prevented.
- Both Turkish Army units and FSA units accompanying them should be reinforced with more weaponry and manpower in order to control and consolidate the newly captured territories from DAESH.
- Lastly, military operations against DAESH in Mosul and Iraq are likely to create a “DAESH without land”, which would unleash a huge wave of FTFs from DAESH ranks into Turkey. In order to stem this flow of FTFs, border security measures should be undertaken more meticulously than ever.

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**T**his report aims to analyze Turkey's fight against DAESH, with an emphasis on the processes of continuities and ruptures on the side of DAESH, and the responses given to it that were witnessed. The report firstly explains the evolution of the DAESH threat up until the airport attack. In the second part, it analyzes the fundamental features of the airport attack, underscoring the new tactics DAESH implemented. The third part assesses the security measures Turkey has taken and their effectiveness before and after the airport attack. Finally, the fourth and the last part points out how the wedding attack ended Turkey's patience, how the implications of foreign policy change affect the struggle with DAESH, and the objectives and the possible outcomes of the Euphrates Shield Operation.



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