

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نېاشد تن من مېباد بدين بوم وېر زنده يک تن مېباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهيم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهيم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/16/how-turkeys-military-launched-a-well-planned-coup-against-presid/>

How Turkey's military launched coup against President Erdogan and government

Peter Foster, EUROPE EDITOR

16 July 2016 • 1:18am



Protesters stand on an armoured vehicle in Istanbul.

Even before soldiers appeared on Istanbul's Bosphorus Bridge and tanks were positioned at the entry and exit points for Ataturk Airport on Friday night, there had been a sense of unease in the air in the Turkish city.

On a warm, sunny day, Gabriel Turner, a 23-year-old management consultant from north London who was on holiday in Istanbul, had been strolling through the city and remarked on how many police seemed to be patrolling the streets

"I thought that was normal, but the two Turkish girls I was with told me it wasn't," he told The Telegraph on Friday night. "We were walking around the centre of Istanbul; at the Grand Bazaar there were police at every entrance and exit with lots of guns."

A few hours later, at about 8pm, a police helicopter was seen buzzing low over the rooftops, as if it was searching for something – another sign perhaps of what was to come – but it was not until nearly 10.30pm that the true import of the military manoeuvres became clear.

Suddenly in the thriving heart of Istanbul, where friends had gathered for a Friday night out, everyone was looking at their phones. Word was filtering out: Turkey was once again subject to a military coup.

With Turkey's increasingly authoritarian president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, away from the city on a holiday, disgruntled elements of the Turkish security services had apparently moved to seize control of key assets in Istanbul in a bid to overthrow the government.



Low-flying jets seen in Ankara amid military coup attempt Play! 00:45

"We went inside a cafe and everyone was on their phones looking worried, texting. Lots of people were running to catch a ferry, because the bridges were shutting and people wanted to get home. Then policemen came out of the ferries on their Walkie-Talkies, looking very alert," Mr Turner said.

It was, apparently, a carefully planned and co-ordinated operation with forces from a section of the Turkish security apparatus moving in to occupy strategic choke points in the city, including the bridges, the state television station and the airport.

In an apparent show of force, shortly after 10.40pm local time, Turkish F-16 fighter-jets were sent screaming across the skyline of the capital, Ankara, just a few hundred feet above the rooftops, bringing home the reality of what was happening.

“Right now in the skies of Ankara fighter-jets flying low,” posted Marina Lourenco, a Portuguese human rights worker visiting the city. “Please let this be some sort of training, I’m scared.”

At the same time Bosphorus and Fatih bridges in Istanbul were closed by the gendarmerie – a branch of the Turkish military dedicated to internal security – with traffic travelling from Asia into Europe halted, while vehicles from the European side were allowed to pass.



Police approach soldiers at the Bosphorus bridge in Istanbul.

Minutes later the sense of panic deepened as pictures of tanks appearing at Istanbul's Ataturk Airport began flashing over social media, as troops moved in on the state broadcaster, reportedly seizing mobile phones of all staff on the premises.

An hour after internet air-traffic monitoring stations had reported unexplained congestion and flight delays at Ataturk Airport, Reuters news agency confirmed that Turkey's largest airport had been closed to all flights.

Then came the official declaration that Turkey was now under military rule of a “Peace Council”, with the breakaway branch of the Turkish military issuing a formal statement, promising to ensure the safety of the population, and attacking Mr Erdogan for eroding the rule of law.

"The power in the country has been seized in its entirety," they said in a statement read on NTV television, without giving further details. The military's website appeared to have been shut down, with Twitter, Facebook and YouTube also blocked shortly after 11pm.

“There are reports of clashes between the police and the army,” Dorian Jones, a British journalist based in Istanbul, told Sky News, adding that there were also reports that police guarding the presidential palace had been disarmed.

“I have been speaking to various friends across the city, some are reporting that they are hearing gunfire in the streets,” he added.

The sense of chaos deepened minutes later as the Turkish state news agency reported that the country's top general was being “held hostage” at military HQ.

“General Hulusi Akar has been taken hostage by a group in the military who attempted an uprising,” the agency said, citing “credible” but unnamed sources.



Turkish soldiers stay with weapons at Taksim square. CREDIT: AFP

The rebels' plans were clearly not complete, however, with Binali Yildirim, the recently installed prime minister of Turkey, countering the claims of a coup and ordering security forces to “do what is necessary” to suppress the takeover.

"Some people illegally undertook an illegal action outside of the chain of command," he said. "We are working on the possibility of an attempt (of a coup). We will not allow this attempt."

Out on the streets, amid the confusion and uncertainty, reactions to the night's stunning and fast-moving events differed wildly.

Revellers enjoying a Friday night beer in the Taksim district of the city hurried home, while dozens lined up at every ATM in the upmarket Cihangir neighbourhood to fill their wallets for fear that the banks would soon close as reports showed the Turkish Lira sinking by 5 per cent on the news.

Soldiers surrounded Taksim Square, appearing calm, but while some people shouted in anger at them, others broke out in applause and chanted the name of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the Turkish Republic's founder.

"The current government is so bad, a lot of people expected a military takeover. I don't know if I'm happy about this, but it can't be worse," said Murat, who applauded the soldiers. Another woman shouted, laughing: "The AKP is finished!" A young woman screamed: "Traitors!"

The divide in reaction might hint at what is to come. Few expected a military coup, as, after decades of military rule in the second half of the 1950s, public opinion is considered as unfavourable to a takeover, but they spoke to the increasingly weak position of Mr Erdogan.

A source from the presidential office told Reuters that Mr Erdogan was "safe", but he was forced to address his country via Skype from his holiday location in the south of the country in Marmaris.

Nearly two hours after the coup began, Mr Erdogan appeared on CNN Turkey over a FaceTime video connection held up to the camera by the news anchor.

The coup attempt would fail, he said in these least presidential of circumstances, warning that those behind it would pay a "heavy price" in the courts, blaming the move on a "parallel structure".

But even as he spoke, tanks were seen rumbling forward outside the parliament in the Ankara, the private Dogan news agency reported, while strong blasts were heard across the city as jets – Nato jets – continued to scream overhead, their afterburners lighting up the night sky.