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## 6,000 detained from Turkish army, judiciary in probe into failed coup attempt

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A crackdown on the military and the judiciary in the wake of a failed coup attempt has led to the detention of thousands of soldiers and judges and prosecutors, including commanders and top court members.

Justice Minister Bekir Bozdağ on July 17 said around 6,000 suspects, including at least 2,839 soldiers and thousands of judiciary members, have been detained as part of a wide-scale

operation launched following the deadly coup attempt initiated by a group of soldiers late on July 15.

“There are currently around 6,000 detentions. It will surpass 6,000. The legal process on these will continue,” said Bozdağ.

Suspects are being charged with “membership of an armed terrorist organization” and “attempting to overthrow the government of the Turkish Republic using force and violence or attempting to completely or partially hinder its function.”

The terrorist organization is allegedly led by the U.S.-based Islamic scholar Fethullah Gülen, a friend turned foe of the Turkish government.

The arrest warrants target two members of the Constitutional Court, Alparslan Altan and Erdal Tercan, 48 members of the Council of State, and 140 members of the Supreme Court of Appeals.

The detention of 2,745 judicial and administrative judges and prosecutors was ordered after they were suspended from duty by the Supreme Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK) early on June 16.

Many commanders have also been detained and some of them were later arrested.

Among the most significant names detained was the chief military assistant to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Col. Ali Yazıcı; the commander of the 2nd Army, Gen. Adem Huduti; the executive officer and Malatya Garrison Commander Avni Angun; and the commander of the 3rd Army, Gen. Erdal Öztürk.

Air Forces Commander Akın Öztürk was also detained on suspicion of masterminding the coup attempt, according to multiple reports.

In addition, Adana İncirlik 10th Adana Tanker Base Commander Gen. Bekir Ercan was among those detained.

The jets that hit Ankara were reportedly supported by Turkish tanker aircrafts based at the İncirlik Air Base, which is also being used by the U.S.-led coalition in the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Police also detained eight Air Force generals suspected of being appointed to the top “coup command posts” if the failed attempt had succeeded, at Istanbul’s Sabiha Gökçen Airport late on July 16.

In the Aegean province of İzmir, Aegean Army Deputy Commander Brig. Mamduh Hakbilken and Foça Marine Amphibious Force Brigadier Commander Commodore Halil İbrahim Yıldız were among those detained.

Meanwhile operations in Turkey’s eastern and southeastern provinces also took place, with Brig. Arif Seddar Afşar in Bitlis, Brig. Yunus Kotaman in Bingöl, Brig. Abdülkerim Ünlü in Tunceli,

Brig. Ahmet Şimşek in Siirt, and Maj. Gen. Halil İbrahim Ergin in Hakkari all being detained.

On July 17, meanwhile, an operation was carried out on the Istanbul Gendarmerie Commandership, with police searching Istanbul Provincial Gendarmerie Commander Staff Col. Gürcan Sercan's office.

Several other provincial gendarmerie commanders were also detained as part of the operations throughout Turkey.

Eight generals, namely Brig. İrfan Can, Maj. Gen. İmdat Bahri Biber, Maj. Gen. Fethi Alpay, Maj. Gen. Haluk Sahar, Maj. Gen. Mehmet Özlü, Brig. Ahmet Biçer, Maj. Gen. Şaban Umut and Maj. Gen. Serdar Gülbaş were detained.

Meanwhile, the general assembly of the HSYK decided to end the membership of five of its judges who were facing detention demands from the Ankara Chief Prosecutor's Office, while it also cut short the vacations of some other judges and prosecutors.

The Bakırköy Prosecutor's Office in Istanbul ordered the detention, in line with the HSYK's demand, of some 140 judges and prosecutors on duty at the Bakırköy, Küçükçekmece and district administrative courts early on July 17.

At least 290 people were killed and thousands of others were wounded in the coup attempt.

People took to the streets throughout Turkey on the evening of July 15 with shots being heard inside the General Staff headquarters in Ankara and a helicopter firing at people on the ground.

While a group of soldiers then took control of state broadcaster TRT and the General Staff headquarters in Ankara, troops and tanks blocked the Bosphorus and Fatih Sultan Mehmet bridges linking Asia and Europe in Istanbul.

An explosion was heard at the police special operations center in Gölbaşı, south of Ankara, shortly after Yıldırım announced that an "attempt to stage a coup" was happening during a live TV broadcast.

Chief of General Staff Gen. Hulusi Akar was held hostage by pro-coup soldiers until he was rescued on June 16. The coup attempt was confirmed nation-wide when the TRT building was raided by a group of soldiers and a news anchor was forced to read a declaration from the coup leaders, who had named themselves the "Peace at Home Committee," claiming to have taken control of the country.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan later addressed the country on CNN Türk via a mobile telephone, urging people to "take to the streets" to resist the coup and defend democracy. After the president's call thousands of people headed to Istanbul's bridges and Atatürk Airport, as well as Taksim Square, to stage demonstrations against the coup attempt. There were major incidents in which crowds of civilians and police officers had violent encounters with pro-coup soldiers.

As protesters poured onto the streets, troops opened fire on people gathered near one of the bridges, killing five. Soldiers also shot at protesters angrily denouncing the coup bid at Istanbul's iconic Taksim Square, injuring several.

While the first investigation into the coup was launched by a prosecutor in Istanbul, the Ankara police headquarters was attacked by jets and helicopters and the Gölbaşı police special forces department headquarters was bombed by a pro-coup aircraft, killing 17 police officers and two personnel from satellite operator Turksat. The events were followed by a total of 13 soldiers, including three senior officers, being held while attempting to enter the Presidential Palace in Ankara. Shortly after, the Turkish parliament was targeted by jets and helicopters in an attack by the pro-coup soldiers and more than 10 are injured in the bombing.

The coup operations of the soldiers had begun to reach an end when some of its forces at the General Staff headquarters asked to negotiate surrender. Three prosecutors later received the surrender of the troops, while a series of other forces also surrendered.

In its first statement following the coup attempt, the Turkish Armed Forces yesterday praised the role of the Turkish people in stopping the plotters, underlining that it will continue to be "at the service of the state and the people."

"The biggest role in preventing this treacherous act belongs to our honorable people. These plotters belonging to the illegal structure have been stopped and will be given the heaviest penalty," the military said in a written statement.

It said a majority of the army and the police department firmly stood against the coup plotters, which meant the attempt could be neutralized before accomplishing its aim. It also noted that many members of the public took to the streets to protect "the real members of the Turkish Armed Forces" and to foil the coup, which it said would have dealt a serious blow to Turkey's democracy.