

# Curious findings in Gölcük naval base

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## Have Turkey's naval forces become the focal point of anti-democratic activity?

It should be rather clear by now that it is more than a mere suspicion that corruption — ideological and behavioral — has taken the entire military institution hostage. Thanks to brave journalists, despite efforts to the contrary by the so-called mainstream media to cover up or spread disinformation, a problematic military structure has emerged, pushing the need for comprehensive reform.

Ongoing revelations of misconduct, as well as a number of mass trials involving high-ranking officers, on duty and retired, are proof of how rotten things are.

Tomorrow, a historic trial will begin under the title “Sledgehammer” in which 196 officers, including 25 generals, are accused of “attempting to prevent by force the government of the Republic of Turkey from conducting its duties.” The 1,000-page-long indictment is based on records of a so-called “seminar” which took place in early March 2003 during which an alleged “coup simulation” with real names of elected politicians was conducted. Furthermore, files involving plans to prepare for “action” includes names of many officers as accomplices. Prosecutors demand up to 20 years’ imprisonment for high-ranking officers, who will not be held in custody while standing trial.

This mass trial will help shed light on a “closed” institution as well as reveal the mindset that dominates its operations. It is also critical because three-fourths of the accused are still on duty, and if the judges find it necessary to issue arrest warrants, the army apparatus may suffer seriously. Also, tension between the government and the military can escalate to new heights. In this sense, the Sledgehammer case will be much more spectacular and, arguably, defining than Ergenekon.

A look into the affiliations of the accused makes clear that almost half of the officers belong to the land forces, followed in equal number (52) by the gendarmerie and the navy. Only three defendants are members of the air force.

Now, let us return to the first question, because we have reason to do that on the basis of brand new developments, which took place at the Gölcük Naval Command, situated in the Bay of İzmit, not far from İstanbul. The seized documents there, hidden carefully in one of the buildings, contain sensational findings. Upon an order by İstanbul public prosecutors, police carried out a search, netting 10 bags of confidential material, which may help link all the ongoing trials on “subversive, undemocratic activity” involving officers.

In a nutshell, the material is a thick pile of data on a planned coup — seemingly organically linked with “Cage” and the “Action Plan against Reactionaryism” — against the elected Parliament. It includes details on how the coup should be conducted, where detained “VIPs” should be held captive, where “opposing” commanders should be deported, secret files on 46 “state dignitaries” and classified data from “critical parts” of the state. It also contains material on a network of extortion and blackmail — possibly to force high-ranking officers to “compromise” in times of action. It includes data on plans for “rogue flights” over Greek islands in the Aegean and links between the military commanders to engage some university directors in anti-government action.

The confiscated material is truly explosive and must be taken very seriously.

First, it tells that certain “elements” in the military have continued with “secret activities” (despite opened legal cases) which demand swift and decisive legal inquiry. In other words, there is reason for concern

that the regime is still under the threat of a coup or, at least, “guided chaos.”

Second, it sheds light on speculation that there is a “central authority” in the pyramid that prosecutors allege orchestrates subversive activity against the constitutional order. It points to, by way of details, the navy as the possible focal point of the entire illegitimate military activity in politics. No doubt it will also be helpful for trials other than Sledgehammer.

Its seriousness brings forth an urgency. As Turkey approaches yet another critical election, much will depend on whether the government and Parliament will be alert and determined enough to take further steps to impose civilian control over the army and pressure for institutional reform. The recent “step back” on the Court of Accounts and ongoing problems between the jurisdiction of the military and civilian courts are signs that the civilian will is not strong enough.

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## **Sources**

Source : TdZ, 15 December 2010, Wednesday