

Remarks by Vice President Biden and President Erdogan of Turkey in Pool Spray

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August 25, 2016

The White House

Office of the Vice President

For Immediate Release

August 25, 2016

Presidential Palace

Ankara, Turkey

VICE PRESIDENT BIDEN: (In progress) -- thoughtful consideration when I lost my son. It was appreciated very much. We've known each other for a long time.

I came today for multiple reasons. Most of all, Mr. President, to express my personal condolences and the condolences of my country for the brutal, unconscionable attack in Turkey, the very spot where the Islamic State (inaudible.)

The attempted coup went to the heart of who your people are -- principled, courageous and committed. And for a people who have struggled so long to establish a true democracy, this was, from my perspective and the President's perspective, the ultimate affront. So my heart goes out to not just the government, but to the Turkish people.

It's hard to imagine a Turkish fighter jet that would zero in on your parliament, or helicopters, Mr. President, attacking (inaudible), where you and your family were 15 minutes earlier. It's hard to fathom. It's hard for Americans to picture the possibility that a U.S. military helicopter would be (inaudible) when they thought the President was on vacation with his family.

I saw some of the damage myself today, meeting some of the members of your parliament, including the Speaker. I was told, as I came into this magnificent building, that if I were to go out to my left -- or right as I came in -- that I would see a bullet hole in the façade of this building, as well. I can understand, Mr. President, how some of your countrymen would feel that the world didn't respond to the existential crisis your country was facing rapidly enough, or with the appropriate amount of solidarity and compassion and empathy. And that's why, Mr. President -- you've known me for a while -- that's why I wanted to personally be here, and was asked by the President to personally be here to represent, to tell you and all of your colleagues and your countrymen how very, very, very sorry I am, the President is, the American people are for the suffering and loss you have endured.

You gave me an example in our private meeting on -- you said a very friend of yours who named his son after you, he and his son were killed in this coup. This is not something that is distant. It's not something that is always read about in history books. It's personal. It's personal. And I want to make sure -- I want to make unmistakably clear that the United States stands with our ally, Turkey. We support the people of Turkey. And our support is absolute and it is unwavering.

As I said in the press statement earlier today, this attempted coup was an attack on the people of Turkey -- not just the government -- on the people of Turkey and their most cherished values. It was a violent betrayal by a small group of folks who were sworn to defend the very people that they say they care and love.

We've stood with you from the moment it began, Mr. President, and we stand with you now. We are your allies. The American people also stand in awe of the way your countrymen respond to the way you respond personally -- going on the Internet through, my guess is on Facebook -- I'm not sure which vehicle you used -- with a portable -- or with a cellphone, telling your people to rise up, take back the street, do not let these terrorists, which is what they ended up being, steal their patronage, their -- who they are.

And it was amazing as the world watched. They went through the streets. As I said to you earlier, I can't imagine -- they probably had no idea whether another F-16 jet would come flying over; whether all of a sudden as they marched out to make their views known, whether a helicopter would rise up and gun them down. The world saw Turkish patriots, ordinary citizens, who -- literally standing in front of tanks -- standing in front of tanks. To the best of my knowledge -- I don't think I'm incorrect -- some of them actually got run over by those tanks.

As I said, I personally, the President personally, the American people stand in awe of the courage of your people. And we understand, Mr. President, the sensitivities the Turkish people feel about international security. That's why the United States is committed to doing everything we can to help bring justice for all those responsible for this coup attempt while adhering to the rule of law.

As I said -- and I personally, the President personally, the American people stand in awe of the courage of your people. And what we saw, Mr. President, is the sensitivity that the Turkish people feel about their national security. That's why the United States is committed to doing everything we can to help through your justice hold all those responsible for this coup attempt while adhering to the rule of law. As I said earlier, even as we speak, our American experts are on the ground, here in Ankara, meeting with your people, closely coordinating with our Turkish counterparts to evaluate and gather the material with regard to Turkish requests to extradite Gulen, in accordance with our bilateral extradition treaty. We have more lawyers working on this case than any other extradition in recent history. And I've been around a long time, Mr. President. I've been in the Congress for a long time. I was head of the Judiciary Committee. I know of no other case where as much time is being spent to make sure we find enough data to meet a court standing.

I know it's hard -- I don't know -- I suspect it's hard for people to understand that as powerful as my country is, as powerful as Barack Obama is as President, he has no authority under our Constitution to extradite anyone. Only a federal court can do that. Nobody else can do that. If the President were to take this into his own hands, what would happen would be he would be impeached for violating the separation of powers.

And so, Mr. President, it's not that we have any reason -- and your people should know -- any reason to protect Gulen or anyone else who, in fact, may have done something wrong. As a matter of fact, you'll recall, Mr. President, when Gulen sought refuge in America, the Bush administration denied him. He went to court. It was the court that overruled the President of the United States of America allowing him to do this.

So, Mr. President, this case, like all others, is going to have to be assessed by an independent federal court along with evidence backing it up. That's what we're working on together now. And it takes time to work an extradition request, but there should be no doubt that we'll continue to work closely with the Turkish government as this process unfolds.

The people of Turkey have no greater friend than the United States of America. As I said earlier, I want to offer my personal condolences and those of the President to the people of Turkey for not only what they went through in the coup attempt, but shortly after that over 50 people murdered apparently, from what we're told, by ISIS in a suicide bombing - - 28 or 29 young people under the age of 18 were killed. The suffering of your people at the hands of ISIS, at the hands of the PKK in the southeastern part of your country is beyond what any people should have to sustain. The barbarism is horrifying. But neither the Turkish people nor, might I add, Mr. President, the American people -- neither of us ever balk, ever bend, ever yield to terrorist threats or terrorist action.

So, Mr. President, we've always had good conversations. Today was no exception. I look forward to continue to work together with you and your team, and as we find even more ways for our nations to keep expanding our partnership, and jointly taking on this mindless terrorist activity that goes on around the world.

Let me say it for one last time: The American people stand with you. We (inaudible). Barack Obama was one of the first people you called. But I do apologize. I wish I could have been here earlier. I wish I could have been here earlier. But, Mr. President, we admire your people and we admire the way in which you're standing up to all this difficulty.

PRESIDENT ERDOGAN: (As interpreted.) First and foremost, thank you very much. Mr. Vice President, distinguished members of the press, valuable guests, I would like to salute you all with my most heartfelt emotions.

Vice President of the United States of America, Mr. Joe Biden, bestowed upon us the pleasure of hosting him in our country for the second time this year. Of course, this current visit coincided with an extraordinary time during an extraordinary process, which

saddens me, actually. I wish that we could have greeted each other under the most normal circumstances instead of what prevailed currently.

I would like to welcome him once again to our capital city, to our country, especially -- the failed coup that took place on the 15th of July, those traitors who are members of the Fethullah Terrorist Organization in armed forces uniform tried to topple the government, but couldn't achieve their objectives thanks to a very different resistance put forth by the people of our nation. And those heinous attempts were repelled by this firm stance assumed by the people of my country that I'm extremely proud of.

In the hands of the Fethullah terrorists, there were F-16 fighter jets. They had helicopters, they had tanks, and they had cannons at their disposals. However, in the hands of my people, in the hands of my citizens, all they had were their flags. And with those flags, they were marching towards the tanks, joining their faith with their hearts. And in a mere period of 12 hours, they have completely repelled this heinous, failed coup.

That's why I would like to take this opportunity to once again extend my gratitude to my people and commemorate our martyrs, and remember our veterans. The number of the martyrs reached 241, as we speak, and the number of the veterans has reached 2,194. I hope and pray that they will be able to recover soon.

From a 15-year-old child to an elderly member of this society around the age of 70 to 75, men and women, they took a firm stance against this attempted coup. This was an articulation of a very extraordinary situation. This was the communication of a very different attitude of our people against these traitors, because democracy could only survive if people of this nation embraced her fully. My people embraced democracy fully so that we can continue our march the way we do.

Our strategic partnership with the United States of America, they date back a long time in history. We have transitioned from a strategic partnership to a model partnership under the office of President Obama. And within the framework of the model partnership that we've enjoyed, we've erected our endeavors on a very different foundation. And with the current visit paid to Turkey by Vice President Biden, we've had the opportunity to discuss this failed coup at every extent possible. And the Vice President had the opportunity to visit in situ the parliament to observe the repercussions of this attempt. And I'm going to submit him some additional documents after this meeting, and he will be able to firsthandly observe the feelings of the Turkish nation on this individual who is called Fethullah Gulen.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, this incident -- which took place on the eve of July the 15th -- and in the aftermath of this failed coup, the resistance of our people flourished in a very different manner. And I believe this failed coup yielded some very positive results at the same time, primarily because of all of the political factions in Turkey, all of the opposition parties, and all of the members of the society reunited. This was a very important opportunity for us all.

Throughout our talks with Vice President Biden, we've stated once again that we are very much committed to fighting against this FETO terrorist organization, and we've discussed what kind of measures we were determined to take. First and foremost, this leader of the FETO terrorist organization needs to be extradited to Turkey as soon as possible. That is the first measure that needs to be taken. There are references made to the verdicts to be issued by courts, and we have previously submitted all of the folders regarding the actions engaged in by these terrorists before July the 15th. And right now, we are amassing certain documents pointing out to their involvement in this failed coup that took place on July the 15th.

But between the United States and Turkey, there is a bilateral extradition treaty. And in light of this extradition treaty, those individuals should be taken into pretrial detention, they should be arrested, and throughout the trial they need to remain in custody. This person, however, is currently managing and directing the terrorist organization where he lives. They are present in more than 170 countries around the world, and they are present through school associations and other sorts of educational institutions. Many individuals were taken into the Pennsylvanian premises, where he resides.

And similarly, he is still providing interviews to media outlets in the United States. Some journalists are being taken into the Pennsylvania residence, and he is still continuing his actions around the world, and he's shaping his actions for the future using these outlets. That's why it is very important for him to be contained through pretrial detention, which is actually part of the bilateral extradition treaty that was signed between our two countries, which we should not ignore. And that is something I especially feel that I need to remind you of. And I'm confident that the United States will take the necessary measures to cater to our expectations in that regard.

Throughout our discussions with Vice President Biden, we've also discussed the developments in Syria and our fight against Daesh, which is a primary issue in our region. Today, certain operations were conducted within Jarabulus in Syria. Jarabulus is about 20 to 30 kilometers away from our border to Syria. It is a province, strategic province, where attacks were directed to our Karkemish district right on the Syrian border. We were heavily disturbed of the attacks that were forwarded to us from that province in Syria. And we couldn't communicate to ourselves in the best manner possible, I assume, and that's why we felt not understood. And so eventually we decided to perform an operation on the province of Jarabulus with the aid of coalition forces who have entered the Jarabulus province, and the members of the Free Syrian Army and the local Jarabulus residents managed to liberate that entire province from Daesh.

All of the public institutions and all of the official headquarters were immediately liberated from the hands of Daesh fighters. And Daesh troops were forced to evict Jarabulus immediately after these operations that we had undertaken. Whether it be PYD, where it be PKK, whether it be YPG, whether it be the HKPC, or whether it be ISIS, all of these organizations are terrorists in our point of view. Al Nusra, al Shabaab -- regardless of their origins -- are terrorist organizations. There is not a good terrorist

organization and an evil terrorist organization. We can't make a distinction between them like that. They're all terrorist organizations at the end of the day, and terrorists will be terrorists regardless of our mentalities.

If one terrorist organization is fighting against another terrorist organization, it doesn't help them wash their hands clean out of the actions they have engaged in. A terrorist organization cannot impose a threat on the homeland security of a nation. However, (inaudible) are shattering our hearts into fragments, and we don't want to see those pictures appearing any longer, and we don't want this suffering to continue of the Syrian people anymore. Because we believe that the Syrians should be governed by a person elected depending on their own will.

Syria can no longer be governed by an individual to whom the people of Syria says no. Syria, led by Assad, will never embrace democracy or stability. Assad has been engaging in state terrorism that resulted in the death of 600,000 civilians. Assad is a tyrant. And I know that the United States will become more sensitive towards these developments. And I believe the United States will provide the support that is required out on the field. And I know that Vice President Biden had very extensive talks with our Prime Minister, and I am sure he was engaged in very fruitful talks all throughout the day.

And before I conclude my remarks, I would like to welcome him and thank him once again for being in our capital city, for being in our country. Now we are ready to receive one question from the medias of each countries, and then we will conclude our press statement.

Thank you. First, we will hand the microphone over to our guests. Thank you.

Q Thank you. Mr. Vice President, the U.S. is now flying with Turkey in the Jarabulus offensive. Can you talk a little bit about what that means for U.S.-backed Kurds and the overall operation in Syria against the Islamic State?

And, President Erdogan, U.S. officials have indicated that it could take years to work through your extradition request. You just said that you want this to happen as soon as possible. How is that difference going to affect the relationship going forward?

Thank you.

VICE PRESIDENT BIDEN: In terms of the operation in Jarabulus, we strongly support what the Turkish military has organized and done. We've been flying air cover for them. We have known for some time that Daesh -- ISIL -- is there. And we believe very strongly that the Turkish border must be controlled by Turkey, that there should be no occupation of that border by any group whatsoever, that Syria must be whole and united, not carved into little pieces. And we have been -- we hope to continue to work with Turkey closely on continued operations that will root out Daesh. But we're supportive of the operation. I hope that answers your question.

PRESIDENT ERDOGAN: (As interpreted.) In addition to what Vice President Biden stated, I must say that I fully agree with his questions. If we can correct something in the meanwhile it would be proper. We can't call this an Islamic state. And the Vice President had already corrected the name of this terrorist organization as Daesh, because they should be called Daesh. They should not be associated with Islam. The Islamic State cannot be associated with terrorism. Daesh is a terrorist organization. They are terrorists. Islam is a derivative of the word "peace," or the prefix "peace" stands for Islam, which is a derivative of Islam. A member of the Islamic faith can never engage in these massacres, in this carnage. They wouldn't use 13- or 14-year-old boys as suicide bombers. But however, Daesh is doing that, and they will pay a hefty price in return. Rest assured that that is going to be the case so long as us, looking for peace and yearning for peace, can join their forces and forge a close solidarity.

Q (As interpreted.) I have a question for Vice President Biden. After the September 11 attacks, the United States attached great significance to fighting against terrorism, and sometimes the United States asked for assistance from Turkey. Turkey, without resorting to any bureaucracy or any legal issue, extended a helping hand.

But right now there is a person who is charged with plotting this coup. Your ambassador in Ankara and the chief of general staff believe that Gulen is behind these failed coup attempts. And after these issues, do you think the United States and our administration is lingering things? Do you think the American action will keep on bothering the Turkish public or the conscientious of Turkish public? Because instead of moving on, I think everything is left in the hands of time, and you're just giving it time. How would you comment on this, and how do you think -- or how long do you think Gulen will be allowed to remain in your country and still keep on voicing threats upon our country using media outlets? Thank you.

VICE PRESIDENT BIDEN: It's a simple proposition in America. We are a nation of laws. We are bound by a constitution. And we are sworn to uphold that constitution. The constitution and our laws require for someone to be extradited, that the court in the United States has to conclude with probable cause to be extradited. Not only do we apply that standard as it relates to extradition; we apply that standard every day we do our country.

For example, you've read of three or four terrorist attacks that have recently taken place in my country. The FBI had followed two of these people. One of these people had said that he'd like to see Americans killed. He was a proponent of Daesh. He had sworn to Daesh. Notwithstanding the fact he said that under our law, there was no direct threat against anyone, there was no ability to detain him. He ended up going out and killing people.

We mean what we say when we say we apply the law without exception -- without exception. What we're doing now is we have a team of our lawyers and experts who were here in Ankara yesterday, sitting down with your experts on the judiciary and your prosecutors, saying, give us the data we need in order to be able to bring these to a court of law that will say, yes, we must extradite you.

We have zero interest. What possible interest could the United States have in wanting to protect someone who, in fact, met the standard under our law of being deported? What possible motive could we have? How could that even be thought to be possible? So we are bound by the law. Our judicial system is not only different than Turkey's; it's different from France's, it's different than Germany's. It's different, but it is our system we have abided by for over 225 years. Nothing will change that. How long it will take will depend upon how much evidence is able to be presented.

Thus far, until yesterday, there has been no evidence presented about the coup -- the coup. When you go to an American court, you can't go into a court and say, this is a bad guy, generally. You have to say this is a guy or a woman who committed the following explicit crime. That's what we're working with the President right now to gather the evidence that will establish in a court of law probable cause to believe he may have done this. We are determined -- we are determined to listen to every scrap of evidence that Turkey can provide or that we can find out about.

But again, I say to the people of Turkey: What possible motive could we have to, in fact, harbor a terrorist? Why would we do that? It makes absolutely no sense. None whatsoever. We are bound by the law. The President is bound by the law. The court will decide. As soon as we have enough evidence, it will be present to a court, and the court will then decide. And I cannot speak for a court.

Lastly -- and I'm sorry for the long answer, Mr. President -- but lastly, under our system, the federal court is a co-equal branch -- not subservient to, not underneath, but equal -- equal to the Congress, equal to the President. That's what we call separation of powers. That's our system. We will abide by our system. We will continue to abide by the system. And God willing, there will be enough data and evidence to be able to meet the criteria that you all believe exists. We have no reason to shelter someone who would attack an ally and try to overthrow a democracy. Can you imagine us being happy with another military state? We didn't get on so well with your previous military states. So what motive could we possibly have? None. Except we're bound by the law.

Thank you.

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