

Ukraine reshuffles military amid war

Ukraine continues its fight against Russia after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy appoints a new army chief amid a major military leadership shake-up

ISTANBUL - DAILY SABAH

» **UKRAINE** pressed ahead with its fight against Russia yesterday, hours after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy fired his top military commander in response to mounting public pressure.

Ukraine has made significant progress in the war this year, and a rift between the country’s outgoing army chief and its defense minister threatened to derail its ef-

forts. Both men lost their jobs following Zelenskyy’s major government reshuffle last week.

The new army chief, 43-year-old Maj. Gen. Mykhailo Drapatyi, belongs to a new generation of Ukrainian generals who have come up through the ranks during the battle against Russian aggression.

He became known for his daring and courage in 2014, the year that Russia seized and illegally annexed Ukraine’s Crimean

Peninsula – eight years before Moscow’s all-out invasion.

Zelenskyy said Drapatyi and other commanders must present an updated defense strategy, including continued reform of the corps system, faster weapon and drone deliveries, stronger air defense against Russian strikes, and a clearer mobilization plan.

Zelenskyy met Tuesday separately with outgoing Defense Minister Mykhailo Fedorov, a 35-year-old tech-savvy entre-

preneur credited with swiftly developing Ukraine’s drone technology that has given it a battlefield edge.

He locked horns with outgoing commander-in-chief Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, a 60-year-old veteran trained in the Soviet Union before Ukraine’s independence.

Street protests in Kyiv and other cities demanded Fedorov’s return, viewing him as a key military modernizer, and urged Zelenskyy to fire Syrskyi, regarded as part

of the old guard. Zelenskyy offered Fedorov what he called a respected position in the government that would unify the country’s technology sector. It wasn’t clear if Fedorov accepted the offer – or whether the latest moves would satisfy protesters and calm the streets. Fedorov supported Drapatyi’s appointment, calling it “new hope in the fight of free people for freedom and justice” and “a voice for change that could not go unheard.” **PAGE 10**

OPINION

ORAL TOĞA

Cost of compromise: US, Iran’s battle across borders and within

» **IN MID-JULY**, the United States resumed strikes on Iranian territory, sustaining them night after night. Iran has answered with missile and drone attacks on the Gulf states hosting American forces. Commercial transit through the Strait of Hormuz has effectively ground to a halt, and war-risk insurance premiums have climbed to as much as 10% of a vessel’s value. All of this has unfolded barely a month after a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed in Islamabad on June 17. Yet, military moves alone do not explain the trajectory. None of the signatory capitals can muster the political will to defend the text to its own public.

The Islamabad MoU is a 14-point interim framework that halted the war. It provides for a 60-day negotiation timetable, the lifting of the blockade, free transit through the Strait of Hormuz, a large reconstruction fund, and the downblending of uranium stockpiles. Yet it did not resolve the parties’ most critical disputes. It postponed them. Mutual accusations of violations surfaced within the first week. In late June, Iranian missiles struck bases in Kuwait and Bahrain. In early July, commercial tankers were hit in the Gulf, and the U.S. hit back with strikes on more than 80 targets. U.S. President Donald Trump declared that the war with Iran was about to resume on July 7. Tehran suspended its obligations on July 13. Even so, the two sides have not entirely severed the technical contacts running through Qatari and Pakistani mediation. **PAGE 8**



An Iranian national flag waves in front of an anti-U.S.-Israel billboard, downtown Tehran, Iran, July 21, 2026. (Getty Images Photo)

RUBIO CLAIMS U.S. STILL OPEN TO IRAN NEGOTIATIONS, BUT STRIKES CONTINUE

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said yesterday that the U.S. remains open to ending the Iran crisis through talks, but accused Tehran of stalling as the conflict threatens global energy routes. Rubio made his comments a day after three oil tankers reversed course in the Red Sea. **PAGE 10**

Israel erects miles-long barrier inside Gaza to entrench division

» **THE ISRAELI** military is rapidly constructing a massive earthen barrier to separate the area it controls from the rest of Gaza, satellite images show, deepening the enclave’s division.

More than 23 kilometers (14 miles) have been constructed in recent months, running through Palestinian communities demolished by the military. That is equivalent to more than half the length of the coastal strip, which is some 40 kilometers long and 11 kilometers wide and home to over 2 million Palestinians.

When presented with the satellite images, Israel’s military confirmed to The Associated Press it has built a physical barrier in the area of the so-called yellow line, the boundary to which Israeli troops withdrew under the October cease-fire deal with Hamas.

The line was envisioned in the U.S.-backed agreement as a temporary division of the territory pending a fuller Israeli withdrawal.

But as the truce stagnates, it appears Israel is digging in, heightening Palestinian fears that the line is morphing into a border. Neither U.S. Central Command, which is tasked with monitoring the cease-fire, nor the Board of Peace, the body led by U.S. President Donald Trump meant to eventually oversee Gaza, would comment on the barrier. **PAGE 10**

Özgür Özel, mayors plan future in post-divide main opposition

» **SECRECY** and silence have fueled rumors about the future of Özgür Özel after he announced that he would establish a new, as-yet-unnamed party. The man who delivered the first tangible success in decades for the main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) in the 2024 local elections remains confident of winning the next vote. However, hours after his historic declaration, few people publicly endorsed his new bid. Among those mentioned was Mansur Yavaş, the Ankara mayor, who is widely viewed as a popular figure and a potential future presidential contender. While

the mayors of Adana and Mersin, whom Özel mentioned in his speech on Tuesday while calling on them to join him, signaled their intention to remain in the CHP, Yavaş maintained his silence yesterday. Cemil Tugay, the mayor of the CHP stronghold of İzmir in western Türkiye, also reportedly chose to remain in the party.

Earlier yesterday, Özel held talks at a hotel in Ankara with the party assembly and central executive board of his new party, as well as lawmakers who have remained loyal to him since he was ousted from the CHP chairmanship in May. **PAGE 7**

Turkish capital ‘for sale’ by CHP-run municipality

» **THE ANKARA** Metropolitan Municipality (ABB), run by the main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP), is setting records in the sale of its valuable assets and properties, rapidly depleting its resources, according to a report by the Sabah newspaper. Plots of land, shops and residences in prime locations are being put up for sale one after another.

The municipality, led by Mansur Yavaş, a popular figure in the party who was once regarded as a future presidential candidate, will launch a new tender today

for the sale of several properties with a starting price of TL 1.3 billion (\$28 million). With the latest tender, the municipality’s total real estate sales over the past seven years have exceeded TL 35 billion.

The rapid liquidation of public properties in sought-after districts such as Etimesgut, Çankaya, Altındağ and Mamak, along with the involvement of municipal subsidiaries in the process, has fueled criticism over what opponents describe as the municipality’s failure to improve public services despite the revenue generated from the sales. **PAGE 6**

Govt lays foundation for new ‘digital fortress’

» **TÜRKİYE** yesterday laid the foundation for a new flagship data center that it says will strengthen the country’s digital sovereignty, cybersecurity resilience and artificial intelligence infrastructure, as it seeks to expand domestic control over critical digital assets.

Speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony, Transport and Infrastructure Minister Abdulkadir Uraloğlu described the facility of the state-owned satellite communications firm Türksat in the capital Ankara as “Türkiye’s new digital fortress.”

Uraloğlu stressed the center would ensure that critical data remain within the country’s borders. “We are establishing sovereignty over our data on our own soil,” he said. “This is not just a concrete structure, but Türkiye’s new digital fortress.”

The project forms part of Ankara’s strategy to expand domestic digital infrastructure and reduce reliance on foreign technology providers amid growing geopolitical competition over data, artificial intelligence and cyber capabilities. **PAGE 5**

Beyond beaches and hotels, diplomacy decides who arrives

CÜNEYD ER - OPINION

» **TOURISM** figures in Türkiye last year were strong enough to start an argument. More than 62 million visitors arrived, bringing in almost \$61 billion in tourism revenue. A journalist friend of mine immediately credited advertising. Some of my friends from the business world preferred to talk about prices, capacity and demand. Another, who had spent years around foreign policy, looked at the same numbers, shrugged and simply said, “Diplomacy.”

What stayed with me afterwards was not

the disagreement itself. It was how little diplomacy featured in the discussion after that. Tourism and foreign policy usually live in different parts of the newspaper. One belongs in the business section, the other somewhere near international affairs.

In practice, they meet far more often than we admit. Governments announce new partnerships or speak about improving relations. Most people do not read diplomatic communiques before booking a holiday. They react to things much simpler, like headlines, delays and television footage. **PAGE 8**

OpenAI says AI models went rogue, triggering ‘unprecedented’ breach

» **AN AUTONOMOUS** agent powered by OpenAI’s advanced AI models went rogue during a security test last week and launched a hack that breached the infrastructure of a popular platform for programmers, the ChatGPT maker said on Tuesday.

In a blog post, OpenAI said it was testing the capabilities of some of its most advanced models in a controlled environment but that the agent managed to escape containment, reach the internet and break into AI startup Hugging Face to try to satisfy its testing goal.

The San Francisco firm said the breakout was “an unprecedented cyber incident, involving state-of-the-art cyber capabilities” and that the company was reinforcing its safeguards.

AI models that underpin tools like chatbots and image generators are known as agents when they act autonomously to carry out tasks in the real world.

As the technology quickly becomes more sophisticated, cybersecurity is in the spotlight given the risk of advanced AI finding weak points in existing software before humans do. **PAGE 4**