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## The Great Harlot

**Louis A. Palivos**



Another enigmatic long prophecy was written by St. John in Revelation about a grotesque Harlot, causing millions to be slaughtered, riding a Beast Empire which winds up destroying her. Globally people mourn her loss. Why is humanity mourning her loss? Is it for financial reasons? Is it for religious reasons? Is this Great Harlot a religion, a philosophy, a political movement? Holy Scripture states that this Great Harlot is a Great City that commits fornication and blasphemy. Are there clues in Holy Scripture and by the Holy Fathers to identify this Great Harlot which is a Great City? There are many clues!

### Holy Scripture

There are several major points to keep in mind when attempting to unlock the meaning of prophecy in enigmatic chapters. Holy Scripture interprets itself by the prophecies of the various Prophets. Prophets also interpret Holy Scripture within the chapter(s) they write about. The Reader should read all of Revelation chapters 17 and 18

The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. "Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition. The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth." Rev. 17:8-12,15, and 18. Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her! The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth. Rev. 18:20, 23-24.

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## 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Commemoration of the Fall of Constantinople

On Tuesday, May 28, the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago, the Metropolis of Chicago Archons and the Hellenic Society of Constantinople in Chicago held the 38<sup>th</sup> Commemoration of the Fall of Constantinople at St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in Palos Heights, Illinois. The annual event



*Pictured left to right: Archon Robert Buhler, Archon Theodore Theofilos, Archon Tom Kanellos, Hellenic Society of Constantinople President Anna Harisiadis, Archon Regional Commander Gus M. Pablecas, His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago, Rev. Fr. Tilemahos Alikakos, Emcee and Secretary of the Hellenic Society of Constantinople Hellenia Chrones, Archon Regional Commander John G. Manos, Archon Steve Laduzinsky, Archon Wesley Stinich and Archon Dr. John Fotopoulos.*

remembers and raises awareness on the conquest of Constantinople, which occurred on May 29, 1453. This event marked the end of the Byzantine Empire, which had lasted for 1500 years, and was also the day that Hagia Sophia in Constantinople was converted from a Christian Orthodox Church into a mosque.

Keynote speaker Archon John Fotopoulos, Ph.D., *Didaskalos Tou Evangeliou*, presented a lecture titled, "The Fall of Constantinople, Backward, Forward, or Why Should We Care?", which delved into the history and importance of this event to Orthodox Christians and its importance for people today. The lecture was followed by a question and answer period.

A musical performance by the St. John Damascene League of Chanters Byzantine Choir began and concluded the evening's festivities. Hellenia Chrones, corresponding secretary for the Hellenic Society of Constantinople, served as emcee and chairperson of the event. His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago provided the opening prayer for the evening and presided over the evening's festivities.

During the event, the organizations also acknowledged the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the genocide of the Greeks of Asia Minor, Pontos and Eastern Thrace, which took place on May 19. A trailer of the upcoming film, *The Great Catastrophe*, which was produced by The Asia Minor and Pontos Hellenic Research Center was also shown. In addition, the Archons, as Defenders of the Faith, made available and distributed an array of information on their mission and on the Five Key Issues facing the Patriarchate in Constantinople.

A special thank you to Rev. Father Tilemahos Alikakos, the parish of St. Spyridon, and the St. Spyridon Women's Philoptochos Society for hosting and providing refreshments for the event.

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- 7.To advance the just causes of Hellenism.
- 8. To promote the ideals Greece has given to humanity.

38<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Commemoration of the Fall  
of Constantinople

(CONTINUED FROM P.1)

The Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago consists of 34 parishes in Illinois, with another 24 parishes in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, northern Indiana, and eastern and central Missouri. The general offices of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago are located in Chicago, Illinois. For more information visit <http://chicago.goarch.org/>

The Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle is comprised of Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate who have been honored for their outstanding service to the Orthodox Church by having a Patriarchal title, or “offikion,” bestowed upon them by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. Those upon whom this title of the Mother Church has been conferred are known as “Archons of the Great Church of Christ,” and the titles are personally conferred by the Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in America. The Order’s fundamental goal and mission is to promote the religious freedom, well-being and advancement of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which is headquartered in Istanbul, Turkey. For more information visit <https://www.archons.org/>

The Hellenic Society of Constantinople in Chicago was founded in 1939 by a small group of immigrant Romoi, the proud name for Greeks from Istanbul, who fled their homeland of Constantinople by the forced exchange of populations following the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. The society’s current president is Anna Harisiadis. For more information visit <https://www.hellenic-societyofconstantinople.org/>

Archon Dr. John Fotopoulos, Ph.D., was inducted as an Archon of the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle in 2017 and was bestowed with the *offikion* (“office”) *Διδάσκαλος του Ευαγγελίου* (*Didaskalos tou Euaggeliou*, “Teacher of the Gospel”) by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. Fotopoulos is an associate professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Saint Mary’s College, Notre Dame, Indiana, where he has served on the faculty since 2001. He graduated as valedictorian with a B.A. in Pre-Theology from Hellenic College (1989) and again as valedictorian with a M.Div. from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (1992). Fotopoulos received his Ph.D. from Loyola University Chicago (2001). His area of specialization is the New Testament and early Christian literature within the context of Greco-Roman society and culture, focusing in particular on the letters of St. Paul the Apostle by using social-historical and rhetorical-critical methods of interpretation. Fotopoulos also does scholarly work on the historical Jesus and on St. John Chrysostom. Fotopoulos is a member of numerous academic associations including the prestigious Colloquium Oecumenicum Paulinum which is a select group of Pauline scholars meeting biennially in Rome to discuss aspects of St. Paul’s letters. Dr. Fotopoulos has published four academic books as well as numerous articles in academic journals and reference books. He is married to Dr. Eleni Makris and they have two children, Demetrios and Evanthis.

The Great Harlot

Louis A. Palivos

(From p. 1

Unraveling the meaning of these two chapters, as well as, Rev. 17:9 reveals that the woman sits on 7 mountains or kingdoms. These kingdoms, some scholars understands to be:1) Egyptian Empire; 2) Assyrian Empire;3) Babylonian Empire;4) Medo-Persian Empire;5) Grecian Empire; 6) Roman Empire;7) Islamic Empire; and8) Revived Islamic Empire of the Antichrist.rev. 17:3 reveals that a Beast Empire existed as the seventh empire, which will come again as the eight empire. Rev. 17:10 reveals there are 7 kings, 5 have fallen, 1 is and the other has yet to come. A future king will come and continue for a short time. This short time will be 7 years, to fulfill Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week, Dan. 9:24. Rev. 17:12 reveals that there are 10 kings who will come to power along with another king, the Antichrist. Rev. 17:15, reveals that the waters are people, multitudes, nations and tongues. Rev. 17:18 reveals that the Great Harlot is a Great City.

Given that prophecy is Israeli and Jerusalem centered, the above interpretation must rule out New York, Rome or Brussels as cities and rule out the United States, Europe or an Asiatic Block as a Beast Kingdom.

However, an Islamic City, Mecca, and an Islamic Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, must be ruled in. The City of Mecca fulfills the following: a literal place, a dessert city, a coastal city, a consumer not a provider of goods, an adulterous hub, a religious promoter of Islamic religion, a seducer of kings, a city of excess luxury, an economic seducer, a city of slavery, has murdered Jews and Christians, represents royalty, sits as a queen, is a spiritual and financial capital of the Islamic World.

As matters stand today, Mecca and Saudi Arabia, seem to fulfill, to an astonishing degree of certainty, the prophecies of Revelation 17 and 18.

Some scholars do not exclude Jerusalem, as Babylon the Great, or a revival of the ancient City of Babylon in Iraq. The Author, however, has several reservations, as Jerusalem does not fit the Biblical parameters, like being a coastal city or being destroyed forever. Jerusalem is going to be forever. Jer. 17:25. The City of Babylon is also not a coastal city.

As history moves forward, will Islam’s goal of enforcing the total and all encompassing *Sharia Law* change? Will its total theocratic religious submission change? Will its eschatological interpretation change? Looking at Islam’s 1400 year past history, a reasonable person must conclude that the answer is that Islam will not change. Where are the large Christian Communities that once existed in Syria, Iraq, Iran and Turkey? Islam by the sword has decimated the Christian communities of these countries. This onslaught has continued until today, and at many other Muslim countries.

Mecca imports gold, silver, precious stones, pearls, fine linen, purple silk and scarlet, every kind of scented wood, ivory, precious wood, bronze, iron, marble, cinnamon, incense, fragrant oil, frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, bodies and souls of men? Mecca is a dessert city, Rev. 17:3, and an oil rich city that imports these luxuries. Saudi Arabia and Mecca also have as their merchants the great men of the earth, because of petrol oil. Rev. 18:19.

Mecca and Saudi Arabia fund worldwide organizations that have spun into radical Jihadist groups, such as, al-Qaeda, ISIS, Taliban, Abu Sayyaf (Philistine), Lashkare-Taiba (Pakistan), Jabbat al-Nostira (Syria), Al-Shabab (Somalia) and Boko Haram (Nigeria).

Mecca is also a city of idolatry to non Moslems, where worship of the black stone<sup>1</sup> takes place, a stone that allegedly fell from paradise. Moslem pray five times daily facing the Kaaba, that contains the black stone, at Mecca. Mecca is a religious and missionary city for Islam.

In closing, another city and country may arise in the future to be within the Biblical parameters, but what happens to Mecca and Saudi Arabia? Mecca and Saudi Arabia, presently, influence 1.6 billion Islamic People. What other city or county could arise to have the huge *religious* and *economic* influence that Mecca and Saudi Arabia have impacting Jerusalem, Israel, the world, and Christians? If another city and country arises, it must use beheading, be anti-Christian and anti-Jewish, have a worldwide religious influence *inside* various countries and its followers must be obedient *inside* these various countries to Islam. At present, Mecca and Saudi Arabia spent millions advancing Islam throughout the world. Deception is not that the vast majority of Muslim people are peaceful, they are, but that the fanatical minority that will not dialogue with reasonable evidence and truth.

Does this unreasonable minority make the majority irrelevant? Will Sunnis and Shiites be peaceful and coexist? Who shall be the rightful heir to Mohammed to rule Islam? At present, Mecca seems to be the Great City and Saudi Arabia the Kingdom.

1. There is another enigmatic black stone that allegedly Zeus dropped from the sky, Gk. διοπετους, diopetous. Acts 19:35. How did these idolaters behave in Ephesus? “They were enraged and cried out, ‘Great is Artemis of Ephesus!’” Sounds familiar!

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# US-Iran relations: A brief history



From the CIA-orchestrated overthrow of Iran's prime minister in 1953, to tension and confrontation under President Trump, a look back over more than 65 years of tricky relations between Iran and the US.

## 1953: Overthrow of Mossadeq

Media caption US-Iran relations: A guide to 60 years of tricky relations

US and British intelligence agencies orchestrate a coup to oust Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister, Mohammad Mossadeq. The secular leader had sought to nationalise Iran's oil industry.

## 1979: Iranian revolution

The US-backed Shah of Iran, Mohammed Reza Pahlevi, is forced to leave the country on 16 January following months of demonstrations and strikes against his rule by secular and religious opponents.

Two weeks later, Islamic religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini returns from exile. Following a referendum, the Islamic Republic of Iran is proclaimed on 1 April.

## 1979-81: US Embassy hostage crisis

The US embassy in Tehran is seized by protesters in November 1979 and American hostages are held inside for 444 days. The final 52 hostages are freed in January 1981, the day of US President Ronald Reagan's inauguration.

Another six Americans who had escaped the embassy are smuggled out of Iran by a team posing as film-makers, in events dramatised in the 2012 Oscar-winning film *Argo*.

## 1985-86: Iran-Contra scandal

The US secretly ships weapons to Iran, allegedly in exchange for Tehran's help in freeing US hostages held by Hezbollah militants in Lebanon.

The profits are illegally channelled to rebels in Nicaragua, creating a political crisis for Reagan.

## 1988: Iranian passenger plane shot down

The American warship USS Vincennes shoots down an Iran Air flight in the Gulf on 3 July, killing all 290 people on board. The US says the Airbus A300 was mistaken for a fighter jet. Most of the victims are Iranian pilgrims on their way to Mecca.

## 2002: 'Axis of evil'

In his State of the Union address, President George Bush denounces Iran as part of an "axis of evil" with Iraq and North Korea. The speech causes outrage in Iran.

## 2000s: Nuclear fears and sanctions

In 2002 an Iranian opposition group reveals that Iran is developing nuclear facilities including a uranium enrichment plant. The US accuses Iran of a clandestine nuclear weapons programme, which Iran denies. A decade of diplomatic activity and intermittent Iranian engagement with the UN's nuclear watchdog follows. But several rounds of sanctions are imposed by the UN, the US and the EU against ultra-conservative president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's government. This causes Iran's currency to lose two-thirds of its value in two years.

## 2013-2016: Closer ties, and a nuclear deal

In September 2013, a month after Iran's new moderate president Hassan Rouhani takes office, he and US President Barack Obama speak by phone - the first such top-level conversation in more than 30 years. Then in 2015, after a flurry of diplomatic activity, Iran agrees a long-term deal on its nuclear programme with a group of world powers known as the P5+1 - the US, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany. Under the accord, Iran agrees to limit its sensitive nuclear activities and allow in international inspectors in return for the lifting of crippling economic sanctions.

## 2019: Tension in the Gulf

In May 2018, US President Donald Trump abandons the nuclear deal, before reinstating sanctions against Iran and countries that trade with it. Relations between the US and Iran worsen. The US sends an aircraft carrier strike group and B-52 bombers to the Gulf because of what it calls "troubling and escalatory indications" related to Iran.

Then, in May and June 2019, explosions hit six oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman, and the US accuses Iran.

And on 20 June, Iranian forces shoot down a US military drone over the Strait of Hormuz. The US says it was over international waters, Iran says it is over their territory.

# Trump, Erdogan and tensions in the Aegean and Cyprus



Understanding the dangers that loom as a result of the latest developments in the Eastern Mediterranean, Washington is exerting its influence. However, sound assessments and solid predictions cannot be made given the uncharted territory in which US-Turkish relations are now moving.

Meanwhile, the bureaucracy, including the Pentagon, is furious over the case of the Russian S-400 weapons systems. Clear messages are being sent out. On a symbolic level, statements are made about "provocative actions." At the same time, officials here in Washington insist that they mean what they say and are moving to the next phase, drafting sanctions targeting the Turkish economy. Nevertheless, almost everyone is conveying the message that the US does not want to "lose" Turkey.

Geopolitically speaking, they do not want the hitherto secular and Western-style democracy – with all its particularities and weaknesses – and significant ally to mutate into an authoritarian regime like Pakistan. Still, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's hatred of the West, in tandem with the intensely Islamic traits of his personality and his neo-Ottoman vision, is transforming this large country into a destabilizing factor in the region.

As far as Greece and Cyprus are concerned, the Americans emphatically acknowledge – and not just in private conversations but in public statements – that the strategic choices of Athens and Nicosia – in the current situation of



increased tensions – are moving in the right direction. Moreover, Washington's recent cooperation with Athens has been excellent and there is the belief that this will continue under a government led by Kyriakos Mitsotakis. Some friction, mainly of a personal nature, has been overcome and plans for cooperation with the new government are already being drafted.

The democratic axis of Jerusalem, Nicosia and Athens has developed on a solid foundation and across party lines – something rare in the case of Greece. This allows for long-term planning and a plethora of actions – ranging from joint military exercises and information exchange to commercial cooperation. Many steps have been taken in the right direction with the US and the European Union.

Steps can also be taken toward the United Nations with the submission of geographic coordinates marking the outer boundaries of the Greek continental shelf in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, Erdogan knows that the strongest player – regarding a wide range of issues from the economy to geopolitics – is the US. The Congress and the bureaucracy are not enough. The de facto most important factor is the president.

Donald Trump is unpredictable. It takes a tweet to overturn policies decided by federal agencies and departments. Furthermore, he has shown that he admires Erdogan's hegemonic style. Within this context, the meeting between Trump and Erdogan in a week's time on the sideline of the G-20 summit in Osaka will be of decisive significance for US-Turkish relations. It will also influence the equation in the Eastern Mediterranean.

## Bernie Sanders: What's different this time around?



In 2016 Bernie Sanders arrived on the Democratic presidential scene with all the surprise of a thunderclap in a blue sky. He set fundraising records, drew rally crowds of tens of thousands and, for a time, cast the once-seemingly inevitable nomination of Hillary Clinton in doubt.

Now he's back for another run at the top prize, with new advantages - and obstacles. This time around he's fighting a two-front campaign, against establishment front-runner Joe Biden and fellow progressive champion Elizabeth Warren.

### Is Sanders up to the challenge?

Earlier this month the Sanders campaign swung through California, which was the last major battleground in his 2016 primary season. At a rally in San Jose, Çis A-list of warm-up speakers from 2016 was reassembled - Harvard Professor Cornel West, actor Danny Glover and Vermont-based ice-cream mogul Ben Cohen of Ben & Jerry's fame.

When Sanders took the stage, he railed for 35 minutes against the oligarchy, multinational corporate executives, Wall Street bankers and the 1% of Americans who own more than 40% of the wealth in the country.

He repeated calls for universal government-run healthcare, free college tuition, environmental regulation and a nationwide \$15 minimum wage. It was chapter and verse from the 2016 hymnal.

There is even a similar adversary this time around. In 2016, the Sanders movement viewed former Secretary of State Clinton as the face of a Democratic establishment that was out-of-touch with the progressive heart of the party.

Now it's former Vice-President Joe Biden, whose political legacy is longer and perhaps - due to his outspoken support of laws like a draconian 1994 anti-crime bill - even more distasteful to Sanders supporters.

There is no middle ground "when the future of the planet is at stake", he thundered. No middle ground on healthcare, abortion, gun control, immigration or income inequality. As he did in 2016, Sanders is painting in bold colours and brooking no compromise - and the crowd of progressives and grass-roots activists ate it up. Although Sanders lost three years ago, the Vermont senator in his San Francisco speech drew a clear line from 2016 to today's campaign to a presidential victory in 2020 that would herald the arrival of a new era of progressive government.

"Together we began a political revolution whose ideas and energy have not only transformed the Democratic Party, but have transformed politics in America," he said. "And today we take that revolution forward."

### New twists

And while the backbone of Sanders' rhetoric is the same, there are some new twists and flourishes. There's a heavier emphasis on criminal justice reform and swipes at the "prison-industrial complex." More talk of his own personal story, including his childhood of living "paycheque to paycheque".

His wife, Jane Sanders, has joined the list of campaign surrogates, offering a more personal look at the candidate.

It's all part of the Sanders campaign's attempt to expand on the successes and avoid the mistakes of 2016. In 2016, it was frequently a slapdash, shoestring operation ill-prepared for the scope of the national contest.

"When we began the campaign back in May of 2015, there was no way to know how quickly the campaign was going to grow and how much grass-roots support there would be," says Jeff Weaver, who ran the Sanders campaign in 2016 and is now a senior adviser to Sanders. "So the campaign really could not keep up."

This time around, he says, Sanders has a much more sophisticated nationwide electoral infrastructure.

The Vermont senator's Our Revolution organisation - picking up where his 2016 effort left off and developed over three years - effectively served as a turnkey national campaign, just waiting for the green light.

Sanders boasts a volunteer list of over a million people, and can turn on the money faucet from his grass-roots donor network with seeming ease. In the first quarter of 2019 fundraising, he pulled in \$18.2m - easily outpacing the rest of the Democratic field (which excluded Biden at that stage).

## Turkey sends second ship to drill near Cyprus, EU warns of action



Turkey launched a second drilling ship on Thursday which will conduct natural gas operations off the northeast coast of Cyprus for three months, a move which risks aggravating a conflict with Cyprus over jurisdiction rights for oil and gas exploration.

Turkey and the internationally recognized Cypriot government have overlapping claims in that part of the Mediterranean, an area thought to be rich in natural gas.

Energy Minister Fatih Donmez said at the launch of the vessel, Yavuz, it would operate in a borehole near Cyprus' Karpas peninsula, and reach a depth of 3,300 meters (3,609 yards).

Turkey already has a ship offshore Cyprus, and Cyprus last week issued arrest warrants for its crew.

European Union leaders are set to warn Turkey on Thursday to end its gas drilling in disputed waters or face action from the bloc, as Greece and Cyprus pressed other EU states to speak out.

Gathering for an EU summit in Brussels, leaders are expected to issue a formal statement saying Turkey's drilling is "illegal" and that the bloc "stands ready to respond appropriately," according to a draft seen by Reuters.

"I'll be supporting strong language being included in our conclusions today," Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar told reporters when asked about the Cyprus-Turkey issue as he arrived for the two-day summit in Brussels.

Greece's Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras called for "a clear message" from the EU, accusing Turkey of breaking international law and "violating European sovereignty."

The dispute has escalated in the past month and also risks straining Ankara's relations with its western allies.

Ankara, which does not have diplomatic relations with Cyprus, claims that certain areas in Cyprus's offshore maritime zone, known as an EEZ, fall under the jurisdiction of Turkey or of Turkish Cypriots, who have their own breakaway state in the north of the island recognized only by Turkey.

Cyprus says that defining its EEZ is its sovereign right.

Donmez said unilateral agreements made between Cyprus and the regional countries that attempted to "steal" the rights of Turkey and Turkish Cypriots had "no legal validity."

"Turkey will continue its operations in its own continental shelf and in areas where the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has licensed Turkiye Petrolleri without stopping," Donmez said, referring to Turkey's main oil exploration company.

"We are warning actors from outside the region that are forming co-operations with Cyprus: Do not chase illusions that will yield no results," he said.

It was not immediately clear what action the EU might take against Ankara, and the bloc will ask its foreign service, the European External Action Service, to put forward options, the draft statement said.

Cyprus has threatened to jeopardize the EU membership bids of North Macedonia and Albania if the bloc does not take action against Ankara.

One senior EU official said one option was to end talks with Turkey over extending a customs union, which already allows tariff-free trade with the EU for industrial goods but not services or agriculture.

Another option could be formally suspending Turkey's status as an official candidate to become a member of the European Union, although talks have been frozen for over a year. [Reuters]

## Brussels issues warning but Ankara remains defiant



European Union leaders expressed their solidarity with and full support for Cyprus on Thursday over Turkey's illegal drilling activities by its Fatih vessel within the island's exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and called for measures to be taken against Ankara, which however remained defiant.

"Concerning Turkey's continued illegal drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, the EU will, as set out in the Council conclusions of 18 June 2019, closely monitor developments and stands ready to respond appropriately and in full solidarity with Cyprus," the European Council stated, vowing to consider "targeted measures."

Moreover, it lauded the invitation by the General Affairs Council (GAC) to the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to submit options for "appropriate measures without delay."

Speaking to reporters, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker warned Ankara that it could expect a tough response.

"We are in full solidarity with Cyprus. What Turkey is doing in the territorial waters of Cyprus is totally unacceptable [...] The commission has been charged to propose measures to be taken as soon as possible when it comes to this conflict and we'll do so, and these will not be soft measures," Juncker said.

It remains unclear what these measures will actually be. According to sources in Brussels, the measures could entail the continuation of the freeze on pre-EU accession funds to Turkey and custom union negotiations, but also the imposition of sanctions on individuals and companies that are involved in Turkey's drilling activities.

However, these measures are no more than proposals and their implementation will require the approval of EU member-states.

The feeling in Brussels is that the approval of sanctions against individuals and companies will be a tall order because, despite the negative climate regarding Turkey, most member-states believe the door of EU accession to Ankara should remain open. And this is why the measures being examined do not include a freeze on funds for Turkey to deal with the migration crisis.

The unveiling of whatever measures are decided is expected in the coming weeks and almost certainly before the August summer vacations.

Turkey however appeared anything but willing to comply with European calls on Thursday as a second drillship, the Yavuz, departed from the port of Dilovasi outside Istanbul, destined for an area near the peninsula of Karpasia in northern Cyprus, where it is scheduled to begin drilling activities in July.

Turkish Energy Minister Fatih Donmez, who addressed the launch ceremony for the vessel alongside Turkish Petroleum Corporation general manager Melih Han Bilgin, issued a warning to what he described as "external actors" cooperating with the Cypriot government not to pursue "illusions" that will not yield results.

According to Donmez, the Yavuz will remain in the area for three months and will operate in a borehole at a depth of 3,300 meters. The Associated Press said its area of operation will be at a distance of 40 miles from the Fatih.

Meanwhile, ahead of Thursday's summit, Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades met with European Council President Donald Tusk and briefed him on the situation, as well as on Ankara's stated plans to settle the fenced-off town of Varosha in occupied northern Cyprus.

After the meeting, Tusk said that he expected the European Council to confirm its full solidarity with Cyprus and its readiness to respond appropriately.

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## New Democracy leader outlines opposition's policy pillars



New Democracy leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis on Friday presented the main opposition party's policy program for rebooting the Greek economy and easing the burden on middle-income taxpayers.

Speaking at an event near central Athens ahead of general elections next month, the 51-year-old economist said that New Democracy plans to implement a series of changes in a program that expresses the party's "identity" and its intention to "reach out to the people."

Outlining the pillars of that program, Mitsotakis said that New Democracy will abolish the "destructive policy" of high primary surpluses "deliberately implemented" by the incumbent SYRIZA government, while also lowering corporate tax from 28 to 20 percent within two years and taxes on shares. He also vowed to introduce measures for reducing the cost of borrowing to business.

On income tax policy, the center-right leader said New Democracy would reduce the levy from 22 to 9 percent on incomes up to 10,000 euros a year and gradually pare the so-called solidarity tax from its current 20 percent to 15 percent. The ENFIA property tax will also be cut by 30 percent within the first two years of a New Democracy government in order to bolster real estate values, while value-added tax would have two categories, of 11 and 22 percent, applicable within a four-year period, he said.

Mitsotakis, a former minister of administrative reform, said that he intends to slash red tape and introduce measures to boost employment so that the number of Greece's jobless shrinks to 500,000 from 850,000 where it is today within four years. On the issue of law and order, the conservative chief announced plans to abolish the so-called Paraskevopoulos law for reducing prison populations that has resulted in hundreds of releases, as well as to amend Greece's new criminal code "where necessary." Bolstering families and the flagging Greek population will be one of ND's "highest priorities," Mitsotakis said, announcing a bonus of 2,000 euros for every child born in Greece, raising the tax ceiling by 1,000 euros for every child dependent, restoring the subsidy for large families to pre-2018 levels and ensuring that all parents have access to kindergarten services.

"New Democracy has a duty to stand beside everyone in need and we support the institution of a minimum guaranteed salary," Mitsotakis said, adding the creating jobs was the best policy for combating poverty.

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EU to ‘closely monitor’ Turkish activities off coast of Cyprus



The European Union will “closely monitor” Turkish drilling activities off the coast of Cyprus and “stands ready to respond appropriately,” the European Council said in the draft conclusions of a summit in Brussels.

According to the draft conclusions, the Council agrees, vis-a-vis “Turkey’s continued illegal drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean,” to “closely monitor developments.” It is also prepared to respond “in full solidarity with Cyprus,” the statement reads.

The European Council further welcomes the invitation to the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to submit options for “appropriate measures without delay.”

Turkey however appeared anything but willing to comply with European calls on Thursday as a second drillship, the Yavuz, departed from the port of Dilovasi outside Istanbul, destined for an area near the peninsula of Karpasia in northern Cyprus, where it is scheduled to begin drilling activities in July.

Turkish Energy Minister Fatih Donmez, who addressed the launch ceremony for the vessel alongside Turkish Petroleum Corporation general manager Melih Han Bilgin, issued a warning to what he described as “external actors” cooperating with the Cypriot government not to pursue “illusions” that will not yield results. According to Donmez, the Yavuz will remain in the area for three months and will operate in a borehole at a depth of 3,300 meters.

The Associated Press said its area of operation will be at a distance of 40 miles from the Fatih.

Meanwhile, ahead of Thursday’s summit, Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades met with European Council President Donald Tusk and briefed him on the situation, as well as on Ankara’s stated plans to settle the fenced-off town of Varosha in occupied northern Cyprus.

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## Strait of Hormuz: US confirms drone was shot down by Iranian missile



A US military surveillance drone has been shot down by Iranian forces while flying over the Strait of Hormuz. Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said the drone had violated Iranian airspace. But US military said it had been over international waters.

IRGC commander-in-chief Maj-Gen Hossein Salami said the downing of the drone sent a "clear message to America" that Iran's borders were its "red line".

It comes at a time of escalating tension between the US and Iran.

On Monday, the US defence department said it was deploying 1,000 extra troops to the region in response to "hostile behaviour" by Iranian forces. It has already sent an aircraft carrier strike group and B-52 bombers. The US has also accused Iran of attacking two oil tankers with mines last Thursday just outside the Strait of Hormuz, in the Gulf of Oman. Iran rejects the allegation.

It was the second time in a month tankers have been attacked close in the region, through which a fifth of the world's oil passes each day. Tensions were further fuelled on Monday when Iran announced its stockpile of low-enriched uranium would next week exceed limits it agreed with world powers under a landmark nuclear deal in 2015. Iran stepped up its production in response to tightening economic sanctions from the US, which unilaterally withdrew from the deal last year.

The IRGC said its air force shot down a US "spy" drone in the early hours of Thursday after the unmanned aircraft violated Iranian airspace near Kuhmobarak in the southern province of Hormozgan. The drone was identified by the IRGC as a RQ-4 Global Hawk, but the US military official told Reuters news agency the drone was a US Navy MQ-4C Triton, a maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft based on the RQ-4B Global Hawk.

Later, in a speech carried live on Iranian state TV, Gen Salami warned the US that it needed to respect Iran's territorial integrity and national security. "The downing of the American drone was a clear message to America, and the message is this: those who defend the borders of the Islamic nation of Iran will react in a total and decisive way to any intrusions by foreign elements on our land. Our borders are our red line." He added: "Iran is not seeking war with any country, but we are fully prepared to defend Iran."

Iran's foreign ministry warned of the consequences of "provocative measures".

### First direct incident of crisis

This is the first direct incident of the current crisis involving the US and Iranian militaries and is a powerful reminder of the dangers of escalation in the Gulf. As far as the Iranians are concerned, the downing of the drone was intended to send a clear and explicit message to the Americans - "our borders are our red line" - a point underscored by the IRGC's commander-in-chief.

So there is no doubting who shot down the US drone, an MQ-4C Triton. It is a massive aircraft with a wing-span equivalent to a small airliner. But the two sides differ as to where it happened. The Iranians say it was in their airspace; the Americans say that it was not.

According to some reports, US President Donald Trump himself is eager to dial down the tension, fearing a spill-over into outright conflict.

### US-Iran tension: Recent events

May 2018: US President Donald Trump withdraws unilaterally from the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers, and begins reinstating sanctions to force Iran to renegotiate the accord. Iran's economy slumps as they take effect. 2 May 2019: Mr Trump steps up pressure on Tehran by ending exemptions from secondary sanctions for countries still buying Iranian oil. 5 May: The US sends an aircraft carrier strike group and B-52 bombers to the Gulf because of "troubling and escalatory indications" related to Iran. 8 May: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani says Iran will scale back its commitments under the nuclear deal in retaliation for the sanctions, including by allowing its stockpile of low-enriched uranium to increase. Enriched uranium is used to make reactor fuel and potentially nuclear weapons. 12 May: Four oil tankers are damaged by explosions off the UAE coast in the Gulf of Oman. The UAE says the blasts were caused by limpet mines planted by a "state actor". The US blames Iran, but it denies the allegation. 13 June: Explosions hit two oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman. The US again accuses Iran, releasing footage purportedly showing Iranian forces removing an unexploded limpet mine from a damaged vessel. Iran says the evidence is fabricated. 17 June: Iran says it will breach on 27 June the limit on its stockpile of enriched uranium set under the nuclear deal, unless Europe protects Iranian oil sales. 20 June: Iranian forces shoot down US military drone over the Strait of Hormuz.

## Florida supporters on why they want Trump to win in 2020



On Tuesday night in Orlando, Florida, Donald Trump "officially" kicked off his presidential re-election bid. And so on Tuesday in Florida - one of the biggest of electoral battlegrounds, a state the president absolutely must win in 2020 - it wasn't about whether Mr Trump was going to seek re-election. It was about how he's going to do it. The event was an unveiling of sorts - a trial run of his pitch to the American people for four more years, before a raucous, red-hat-wearing crowd packing a 20,000-seat arena.

Trump rallies are always a give-and-take affair, with the president trying out lines to see how his supporters react. And the crowd's response to Mr Trump's 78-minute speech offered some clues of what could be in store. There were the expected boasts about the state of the American economy, which he called "perhaps the greatest economy in the history of our country". He talked about regulation-cutting, boosts in military spending, trade negotiations, tax reform, border security and judicial appointments. All received a warm reception from the audience.

"What he's done for this country, the manufacturing jobs coming back, our steel industry coming back, wages for the average American going up, Americans are getting back in homes again - it's a beautiful thing," said Robert Adamson, an insurance salesman from Merritt Island, Florida. "This is the only platform he really gets where he gets a fair shake at being able to divulge his achievements." The Trump phenomenon has always been about more than policies, however - more than just "promises made and promises kept," as Vice-President Mike Pence said in his exceedingly conventional introductory speech.

Mr Trump's success has been about attitude and the ability to connect with his supporters, to make them feel like they're a part of his movement. And that was once again on display in Orlando. "I think he resonates with people because he comes across as a regular person," said Paul Barka, a maintenance worker for a college in Tampa, Florida. "He doesn't talk like a polished politician. It doesn't matter if he comes across as being rash or harsh or even ignorant at times."

At one point, the president polled the audience on whether he should keep "Make America Great Again" as his 2020 campaign slogan or opt for "Keep America Great." The deafening response to the latter option seemed to surprise even him. Similar levels of audience approbation came when he thanked outgoing press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders, who briefly took the microphone to say how honoured she was to have a front row seat to history.

She has been one of the president's most ardent defenders, and the crowd showed their love. "She's been a fighter," says Christopher Dunn, a graduate student who travelled to the rally from northern Florida with some friends. "It's not conflict we want, we want somebody who won't roll over."

Then there was the airing of grievances. If Tuesday's rally was any indication, the overriding theme of the president's re-election campaign will be a bid for vindication - vindication against his critics in the "fake news" media, in the Democratic Party and among the nation's elite. It's all part of "the swamp," which he said has been fighting back against him "so viciously and violently".

The president framed that personal vindication as a victory for his supporters - some of whom, he reminded them, were labelled "deplorables" by Hillary Clinton in 2016. The president also made dark warnings of what could happen if Democrats defeat him in 2020. "They are really going after you," he said. "They are trying to erase your legacy of the greatest campaign and the greatest election probably in the history of the country."

Outside the arena hours before the event, in the steaming Florida sun, a handful of anti-Trump protesters - the villains in the president's evening drama - waved small "baby Trump" balloons and hoisted handmade signs.

That could be what the 2020 election comes down to - a battle of turnout and passion, fuelled by equal parts dedication to the cause and antipathy toward the opposition.

On Tuesday in Orlando, Mr Trump showed he can still draw a massive crowd that is itching for the political battles to come. At least on this night, the enthusiasm among the president's base for his rhetoric and pugilistic attitude hasn't waned, despite polls showing an uphill road ahead for the president. In fact, the enthusiasm may be greater because of those pessimistic polls, because of the us-against-them nature of the undertaking.

It's Mr Trump and his faithful against the Democrats, the media, the world - and, if his speech is a guide, that's just the way the president wants it.