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Georgia Politics Still Boils: Elections Are Coming



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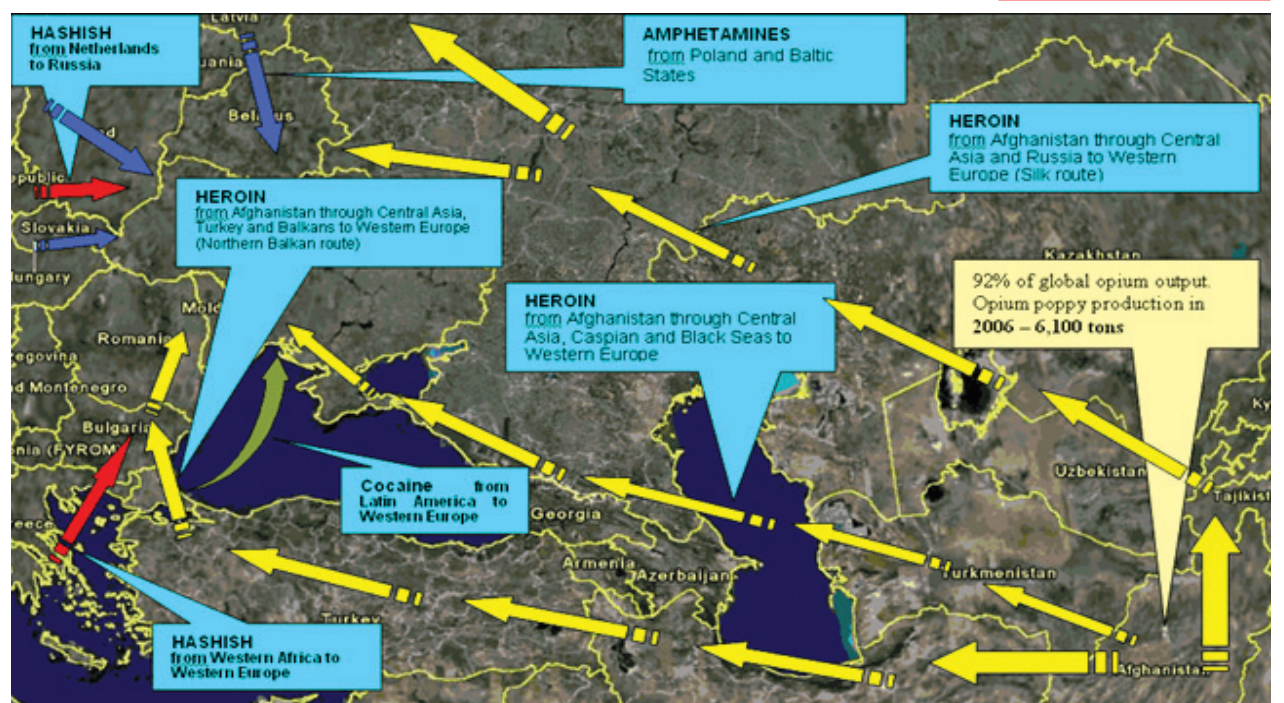
On p. 9

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Pankisi Crisis and Islamic Caliphate Challenge From Jihadist Drug Smuggling Perspective



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On p. 4

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By DR. VAKHTANG MAISAIA

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The election campaign has in fact already been informally launched and is beginning to heat up. But at present it is hard to predict which party is most likely to challenge the Georgian Dream or how much of its October 2012 support the ruling coalition has retained. It is fairly certain that neither the Georgian Dream nor the present main opposition party, the formerly ruling United National Movement, will receive as many votes as last time, but it is unclear who, if anyone, will benefit from the decline in their support. The Patriotic Alliance of Georgia, led by David Tarkhan-Mouravi and Irma Inashvili, and the Democratic Movement of Georgia, led by ex-Speaker of Parliament Nino Burjanadze, may make some inroads and the Labor Party of Georgia, led by Shalva Natelashvili, always attracts a significant minority support, but how and whether this will translate into seats is difficult to determine.

What we can say with certainty however is that these Parliamentary elections will be more volatile, dynamic and aggressive than any previous ones. As the incumbent Georgian Dream government does not wish to change the electoral system they will again be held under a system based on the German model. 73 members will be elected on a "majoritarian" basis (the country is divided in 73 electoral districts, which will each elect one person by the simple majority, or first-past-the-post, system) and 77 will be elected from party lists by proportional repre-

sentation. The smaller parties will be hoping to gain seats in the proportional vote rather than majoritarian contests unless a particularly popular candidate chooses to stand for a majoritarian seat, and as the present government and opposition have both lost support there is still much to play for in this segment of the voting.

There are several reasons why we can conclude that the politicians are expecting a pre-term election:

- The United National Movement is seeking to establish a national "anti-corruption campaign, which involves establishing "Anti-Corruption

Commissions" at regional level. This is the first phase of its election campaign, as confirmed by its leader David Bakradze, who has declared the party ready to take part in elections even if they are held tomorrow. The United National Movement has internal problems within its leadership but is still a stable and well-organised political force, unlike the heterogeneous Georgian Dream coalition. Though no longer popular, it can still expect 13-15% of the vote;

- A crisis has erupted within the Georgian Dream which implies that the disputants are positioning themselves for an expected election. Since the Free Democrats, once an important part of the coalition with 11 MPs and 3 ministers, left the coalition a few months ago its cohesion has been badly affected. Industry Will Save Georgia leader Gogi Topadze has set out new foreign policy priorities and coalition founder and former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili has lost patience with the ineffectiveness and political



scandals associated with current Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili's circle, and is considering establishing a semi-political structure with new faces or even returning to the political arena with a new party;

- There are serious indications that a realignment of the existing forces is taking place, which will result in a new co-

alition offering itself to the electorate to justify its actions. President Giorgi Margvelashvili's personal political team seems to be brokering some sort of deal with the Free Democrats and a movement called Iverioni, which has split from the United National Movement but is composed of former Saakashvili government members. This tripartite coalition is



ready to engage in a campaign and take the "centre-right" position in Georgian politics, clearly demonstrating the pro-Western foreign policy orientation it claims the Georgian Dream no longer has. If the President really is planning this, he must be intending to dissolve the current parliament on the date most conducive to his new party's chances.

At the present time no election has been called and it is

difficult to see what advantage the non-government parties would gain if the President called one. However the situation is fluid, there is a clear expectation that elections will be called and we are bound to see many surprises between now and whenever the election is, just as we did in 2012.

The Georgian Institute for Geostrategic and Euro-Atlantic Studies Institute, Chairman

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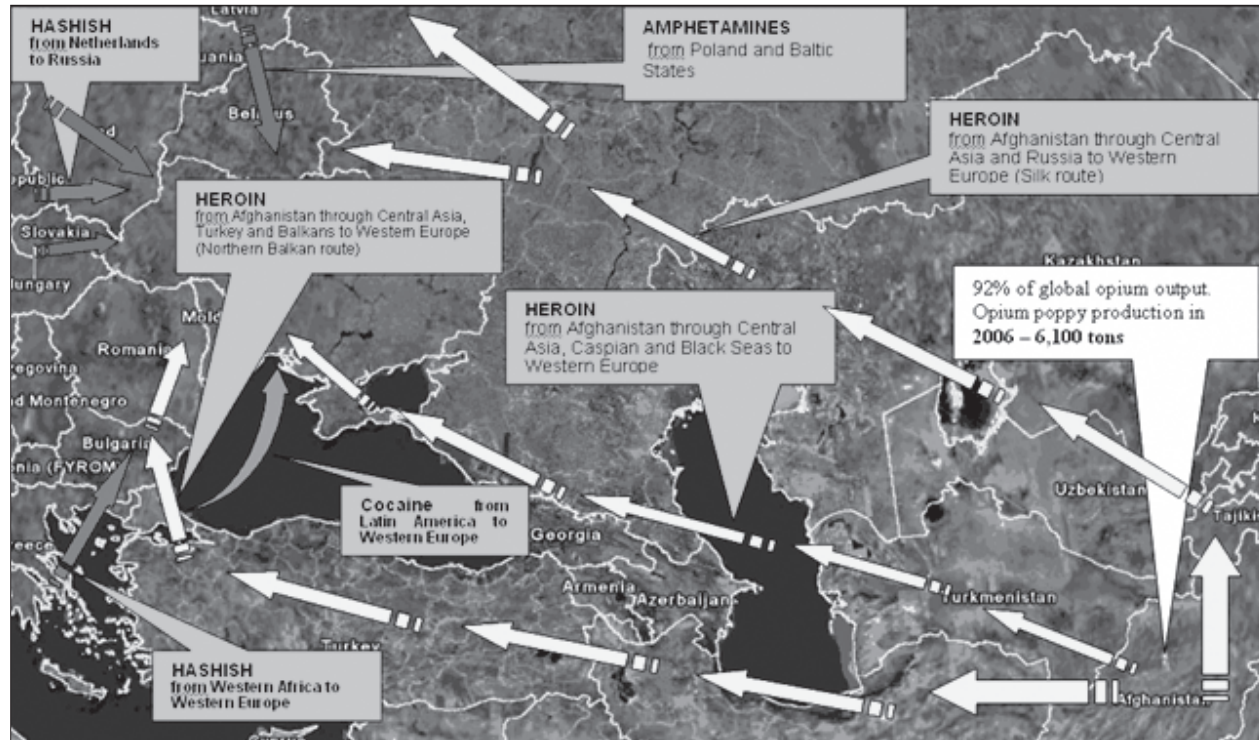
The advertisement features a central image of three people wearing headphones and holding speakers, with a DJ setup in front of them. To the left is a Marshall speaker and headphones. To the right are colorful, patterned balloons. The background is a light gray gradient.

Pankisi Crisis and Islamic Caliphate Challenge From Jihadist Drug Smuggling Perspective

By DR. VAKHTANG MAISAIA

It has recently been suggested that personal mistreatment and confrontation have created a rivalry between the Afghan Taliban and the Arabic Islamic Caliphate. Though the two groups have a common ideological background in the Salafiyah teachings, the Taliban subscribes to the Deobandism strand of this doctrine while the Islamic Caliphate is Wahhabist. Furthermore, although these nominal strategic allies pursue a common mission to enforce the domination of Islamic Shariah Law (in both its divine and revealed sense) and Fiqh, the human process of understanding and implementing the law, they have different interpretations of how Global Jihad should be conducted, and thus who should control the important territories where heroin is cultivated.

As is known, drug trafficking is considered a crucial part of the Global Jihad against Crusaders and Jews, a form of biological warfare designed to destroy the enemy's society.



ical and ideological goal. The importance of this activity is one of the reasons the Taliban and Islamic Caliphate have come to blows over it.

According to some information Islamic Caliphate-controlled combat groups, consisting mainly of recruits from the North Caucasus, have infiltrated the south and south-eastern provinces of Afghanistan controlled by the Taliban movement, which are most famous as the heroin cultivation areas where the Taliban and its allied

the local Taliban in advance, an obvious provocation. Moreover, after reinforcing its presence in the North and South Caucasus the Islamic Caliphate is seeking to gain control of the heroin transit routes as well as the regions where it is cultivated.

The Taliban uses drug transit routes that pass through the Caucasus, including Georgia, intensively. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia recently distributed some information leaflets which said that 2.79

Georgia had been arrested. The truck was carrying 92 30-litre plastic barrels filled with illegal

stan-Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey, with the final destination probably

very likely the Karachi narco-mafia militant groups, supported by the Mukhabarat, the Taliban's special intelligence service, which attacked Georgian peacekeepers in Helmand province in June 2013 and inflicted heavy casualties upon them. The Karachi narco-mafia wanted to ensure the safe delivery of heroin from Helmand to Karachi port, and these forces represent a serious threat to the international community independent of that of the radical Islamic-Jihadist network they work with.

It was the leader of the so-called Kandahar Clan of the Taliban, Mulla Bashir (Jami Bashir Nurzai), who instigated the Allah's Tears project, in which 1 liter of liquid heroin is produced from each 50kg of poppy and smuggled as tea or sugar or even liquid soap. Nevertheless, it is probable that the

TERRORIST GROUPS INVOLVED IN DRUGS IN	HEROIN	COCAINE	CANNABIS/MARIJUANA/KHAT	ECSTASY/AMPHETAMINES
Afghanistan (Taliban, Al Qaeda)	X			
Albania / Kosovo / Macedonia	X			
Burma / Myanmar (United Wa State Army)	X			X
Colombia (FARC, AUC)		X		
Lebanon (Hizbollah)			X	
Morocco (Al Qaeda)			X	
Nepal (Maoists)			X	
Philippines (Abu Sayyaf)			X	
Somalia (Warlords)			X	
Sri Lanka (LTTE)	X			
Turkey (PKK)	X			
Uzbekistan (IMU)	X			

Figure 2: Terrorist groups funded by drug trafficking



Hence it not only provides high revenue which can finance the achievement of Jihad strategic goals but culturally and morally destroys the enemy, a polit-

drug cartel clans produce crops which earn them between \$5 and \$8 billion net annually. They entered from Iran's Khorasan Region without notifying

tones of liquid heroin had been seized from a cargo truck which had entered Georgia from Azerbaijan, the biggest ever drug haul in Georgia, and two citizens of

substances, 80% of the contents being heroin worth "hundreds of millions of U.S. dollars", which was intended for international transit and was en route to Turkey. These drugs belonged to the Taliban. It had been forced to use the "northern transit route", the shortest, in order to get a large amount of money quickly to reinforce its military capability (hire more mercenaries, purchase armaments, etc.) to intensify its military operations at regional and national levels in preparation for the ending of the NATO ISAF mission.

The most drug favored transit route is probably Afghani-

a Southern European country where it is turned into the finished product at a special underground laboratory. The sodden liquid heroin ceases flowering at the end of June in Afghanistan, which is why large seizures generally take place in July and August.

The "Jihadist Drug" – known as "Allah's Tears" – carries with it the possibility of retaliation by the forces behind these transactions, the narco-cartels such as the Kandahar or Karachi drug mafias who make annual profits of \$2-3 billion and cooperate closely with the local Taliban warlords. It was

Taliban and Islamic Caliphate will eventually have to cut a deal concerning its production and distribution, and this would make it well-nigh impossible to confront the trafficking problem at regional level. Hence, the "Pankisi Crisis", in which natives of that small region are somehow being removed from there to fight for the Islamic Caliphate, could soon fuel an explosion in Jihadist Drug trafficking too.

The Georgian Institute for Geostrategic and Euro-Atlantic Studies Institute, Chairman

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Russia, Iran and China Create anti-NATO Alliance: Why?

By DR. VAKHTANG MAISAIA

Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dekhan has come out with a proposal to create closer military cooperation between Iran, Russia, India and China to counter NATO enlargement to the East and the deployment of U.S. Missile Defense Program elements in the Mediterranean and Black Sea areas. The minister made this statement at the Fourth International Conference on Security Issues held in Moscow on April 15-18, at the same time Russia's Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu proposed setting up a formal military alliance to prevent further NATO enlargement.



Iran, Russia and Syria, countries with similar government structures, have proposed greater mutual partnership on previous occasions as a means of addressing common challenges and threats. Russia is already forging closer military ties with its allies under the aegis of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), which involves seven post-Soviet states (Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) and is seeking to create Rapid Reaction Forces and a

common Anti-Air Defense System. This will create a so-called "second rim" of collective defense in the Eurasian geopolitical space.

Russia is also reinforcing its bilateral linkages with China and India through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). This will create a "third rim" of collective defense, and promote joint action in combating terrorism by military means and de-

veloping common regional security principles. The "first rim" of this ever-widening system includes very close military cooperation with the de facto republics of Abkhazia and a reinforcement of the Russian military presence in the Black Sea-Caucasus area.

According to Russian military experts and international relations specialists such as Dr. Andrei Sushentsov Russia has al-

ready achieved several of its geostrategic missions despite being in a new Cold War situation with the West. In each case, these are missions it did not achieve during the first Cold War. They can be defined as follows:

- Russia has achieved hegemony in the Black Sea basin and pursues its national interests there without reference to the ethical and moral principles of international relations. It has dem-



onstrated Realpolitik in action and repulsed U.S. attempts to contain it in the way the Soviet Union was contained within the geopolitical boundaries of the Eurasian "Heartland";

- Russia has seized the strategically vital Black Sea port of Sevastopol, the warm water facility it has always sought, and thus gained the possibility of greatly increasing Black Sea Naval Fleet capabilities and deploying a Strategic Command HQ of the Fleet in Crimea. The recent agreements with de facto Abkhazia have also increased Russia's geostrategic presence in this area;

- Russia has gained the full support of more than 2 million Russian speakers in the Crimean peninsula and thus completed its "historic mission" of regaining control of all originally "Russian" territory. This action is very similar to Nazi Germany's annexes of Austria and the Sudetenland in 1938;

- Russia has managed to avoid becoming fully isolated from the Western community and at the same time has concluded strategic partnership arrangements with other Global Power Centers such as India and China.

These perceptions are widely held in Russia's political analyst and expert community circles and are far from groundless.

It should also be noted that China, India, Iran and Russia have a range of common geopolitical goals. These include:

- Suppression of NATO enlargement to the Caucasus and Central Asia and its dominance of the Black Sea basin;

- Countering the threat of the Islamic Caliphate, in issue in all these countries;

- Stopping the deployment of U.S. National Missile Defense Program elements in the Black Sea area;

- Dealing with the situation in Afghanistan after the ISAF withdrawal and preventing the Taliban, which has caused problems throughout the region, regaining power in Kabul;

- Reinforcing the Russo-Iran presence in the Middle East by fully supporting the Assad regime in Syria;

- Promoting the development of their national military-industrial complexes developing joint armament projects.

This hypothetical scenario is very easily becoming a reality which will change the present world order. The "Eurasian Alliance" could force a reorientation of international society's priorities from Western to Eastern ones.

The Georgian Institute for Geostrategic and Euro-Atlantic Studies Institute, Chairman

NEWS

BELARUS, GEORGIA PLEDGE TO DEEPEN TIES

Belarus President, Alexander Lukashenko, who is paying his first official visit to Georgia, said that he considers Georgia as "a friendly country", whom Minsk has "never let down even in the most difficult times."

Lukashenko, who arrived in Tbilisi on Wednesday evening and will also travel to Batumi during the visit, met on Thursday morning his Georgian counterpart Giorgi Margvelashvili and then PM Iraklii Garibashvili.

"Dear Giorgi, we should have met each other in this legendary city, this legendary country much earlier," Lukashenko told his Georgian counterpart during his opening remarks for the press in the beginning of the meeting, which lasted for hour and a half.

"I told you already that it is shame I have never been in Tbilisi before; actually I've never been in Georgia, except of Sukhumi [in Abkhazia] – that was in the Soviet era," Lukashenko said.

"In politics we have no disagreements whatsoever. I am grateful both to the former president [Mikheil Saakashvili] and you for supporting us everywhere, in the West," Lukashenko added.

Asked during a press conference after the meeting about Russia's recent "alliance" treaties with Abkhazia and South Ossetia and if Belarus will remain committed to non-recognition of these breakaway regions, Lukashenko responded: "Our position about those problems remains unchanged; otherwise I would not have arrived here."

"After the war between Georgia and Russia relations should have been built more softly, not making such steps, which you have mentioned [apparently referring to "alliance" treaties]," Lukashenko said.

"We, together with [the Georgian] President, are realists and we have agreed to draw a line and see what happens tomorrow, what can be done to normalize relations between Georgia, Belarus, also with Russia," he said.

"I think that in the near future we will find at least one answer to a small question – what kind of step to take in order not only to stop this rhetoric, but also to get positions of the states closer and to live in one family as it once was. There is no conflict between peoples of Georgia, Belarus, Russia. Misunderstandings on the political level can be overcome, but we should set concrete tasks and make concrete steps," the Belarus President said.

"We spoke about it, but I am not authorized by the [Georgian] President to unveil our agreements, but in the nearest future you will hear about them," Lukashenko added.

These remarks by Lukashenko on which he did not elaborate triggered questions if he was somehow intending to act or already acting as a mediator or offering to host high-level talks between Georgia and Russia in Minsk.

Georgian President's foreign policy adviser Tengiz Pkhaldadze said speculation on mediation or high-level talks is "pointless" if there is "no political will to take concrete steps towards de-occupation, return of displaced persons, retraction of recognition [of Abkhazia and South Ossetia] or for any other step which Georgia can benefit from."

Speaking at the joint news conference after the meeting, President Margvelashvili thanked Belarus for supporting Georgia's territorial integrity.

"We stressed our appreciation which the Georgian state and the Georgian people have towards Belarus and personally towards Alexander Grigoryevich [Lukashenko] for their support towards the issues, which are very acute for Georgia – in a very difficult circumstances our Belarusian friends have always been unambiguously supportive towards our territorial integrity and sovereignty," the Georgian President said.

He also noted "important role, which our Belarusian friends play" in trying to resolve conflict in Ukraine peacefully.

"Minsk has become the city where agreements are being actually reached for peace and stability in the region. In this context we of course touched upon the problem in Ukraine and the positive impulse, which was given by Minsk to the Ukrainian people and to the entire region," Margvelashvili said.

He also said that this visit of the Belarus President "will lay a significant foundation for further deepening our relations and broadening of our cooperation."

"Although Georgia's economic relations are deepening with the EU and economic ties of Belarus are deepening with the Customs Union, we deeply believe that this development should in no way restrict our bilateral relations, but on the contrary it should give new potential to Georgian and Belarusian economies," Margvelashvili said.

Commenting on the same issue, Lukashenko said: "We have to use with maximum benefit Belarus' participation in Eurasian Economic Union and implementation by Georgia of the Association Agreement with the EU. Reasonable people will always find ways for cooperation even in the most difficult times."

"Although Georgia quit the CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States], Belarus and Georgia maintained free trade regime and we have never let you down even in the most difficult times," the Belarus President said.

He said that the current level of economic and trade relations between the two countries are far from its actual potential and "a significant part" of talks were dedicated to this issue.

Lukashenko said that the Georgian-Belarus business forum, which was held in Tbilisi on April 22, led to significant agreements, which has the potential to boost bilateral trade between the two countries to USD 200 million annually.

Bilateral trade turnover between Georgia and Belarus stood at USD 55.9 million in 2014, according to the Georgian state statistics office.

He said that it was agreed to make focus on setting up of joint ventures.

"Just to trade is easy, but setting up of joint ventures either in Belarus or in Georgia to produce goods and to then sell them on the global markets is more difficult, but it's realistic," Lukashenko said.



Belarus Agriculture Minister Leonid Zayats and Minister of Industry Vitaly Vovk met Georgian Agriculture Minister Otar Danelia in Tbilisi on April 22 and discussed a memorandum on fostering setting up of joint ventures in the agriculture sector.

Number of Belarus ministers, accompanying Lukashenko, signed with their Georgian counterparts about dozen of agreements and memorandums on cooperation in the areas ranging from fighting crime, customs issues to healthcare, education and agriculture.

"I am absolutely convinced that if our governments work efficiently and if our agreements are implemented, believe me contribution of Belarus in development of Georgia will be indisputable, it will be obvious. We want to make it for our... brothers with whom we lived in same home and we should not forget about it," Lukashenko said.

"Belarus unwaveringly considers Georgia as a friendly country, which is very close to us. Development of our political and economic relations is in the interests of the both countries," he said.

Lukashenko said that the two countries have "constructive cooperation" on various international forums, including in frames of OSCE and EU's Eastern Partnership.

Opening of Belarus embassy in Tbilisi was also discussed, Lukashenko said. Georgia opened its embassy in Minsk in 2007.

President Margvelashvili said he believes that the Belarus President's visit will mark "the beginning of very active and efficient cooperation."

After the meeting the two presidents signed a joint statement, which reiterates readiness of the two countries to boost ties in broad range of areas.

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თურქეთის მასშტაბით 12 საუკეთესო კლინიკა მზად არის იზრუნოს თქვენს ჯანმრთელობაზე

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The growth in aged people population, high quality and economical prices compared with European countries make Turkey advantageous about being the “health base” of the region other Countries. Thanks to its strategic location, Turkey has a very good advantage as being close both to Europe and Middle East and Balkan countries With its quality service in Turkey, it became one of the favorite countries in health tourism. The success of our doctors, the quality of our health corporations, being more economical in terms of logistics and medical charges are our important advantages when compared with other countries in health tourism. Medicana Hospitals Group treats patient from Middle East, Middle Asia, Balkans and Europe as well as Turkey by giving service in internationals standards in areas from heart surgery to in-vito fertilization center, from advanced cancer treatment to cosmetology, from brain surgery to organ transplant, from hemodialysis to knee joint disorders and neurology in hospitals accredited by JCI..... Our healthcare facilities chain, which is recognized as one of limited number of private healthcare investments worldwide, is comprised of 9 general purpose hospitals, including Medicana International Istanbul and Medicana International Ankara, and 2 dental care hospitals and we are proud to offer 7/24 healthcare service at high quality level in all departments. Our ultimate target is to constantly improve healthcare services, complying with standards of European Union, and remarkable customer satisfaction level at out hospitals which are subjects to inspections by Joint Commission International (JCI) representing international quality standards. We will surely continue our efforts to make your smile permanent. We wish a healthy, quality and good life...



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