

## **July 2020 shaping up as Erdogan's 'month of provocation and insult'**



**July 2020 is rapidly emerging as the month when Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's administration fully revealed itself as a Islamist agitator on a global scale, with the most shocking provocation, of course, being the conversion of the Hagia Sophia into a mosque - a shocking decision that continues to generate heightened international condemnation.**

True to form, a Turkish seismic research vessel on Thursday sailed off the coast of the divided eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus, after Ankara issued an illegal navigational telex, known as a NAVTEX, reserving parts of Cyprus' exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The action comes days after a similar provocation in a sea region roughly between the large Greek island of Crete and Cyprus fizzled out, after international pressure was applied on Ankara, and in the wake of a rapid mobilization by Greece's air and sea forces.

Referring to the latest illegal NAVTEX, the US government reportedly called the Turkish activity off Cyprus “provocative.”

The research vessel Barbaros was spotted off Famagusta on Thursday morning after sailing from a Turkish port late on Wednesday. The illegal notification by Ankara reserves blocks 2 and 3, and a part of block 13, all of which are within Cyprus’ exclusive economic maritime zone.

Greek media on Thursday quoted an unnamed US State Department official as saying that Washington remains deeply troubled by Turkey’s intended plans to explore for natural resources within Cyprus’ waters.

The unnamed official added that such provocative actions increase tension in the region, while urging Turkish authorities to cease such operations.

### **Diaspora office-holders respond by issuing condemnations, eyeing resolutions in legislatures**

In a related development, several ethnic Greek office-holders around the world immediately responded to a call by a special Greek Parliament committee to condemn the continued Turkish provocations, as well as the sacrilegious conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque.

At least 12 distinguished office-holders in the Greek diaspora have already written letters condemning the Erdogan administration, with the initiative to continue via the passing of resolutions in numerous legislatures around the world to condemn the provocations.

Similarly, ethnic Greek organizations and business groups in Germany also sent letters to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, EU Parliament President David Sas-SO-li and Germany’s foreign minister, requesting courageous and effective measures against the Turkish government, while condemning the Hagia Sophia conversion.

### **US ambassador in Turkey tours Hagia Sophia for first time since its conversion**

Meanwhile, the US Ambassador to Turkey, David Satterfield, visited Hagia Sophia on Wednesday, reportedly for first time since its conversion.

A later Tweet on the US embassy's verified account stated that "...Ambassador Satterfield toured Hagia Sophia to admire its grandeur and technical genius, and better understand the renovation and restoration work to be completed to preserve the universal value of and continued access to this monumental building."

According to Turkish media, the US ambassador was accompanied by Coskun Yilmaz, the top culture and tourism official at the metropolitan level.



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### **Ecumenical Patriarch: Hagia Sophia belongs to all humanity, and shouldn't be used to cause conflict between peoples**

Still on the subject, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, His All Holiness Bartholomew I, reiterated, in comments to a Ukrainian news site that the landmark structure, the greatest of all cathedrals of eastern Christendom for nearly a millennium, belongs to all humanity, and should not be used to cause conflict between peoples. His All Holiness said the Hagia Sophia symbolizes solidarity and

mutual understanding between Christianity and Islam, warning that its reconversion into a mosque could turn millions of Christians against the Islamic world.

