

The 1974 Turkish invasion in Cyprus

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Background: the road to invasion

Since the establishing of the newly independent Cyprus the two communities and their motherlands have been working to destabilize the fragile socio-political situation of the island. After the 1960 constitution only 3 years were spent in a relative tranquillity but during that period of time the problems of the rigid and rapidly constructed constitutional order were able to be seen for the wide public. The institution of the shared sovereignty was created to ensure the peace and the appropriate collaboration between the Greek- and the Turkish-Cypriot communities. However, this utopia did not take into consideration the different perceptions of the two sides. After 1963 the Greek-Cypriot struggle for enosis¹ was getting to undermine this unbalanced socio-political environment.²

The constitution provided exceptional rights for the minority Turkish-Cypriot community given the chance to defend them against encroachment by the Greek-Cypriot leadership. The Treaty of Guarantee provided recognition to the basic articles of the Constitution, required the Republic of Cyprus to maintain the state of affairs established by the treaties and also acknowledged the entitlement of three named Guarantor Powers, the United Kingdom, Greece and Turkey, jointly or separately to maintain the state of affairs being established. The Treaty of Establishment included the right of the United Kingdom to retain military base areas under British sovereignty. The Treaty of Alliance was signed by Greece, Turkey and Cyprus; they principally agreed to co-operate in their common defence. The main goal of these treaties was to ensure the political balance between the two communities and their motherlands. The possible military intervention of the guarantor nations given by the Treaty of Guarantee was limited for the 'reconstruction of the constitutional order' and nothing more.³

By the middle of 1963 the constitutional machinery began to fall apart under the pressure of the competing Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot political interests. By November of 1963 it was revealed that the constitution is simply unworkable. The Greek-Cypriot side intended to remove the 'obstacles' from the constitution such as the Turkish veto in

¹ Enosis was the main struggle of the Greek-Cypriot side means independence and union with Greece.

² Oliver P. Richmond: Ethno-Nationalism, Sovereignty and Negotiating Positions in the Cyprus Conflict: Obstacles to a Settlement. *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Jul., 1999), pp. 42–63.

³ Clement Dodd: *The History and Politics of the Cyprus Conflict*, Palgrave MacMillan Ltd. (2010) London, pp.: 38–39.

legislative issues. This problem led to inter-communal violence and ethnic clashes between the Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot people so the British troops intervened and establishing the so called green line to divide the capital and to provide the way to the United Nations Peace Keeping force (UNFICYP) which has remained ever since. Albeit the wide military action did not fulfil the British and UN hopes to put an end to the clashes. The fight renewed and the Turkish air force bombed the Greek-Cypriot military units concentrated around the established Turkish-Cypriot enclaves. The first Turkish plan of the Cyprus invasion was born at that time and only the intense diplomatic pressure was able to prevent the wide-scale military action. Between 1964 and 1967 the Greek-Cypriot leader Makarios realized their enosis aspirations had been quite unpractical and would mean war against Turkey. After archbishop Makarios' convincing win at the 1968 president election a new era began. The rest of the Greek-Cypriot people disillusioned by the enosis and the economic fears were growing according to unite with the Greek military dictatorship. Also inter-communal talks set up by UN officials and lasted permanently until 1974. On the other hand the Greek military junta observed the turn of Makarios with an anxious eye. Since then the archbishop had to face with a systematic destabilization of his regime made by the Greek military dictatorship. Makarios returned the reliable general Grivas to lead the EOKA B but they had to fill the vacancies with Greek officers due to the lack of experienced Greek-Cypriot military officers. The temporary solution seemed adequate but the growing number of the enosis sympathisers among the military officers concerned huge problems. After Grivas' death Makarios was well aware of the hardest point of the situation. He immediately demanded the withdrawal of the Greek officers from the National Guard on 2 July 1974 after all the archbishop knew the control of the Guard had fallen out from his hand. After his open letter to the Greek President Gizikis the coup was inevitable. On 15 July 1974 the Cypriot National Guard led by its Greek officers overthrew the government and Makarios narrowly escaped from the death. After the attack of the presidential palace they installed a former EOKA gunman Nikos Sampson as a puppet president. This act was a perfect 'casus belli' for Bulent Ecevit, the Turkish prime minister for the military intervention and to establish some military presence on the island. According to the Treaty of Guarantee he appealed for British to give military assistance and when it was refused the Turkish troops were sent into Cyprus on 20 July.⁴

The first invasion: establishing a bridgehead

After the coup the Turkish military was preparing to the invasion according to the old 1963 intervention plan. The Turkish navy and air force prepared with a synchronized attack and the first aim was to establish a defendable bridgehead in the Kyrenia region, the northern part of the island. In the early hours on 20 July the Turkish armed forces launched an amphibious invasion of Pentemilli located on the northern coastline, approximately 8 km west of the main harbour town of Kyrenia. It was clear that the first goal of the Turkish Head of Command was to force the Greek-Cypriot population to flee from the northern part

⁴ David Souter: *An Island Apart: A Review of the Cyprus Problem*. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Jul., 1984), pp. 661–664.

of the island. On the other hand paratrooper battalions were dropped near Nicosia in order to secure the main road from the capital to Kyrenia and support the Turkish-Cypriot enclaves.⁵ The Turkish paratrooper operation was a surprise for the Cypriot National Guard but in the first stage it failed to control the main road and to adequately support the enclaves. The National Guard deployed its best units near Famagusta trying to break down the resistance of the Turkish-Cypriot enclave.⁶ So the third Turkish strike was to demolish the bridgeheads of the CNG concentrated around Famagusta with many merciless air strikes. The CNG was quite divided and certain factions could be seen into their rows after the coup. These factions and unsteadiness posed several problems for CNG and definitely worsened its defence ability.⁷ Shortly after the first wave (which consisted approximately 3000 troops) the second and main task force reached the northern coast near to Kyrenia harbour. Around noon the Greek-Cypriot mechanized units moved to Girne and Pontemili to destroy the Turkish bridgehead but they were pounded by the Turkish fighter-bombers caused fatal damages into the Greek-Cypriot units. At the afternoon the Greek-Cypriot started a counter-attack in order to engage the Turkish forces but they failed to achieve anything decisive. But surprisingly the night actions caused several friendly shot fired on the Turkish side killed some high ranked officers as well, which showed the confusion of the troops and the Turkish military control.⁸ At the end of the first day of invasion the Turkish army was successful in establishing a strong bridgehead (gained 300 km² in the northern coast) and achieved the other major goal to force to flee the Greek-Cypriot population to the south. The Greek-Cypriot and Hellenic forces was able the encircled some enclaves, but with the lack of air cover they were not succeeded in rolling back significantly the invaders.⁹

The second day started quite silent around the Turkish beachhead and during the day the second major wave departed from Turkey, on the other hand the Turkish Air Force commenced a heavy air campaign to block the Hellenic reinforcement and to cover the arrivals the second wave of troops. The Turkish road block between Kyrenia was attacked from Morphou and forced the invaders into a defensive position. The Greek-Cypriot

⁵ The Cyprus National Guard High Command had planned a massive island-wide assault on the Turkish-Cypriot enclaves of Cyprus, in case of a Turkish invasion, so as to quickly eliminate these enclaves as potential footholds for a bridgehead. The initial plan – drawn up by general Grivas in 1964 – was given the codename ‘Aphrodite 1’ and relied upon a full Greek division of 10,000 troops with heavy weapons. This division had been withdrawn from the island in 1967 thus a new plan was drawn up prior to 1974 named ‘Aphrodite 2’ and was to take the form of a major ground offensive against the enclaves instigated at the initiative of the Greek-Cypriots rather than the Greeks. This offensive should not be confused with the so-called ‘Aphrodite 3’ also called ‘Hephaestus Plan’, which was drawn to attack the presidential palace and remove Makarios from the power.

⁶ Contrary to popular belief the biggest Turkish-Cypriot enclave was not in Famagusta. It was the Nicosia-St. Hilarion enclave (also called Günyeli enclave) with its 25,000 population out of the total of 117,000 Turkish-Cypriots.

⁷ Beside the CNG the Turkish forces had to take into consideration the well trained but lightly equipped ELDYK (ELliniki DYnami Kyprou), the Hellenic Contingent in Cyprus consists 1200 troops.

⁸ One of the officers who were killed by friendly fire was colonel Karaoglanoglu, the commander of the 50th infantry battalion.

⁹ See: <http://www.hellas.org/cyprus/timeline.htm>, downloaded: 12 November 2012.

struggle to terminate the Turkish corridor between Kyrenia and Nicosia was not successful on the contrary the invaders were able to widen the corridor and to push back the CNG forces. Undoubtedly the most significant situation was of the day the Greek Cypriot Naval Command's delusive act. Turkish Air Force received reports of a Greek task force of ships off the coast of Paphos and assembled a force of around 28 strike aircraft to destroy the Hellenic force. This however was a deception and the radio signals transmitted by the Greek Cypriot Naval Command indicated that the three Turkish destroyers were in fact Greek war ships carrying support for the CNG. The strategy worked and the Turkish Air Force attacked their own vessels and even one of them sank during the air raid.¹⁰ In the evening the 'Operation Niki' started which covered the air transportation of the 35th Commando Unit from Greece to Cyprus as a strategic reserve for the future battles. The CNG needed help because on 22 July the second wave of Turkish amphibious force, the so called Bora Task Force arrived at Pentemilli including a whole tank company and a mechanized infantry. The troops of the Bora Task Force were sent to launch an offensive against Kyrenia and the merging of the bridgehead position with the Agyrta-Lefkosia enclave prior to the implementation of the cease-fire. The Greek-Cypriot High Command also sent strengthening to the Kyrenia region in order to build up a defensive line in the western part of the city but the CNG forces was overrun by the outnumbered Turkish troops. In the afternoon the invading units entered Kyrenia and divided into two separate forces in order to seek and set up a new bridgehead in the Kyrenia harbour for the forthcoming waves, while the other force marched to the Boghazi-Argypta pass to unite with the previously deployed paratroopers. The Turkish endeavour was successfully carried out by the troops and formed a stable bridgehead between Kyrenia and the village of Geunyeli which was a strategic position to possess the control over the Kyrenia-Nicosia corridor. At 4:00 p.m. the cease-fire supposed to start but the Turkish forces disregarded it and continued the air strike against the CNG positions near Kyrenia. At the airport of Nicosia took place a considerable fight to get the control of the landing fields. The military operation affected the nearby situated UN camp as well which concluded that the territory of the Nicosia Airport later declared as a United Nations Protected Area in order to secure the future transportations including the humanitarian aids as well.¹¹

Cease-fire and the first Geneva Conference 25–30 July

Establishing a cease-fire was not an easy task considering the two opposite forces still had military operations after the cease-fire had declared. The United Kingdom, Greece and Turkey decided to enter into peace negotiations in order to restore the peace in the island and according to the Treaty of Guarantee to restore the constitutional order. The peace talks began in Geneva on the 25 July 1974 which also known as the Geneva Conferences. Callaghan represented the United Kingdom, Foreign Minister Turan Günes Turkey and Foreign Minister George Mavros Greece. After some argument the conference declared the

¹⁰ The Turkish Navy destroyer *Kocatepe* is sunk, while the other two, the *Adatepe* and the *Maresal Fevzi Cakmak* suffered significant damage that renders them non-battle worthy.

¹¹ <http://www.hellas.org/cyprus/timeline.htm>

follows, "1. Recognition of the need to set in train as a matter of urgency, measures to adjust and to regularize, within a reasonable period of time, the situation in the Republic of Cyprus on a lasting basis. 2. No further extension of the areas controlled by the Turkish forces. 3. The establishment of a security zone at the limit of the areas occupied by the Turkish forces. 4. The evacuation of all Turkish (*sic*) enclaves occupied by Greek and Greek Cypriot forces, and the continuation of their protection by UNFICYP. 5. The release of military personnel detained by either side. 6. The elaboration of measures leading to the timely and phased reduction of the numbers of armed forces and of war material, 'within the framework of a just and lasting solution acceptable to all the parties concerned' [emphasis added]. 7. The participation of representatives of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities in the further talks beginning in Geneva on 8 August. 8. The discussion at the forthcoming talks of, *inter alia*, the immediate return to constitutional legitimacy, the Vice-President to resume his functions as under the 1960 Constitution."¹² The five-day-long meeting contributed to the rapprochement between the two sides but we have to see that Turkey gained more than its counterpart. On one hand the linking of the timely and phased reduction of armed forces and war material with finding solution was really important for Turkey. On the other hand the agreement did not mention the protection of the Greek-Cypriots who had to flee due to the invasion and had to leave their homes and the rest of their belongings. On third hand the agreement froze the military situation as far as the territorial questions are concerned given the chance to the Turkish army to reinforce their positions. The declaration of the Nicosia Airport as a UN Protected Area was taken into question by the Turkish delegation but Callaghan (and of course Kissinger) assured the parties that no advantage could be gained for the Greek troops due to the UN action.¹³

During the first Geneva conference and between the end of the first and the beginning of the second invasion several clashes took place. Even a Turkish offensive carried out against the 'Karavas' defensive (areas of Laitphos-Karavas) line of the Greek and Greek-Cypriot troops on 6 August with significant air strike so the Greek forces had to retreat.¹⁴

The second Geneva Conference 8–14 August

The meeting started with the participation of the representatives of the two communities and later on 10 August the leaders, Clerides and Dentktash joined to their delegations. The first conference left several problematic issues which were debated intensely at the second one. The most crucial point was to make it clear that the areas controlled by opposing forces should not be extended in order to avoid the further escalation and to halt the probable second invasion. The other requirement was the immediate evacuation of all Turkish enclaves occupied by Greek and Greek Cypriot forces which was the prior agenda of the Turkish. Unfortunately the biggest problem was that the cease-fire was not holding. Mavros the Greek Foreign Minister claimed that since 22 July cease-fire the Turkish troops

¹² Clement Dodd: *The History and Politics of the Cyprus Conflict*, *op. cit.* pp.: 118–119.

¹³ *Idem.* pp.: 115–119.

¹⁴ The Turkish military operations were made to prepare the eligible positions and to gain strategic advantage for the future attack. Savvas D. Vlassis: *O Aporritos Atilas*, Athens, 2004.

occupied more than 130km² by 8 August totally disregarded the agreement. From the Turkish perspective they were stressed by the Turkish-Cypriot enclaves encircled by the CNG consisting some 81,000 people who were defenceless. Not surprisingly the meetings were characterized by the differences of the British and American opinions of how to prevent the following aggression on the island. The British imagination was to reinforce the UNFICYP troops and deploying fighter aircrafts in order to deter the next Turkish intervention which opinion was agreed by Kurt Waldheim the UN Secretary General as well.¹⁵ Kissinger considerably disagreed this imagination due to he got assurances from Ecevit to whom he had sent a message to continue the peace talks and to refrain from any military action since he believed that there is a real possibility of moving the Turks off their idea of a single Turkish zone in Cyprus.¹⁶

During the direct talks the Turkish opinion did not change so they want two federated states autonomous within their geographical boundaries. This meant two international identities and the loss of the 30% of the island as the Turkish delegation claimed. The Greek-Cypriot side could agree with the autonomy but only in communal and local matters but inside the Republic of Cyprus and not in a wholly separate state. As we can observe the two separate statements were pretty far from each other and at 2.25 a.m. on 14 August the conference broke up right after the Turkish Foreign Minister Günes had told on the telephone to Ecevit that 'Ayse is going on holiday', which meant to start the second invasion.¹⁷

The second invasion: overrun and extending the bridgehead

The new Turkish attack began almost two hours after the conference broke up. On 14 August 1974 Turkish forces massively reinforced to the strength of two infantry divisions and supporting elements, commenced a second major offensive, codenamed Attila II. In the Eastern sector, the Turkish Navy, Air force and artillery started firing at the Greek coalition positions and extended the attack alongside the so called Mia Milia Greek-Cypriot Defensive Line. For security issues the UN troops were informed where the clear pathway through the minefields was in front of the defensive line. Probably from that source the Turkish army was also aware of the position of the clear road so they easily were able to attack the Greek coalition forces and forced them to withdraw to the thoroughly reinforced 'Troodos line' near Famagusta. On the central sector the Turkish Air Force made a wide air raid against the ELDYK camp and after heavy ground attack took place but they were able to repel it. Except these few attacks no other major events happened in the central sector on the first day. In the western sector only a hilltop was occupied by the Turkish troops, but it had no major relevance. On the first day the Turkish forces' main strike was against the

¹⁵ See the full report in: Jean Christou: Reporting in the Cyprus Mail, 12 February 2004.

¹⁶ Düzgün, Basaran. Bir Tarihinin Tanığından Pilatus'un Gölgesinde (From a Witness of a Historical Event in the Shadow of Mount Pilatus). Girne, 2008. p.: 57.

¹⁷ Clement Dodd: *op. cit.* pp.: 119–127.

eastern sector in order to reach Famagusta on the forthcoming days and to liberate the town.¹⁸

On the second day, 15 August in the eastern sector the Greek coalition forces halted along the Troodos line and holding the defence line west of Famagusta. In the afternoon the advancing Turkish troops entered Famagusta and united with the Turkish-Cypriot units but surprisingly did not enter the Greek-Cypriot district of the town which was completely undefended. At that time heavy exchange of fire took place in the central sector but there was no other significant event. The invaders had a little bit bigger success in the western sector where they gained a total 6 km advance to the west made the Greek coalition forces to retreat to the Troodos Line in this sector as well. The last day preserved a major offensive in the central sector. In the morning of 16 August the Turkish infantry covered by artillery and the Air Force attacked the ELDYK camp. In the afternoon the Greek forces facing defeat were ordered to withdraw through the Turkish lines but the casualties were very significant on both sides. The Turkish final assault was successful and they occupied the complete area of the camp.¹⁹

The invaders' attack continued southwards and assaulted a Greek battalion inside Nicosia but only achieved 100 metres advance. The northern part of Nicosia during a tank-to-tank battle a Turkish M47 tank was destroyed by the two Greek-Cypriot T34 tanks. Meanwhile in the western sector the whole CNG had retreated to the Troodos Line which meant to give up Morphou and several villages. At noon Morphou captured by the Turkish troops and 6 p.m. the last town in front of the Troodos Line, Limnitis had also been occupied by the invaders right before the UN instituted a cease-fire. Having disregarded the UN declaration both sides continued advancing and did not stop the military operations. However the opposite forces did not make much effort to carry out an offensive or a single attack. To put it blunt the Greek-Cypriot CNG was heavily weakened, suffered from desertations and poor discipline so the Troodos Line would not have been able to repel a strong Turkish attack. This offensive lasted three days and caused the defences of the CNG to collapse, leading to the capture of the towns of Famagusta, Morphou, and the northern quarter of Nicosia. Not to mention the huge demographic catastrophe and the high number of casualties.²⁰

Consequences of the invasion

The invasion has had disastrous consequences claiming about 142,000 Greek-Cypriots²¹ living in the north were expelled from the occupied northern part of the island where they constituted 80% of the population. These people are still deprived of the right to return to their homes and properties. A further 20,000 Greek Cypriots enslaved in the occupied area were gradually forced through intimidation and denial of their basic human rights to

¹⁸ <http://www.ELDYK74.gr>: ΙΣΤΟΡΙΚΟ ΤΟΥ ΣΥΛΛΟΓΟΥ, downloaded: 7 July 2012.

¹⁹ Ioannis Mamounidakis: *Armour in Cyprus. Evolution and Action*. 2008.

²⁰ http://www.acig.org/artman/publish/article_296.shtml, downloaded: 1 July 2012.

²¹ This means nearly one quarter of the total population of Cyprus.

abandon their homes.²² These facts show us the brutality of the invasion and we should not forget that one of the main goals of the invasion was to force the Greek-Cypriot population in the north to flee to the southern part of the island.²³

The Greek Cypriots were deeply disappointed by the Turkish action, and almost all believed that the United States was responsible for the entire events of 1974. The popular belief was that the CIA was behind the coup that stood Makarios aside, and that the US Government was aware that after the coup a Turkish invasion would follow and did nothing to prevent it. It was also believed that an American objective was to divide Cyprus between Greece and Turkey, thus extending NATO and American air bases to the island. If this goal could not be achieved, the American aim was to control Cyprus through a puppet government, and bring the island firmly within the NATO alliance, establishing at the same time American air and military bases on it.²⁴ Considering the opinion of Kissinger during the first Geneva Conference when highly disagreed with the reinforcement of the UNFICYP troops and the British deterrent actions this belief seems quite logic.

Beside the demographic disaster and the shadow of the alleged US machination the invasion caused a major economic loss as well. One third of the active population became unemployed and the island lost the 65% of the tourist accommodation capacity, 83% of the general cargo at Famagusta port, 40% of school buildings, 56% of mining and quarrying output, 46% of the industrial production and 20% of the state forests. However these losses shared inappropriately between the two parts. The Turkish occupied area accounted for 46% of crop production and much higher percentages of citrus fruit production of 79%, cereals production of 8%, and tobacco production of 100%. Turkey has also promoted the demographic change of the occupied territory through the implantation of Anatolian settlers. After the invasions approximately 115,000 Turks have been imported to the occupied area from Turkey cause not only demographic but long lasting economic discrepancies as well. The excessive number of Turkish settlers contributed to the high rate of unemployment and some unsatisfactory among the Turkish-Cypriot community.²⁵

The 1974 invasion is still both explicitly and implicitly the main reason for the Greek-Cypriot side to protest against any international peace solution or other offer to create bi-communal and bi-zonal federation with two international personality. The military intervention has showed up the biggest source of political and social debates which worsened after the self declaration of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1983. The island is still divided not only physically and politically but also in the hearths and minds of the Cypriot people. The everlasting offendedness of both communities is fairly understandable and no international – whether came from the UN or from the EU – peace endeavour has been succeeded. Neither the Annan plan nor the ‘power of attraction’ of the EU brought major breakthrough for the island’s life. I am confident the solution of this problem is so complex that not only one factor could be taken into consideration. The ethno-nationalism the future economic and political state and attitude of the EU would also be key elements according to the Cyprus problem, but the crucial point is the relation

²² Today there are fewer than 600 enslaved persons (Greek Cypriots and Maronites).

²³ http://www.cyprusnet.com/content.php?article_id=2794&subject=standalone, downloaded: 7 July 2012.

²⁴ Clement Dodd: *op. cit.* p.: 129.

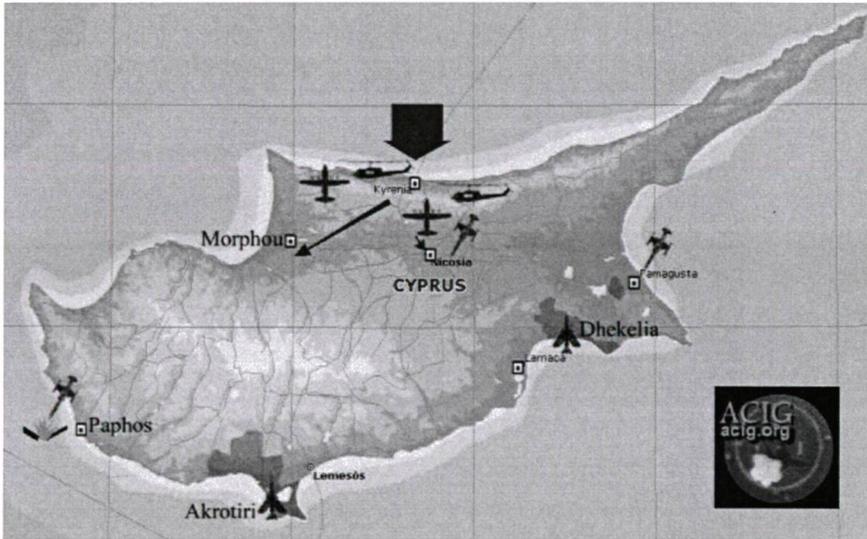
²⁵ http://www.cyprusnet.com/content.php?article_id=2794&subject=standalone

between the EU and Turkey. It goes without saying that the Turkish attitude to the conflict solution in the island has been the inevitable point. Considering the EU accession of Turkey it might be a spark for the solution of the Cyprus problem but regarding the proceedings between the European Union and the Turkish administration it unlikely will ever take place.

Maps

1. Map: The Attila I. operation. Source:

http://www.acig.org/artman/publish/article_296.shtml, downloaded: 1 July 2012.



2. Map: The Attila I. operation. Source: http://www.acig.org/artman/publish/article_296.shtml



3. Map: Cyprus after the 1974 Turkish invasion divided by the 'Green Line'. Source: Clement Dodd: *op.cit.*

