

Turkish officials plan false-flag attacks to create pretext for war with Syria

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In a devastating exposure of the criminality of the US-led proxy war in Syria, Turkish officials have been caught planning an attack on their own forces to manufacture a pretext to attack Syria.

This is the content of a leaked audio recording, posted to YouTube, of a meeting between top Turkish diplomats and intelligence officials, including Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and Hakan Fidan, the head of Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (MIT). At one point in the meeting, these officials discuss the possibility of organizing an attack from inside Syria across the Turkish-Syrian border, or on the Tomb of Suleiman Shah. Under the 1921 Treaty of Ankara between Turkey and France, then the colonial power in Syria, this tomb is a piece of sovereign Turkish territory inside Syria, guarded by Turkish forces.

Davutoglu says: "The prime minister said that in the current conjuncture, this attack [on Suleiman Shah Tomb] must be seen as an opportunity for us."

Fidan replies: "I'll send four men from Syria, if that's what it takes. I'll make up a cause of war by ordering a missile attack on Turkey. We can also prepare an attack on Suleiman Shah Tomb if necessary."

Turkish officials responded to the leak by attempting to suppress it, banning access to YouTube inside Turkey. They did not contest the authenticity of the recording, however. Instead, in a speech in Diyarbakir, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan denounced the leaking of national security meetings as "immoral."

The Turkish Foreign Ministry called the recording "partially manipulated" and a "wretched attack" on Turkish national security.

The leak is an unanswerable indictment of the war on Syria led by Washington and the European powers. Recklessly arming Islamist opposition militias linked to

Al Qaeda in a semi-covert dirty war for regime-change in Damascus, the Western powers have devastated Syria and created fertile ground for the type of provocations exposed by the leak.

The leak provides evidence of a conspiracy to attack a state that has not attacked Turkey—implicating Turkey, a NATO member state, in crimes against peace, a violation of international law for which Nazi officials were hanged at Nuremburg after World War II.

In this, the conduct of the Erdogan regime is not substantially different from that of the leading NATO powers. A decade after Washington launched the 2003 war in Iraq based on lies about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, it tried to launch a war with Syria based on false claims that the Syrian regime had used chemical weapons. NATO powers nearly attacked Syria on this pretext last September, even though similar accusations in May had fallen apart when UN officials stated that the poison gas had been used by the US-backed opposition.

Erdogan's Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) is turning to military provocations as it considers attempting to rally internal support by launching a war. It faces sharp losses in communal elections tomorrow amid an economic and export slowdown driven by recession in Europe. It also confronts continuing protests over its repression of last year's Gezi Park protests.

Tensions between the AKP and other sections of the ruling elite, including the army brass and the CIA-linked Islamist Gülen movement, are intensifying. Some reports suggest the leak was the result of spying operations within the Turkish state by the Gülen movement or its allies.

Erdogan's foreign policy has become increasingly aggressive and incoherent. After the Egyptian

revolution began, he abandoned his “zero problems with neighbors” policy and positioned the AKP as a model for an Islamist-led Middle East, backing the Syrian war despite its unpopularity in Turkey. This policy collapsed after last July’s US-backed coup in Egypt ousted Islamist President Mohamed Mursi, and Obama in September stepped back from military strikes against Syria.

The Western imperialist powers themselves have turned on the AKP, issuing various hypocritical criticisms of Erdogan, including over the Turkish military’s recent decision to shoot down a Syrian fighter jet. One European official told *Al Monitor* that it was part of a policy of backing Islamist opposition militias inside Syria, which he called “a stupid move by the Turkish side.”

“Turkey picked up the strategy of helping these radicals. This cannot be reversed now,” he told *Al Monitor*. “The bombing of the Syrian [MIG-23 fighter jet] was for helping these radicals.”

Since the Erdogan regime “picked up” the “stupid” strategy of arming Al Qaeda forces from the CIA, it only underscores the criminal character of NATO policy in Syria. NATO officials indicated that their main objection to Turkey’s moves to launch a war with Syria was that it would distract from their campaign to back the ultra-right regime they recently installed in Ukraine and isolate Russia.

A NATO source told *Al Monitor*: “In next week’s NATO foreign ministers meeting [on April 1 and 2]... I assume that people will directly share their concern with Minister Davutoglu over Turkish behavior. They will probably give the message that they do not want to be dragged into the Syrian quagmire while the Ukraine issue is keeping them busy at this stage.”

No one warned, however, of the vast and dire implications of a Turkish decision to launch a war with Syria. Such a war would threaten to escalate into a conflagration involving Turkey’s NATO allies and Syria’s main backers, Iran and Russia, as nearly happened last September.

Underlying this silence is the fact that, in Turkey as in the imperialist states, the ruling elites use war as a tool to divert attention from social and political tensions for which they see no solutions. This state of affairs was brought out particularly clearly by later passages in the leaked Turkish tape.

The undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Feridun Sinirlioglu, complains: “National security has been politicized... All talks we’ve done on defending our lands, our border security, our sovereign lands in there, they’ve all become a common, cheap domestic policy outfit.”

Later, another official adds: “Do even one of the opposition parties support you in such a high point of national security?... In what matter can we be unified, if not a matter of national security of such importance? None.”

As they discuss a major military escalation with unforeseeable consequences for Turkey and the world, the officials themselves seem deeply demoralized about the war in Syria and unclear on what they are trying to achieve. They describe the arming of Islamist opposition militias, a US-led strategy in which the Erdogan regime plays a major role, as a deadly threat to their own interests.

Sinirlioglu says: “There are some serious shifts in global and regional geopolitics... That ISIS [an Al Qaeda-linked opposition militia in Syria] and all that jazz, all those organizations are extremely open to manipulation. Having a region made up of organizations of a similar nature will constitute a vital security risk for us.”

Later on, Foreign Minister Davutoglu appears to complain that Turkey did not mount a major attack on Syria earlier: “The year 2012, we didn’t do it in 2011. If only we’d taken serious action back then, even in the summer of 2012.”



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