

Turkey, Jordan discuss moves to seize territory in Syria

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Turkish and Jordanian military forces, including tens of thousands of ground troops, are preparing to invade Syria, with the aim of establishing militarized buffer zones in the northern and southern areas of the country, according to media reports Tuesday.

The Jordanian-occupied area would include large areas of Syria's southern Deraa and Suweida provinces, as well as Deraa city. The Turkish zone would be established along Syria's northern border. It was explicitly authorized by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the name of blocking the formation of a Kurdish state in the area, "no matter what it costs."

The possible Jordanian operation was reported by the *Financial Times* and other media outlets, but there was no official declaration or actual movement of troops across the border. US officials denied that Washington had approved either a Jordanian or a Turkish ground intervention.

Turkish media reports said that Erdogan had chaired a national security meeting on Monday that approved the deployment of 18,000 Turkish troops to secure territory along the Turkish-Syrian border.

The Turkish move would be a direct response to the recent victory of US-backed Syrian Kurdish militia forces, the YCP, which captured the border town of Tal Abyad. The political party which directs the YCP, the PYD, is affiliated to the PKK in Turkey, which has conducted a prolonged guerrilla war against the government seeking the establishment of a separate Kurdish state.

Capture of Tal Abyad by the YCP creates the possibility of forming a contiguous Kurdish-ruled area in northern and northeastern Syria, stretching from Kobane, the focus of fighting between Kurdish forces and ISIS last winter, through Tal Abyad to the predominately Kurdish-populated province of Hazakah.

The Turkish government regards such a region in Syria, linked to the autonomous northern Iraqi region of Kurdistan, as the next step in the formation of an independent Kurdish state claiming territory in Turkey and Iran as well. Some 30 million Kurds live as minorities in the four countries.

A Turkish intervention in northern Syria would give the lie to US government claims that the main concern of American imperialism and its allies is the growth of ISIS and Islamic terrorism. The Turkish government has tacitly aided ISIS by facilitating the entry of Islamic radicals through its territory into Syria. After the fall of Tal Abyad, the pro-government Turkish newspaper *Sabah* ran a headline that declared bluntly, "The [Kurdish] PYD is more dangerous than ISIS."

The reported Jordanian intervention would have as its purpose the establishment of a "buffer zone" in the southern Syrian provinces of Suweida and Deraa, where the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is fighting the only significant rebel force not linked either to ISIS or the al-Nusra Front, the al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria.

Any Jordanian intervention in Syria would require US approval, given the close links between Jordan's military and the Pentagon. The *Financial Times* reported that the intervention would include both regular Jordanian troops and Syrians being trained by the CIA in camps in Jordan. The CIA operation is the largest operation currently mounted by the agency, accounting for \$1 billion out of its \$15 billion budget, according to press reports of congressional hearings in Washington.

State Department spokesman Mark Toner would not confirm the reports of plans for intervention in Syria by either Turkey or Jordan. He said at a press conference Monday that there was "no solid evidence" of operations to create buffer zones. However, he did indicate the real target of such actions, saying that intervention would mean that regional powers no longer believed the Assad government could survive.

"The moment you set up a humanitarian safe zone you're opening the door to conversations about splitting Syria into different entities," he said. "We'd essentially be opening the door to the dissolution of the Syrian nation-state. Of course, a lot of people say that's already a done deal."

The real purpose of the new "security" and "humanitarian" areas will be to serve as staging areas for expanded military operations throughout Syria, directed at the overthrow of

Assad.

The new military interventions are being launched in flagrant violation of Syrian sovereignty, without even the fig leaf of a UN resolution.

Such moves would represent a watershed escalation of the war in Syria, which has already claimed some 250,000 dead and displaced 12 million people since being instigated by US imperialism and its regional allies some four years ago.

Having failed to remove Assad using proxy militia forces alone, Washington is now contemplating the direct invasion of Syria by outside military forces for the purpose of carving out a large area of the country to be subsequently occupied by US and NATO troops.

Plans for a new imperialist division of Syria and the broader Middle East have been brewing within the US ruling elite for decades.

The US elites seized on the dissolution of the Soviet Union to realize their longstanding plans to reimpose colonial forms of rule across Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

Within the past week, leading officials from the US Defense Department, the military brass and the State Department have stated that Washington plans to restore "stability" to Iraq and Syria by overseeing the creation of new mini-states ruled by tribal and sectarian forces.

Congressional testimony by Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter and General Martin Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in mid-June, indicated that the US was now basing its strategy on the assumption that "Iraq as a unified state" would likely no longer exist.

Washington is moving to bypass the central government in Baghdad and recruit Sunni tribal militias to serve as US proxies in a future political order, according to Dempsey's testimony.

Last week, Deputy Secretary of State Anthony Blinken made clear that the break-up of Iraq is only one aspect of a broader US agenda to reorganize the politics of the entire Middle East

"The greater Middle East is witnessing a period of tectonic change that has brought the entire regional order to the brink of collapse," Blinken said in comments to the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) last week.

Under conditions of "historic transitions" in the region, the US must embrace "decentralization of power" and "political accommodation" with sub-national actors, Blinken argued.

Underscoring that the US-led redivision and partition of the region is being pursued as part of a pressure campaign aiming to exert pressure upon and ultimately shatter Washington's two main rivals, Blinken's comment came moments after the second-ranking State Department official accused China and Russia of seeking to "unilaterally and coercively change the status quo" in eastern Ukraine and the

South China Sea.

In a brief published Tuesday, "Deconstructing Syria: A new strategy for America's most hopeless war," the Brookings Institution detailed the application of this neocolonial strategy in Syria.

The report's publication coincided with the publication of media reports announcing the planned establishment of the new "safe zones" in Syria by the Turkish and Jordanian militaries.

The Brookings report argued that a "comprehensive, national-level solution" is no longer possible, and called for the carving out of "autonomous zones."

"The only realistic path forward may be a plan that in effect deconstructs Syria," the report argued. The US and its allies should seek "to create pockets with more viable security and governance within Syria."

"The strategy could develop further in a type of 'ink-spot' campaign that eventually sought to join the various local initiatives into a broader and more integrated effort," the report explained.

This "confederal Syria" would be composed of "highly autonomous zones," the report said, and would be supported militarily by the deployment of US-NATO forces into the newly carved-out occupation areas, including deployment of "multilateral support teams, grounded in special forces detachments and air-defense capabilities."

"Past collaboration with extremist elements of the insurgency would not itself be viewed as a scarlet letter," the Brookings report argued, making clear the extremist militant groups which have served as US proxy forces against the Assad government will not be excluded from the new partition of Syria.



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