

Turkish warplanes hit Washington's Kurdish proxy forces in Syria

Bill Van Auken
27 April 2017

Turkish cross-border attacks against Kurdish militia positions in Syria and Iraq continued for a second day Wednesday, following dozens of airstrikes on Tuesday that left at least 70 people, including both Kurdish fighters and civilians, dead.

The attacks were met with protests from both Washington and Moscow, as well as the Syrian government. One of the main targets of the strikes was the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which constitutes the backbone of so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which serves as the main proxy ground force in the US intervention against ISIS in Syria.

The US State Department said Tuesday that it was "deeply concerned" about the airstrikes, which it charged were launched "without proper coordination" and had "led to the unfortunate loss of life of our partner forces."

A spokesman for the US-dominated anti-ISIS "coalition" told a Pentagon teleconference Wednesday that Turkey had provided less than an hour's warning before bombs fell on Iraq and Syria.

"That's not enough time and this was notification, certainly, not coordination as you would expect from a partner and an ally in the fight against ISIS," US Air Force Col. John Dorrian said.

The spokesman added that the hour's notice combined with the "vague" character of the Turkish warning made it impossible to "ensure safety of our forces on the ground." US troops were reportedly deployed within six miles of the areas targeted.

The unilateral military intervention by Turkey, Washington's NATO ally, targeting forces armed and trained by the Pentagon, has further escalated the multi-sided conflict provoked by the six-year-old US-orchestrated war for regime change in Syria. It further

threatens to turn it into a region-wide and even global conflict. Tensions had already escalated sharply in the wake of the US launching cruise missiles against a Syrian government airbase on April 7, on the pretext of retaliating to a chemical weapons attack that Washington blamed on the Syrian government.

Russia, which has also sought ties with the YPG and sent military advisors into the Kurdish-controlled areas of northern Syria, denounced the Turkish bombings, issuing a statement warning that "in a situation where the war on terror in Iraq and Syria is far from over, such actions clearly do not contribute to the consolidation of anti-terrorist efforts."

In reality, the bombings only underscore the fact that, in the name of the "war on terror," Washington, Turkey and Russia are all intervening in Syria to further their own, opposing interests.

Washington has sought since 2011 to effect "regime change" in Syria in order to impose a more pliant puppet regime in Damascus to further its drive for hegemony over the oil-rich Middle East. Russia has sent forces to back the government of President Bashar al-Assad, its principal ally in the Middle East, against the Al Qaeda-linked militias supported by Washington and its regional allies, including Turkey. For its part, Ankara has sought to further its own regional ambitions and, most crucially, to prevent the consolidation of an autonomous Kurdish region along its southern border.

Turkish officials have rejected the US protests over the attacks. Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said on Wednesday that his government had given both the US and Russia notice "two hours" before launching the airstrikes. Speaking to reporters in Uzbekistan, Çavuşoğlu also claimed that Turkey had discussed its planned attacks over the "last few weeks" with Washington.

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan bluntly defended the actions, saying that Turkey would continue its attacks in both Iraq and Syria "until the last terrorist is eliminated" and that it would "drain the swamp."

The Erdoğan government claims that its military actions are aimed against the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), a Kurdish guerrilla group that has waged a decades-long fight for an independent Kurdish state inside Turkey and has been outlawed by Ankara. The Turkish authorities consider the Syrian YPG a branch of the PKK.

The Turkish airstrikes in Iraq were supposedly aimed against the PKK, which has had a presence in the Sinjar region near the Syrian border since it intervened there in 2014, backed by US air power, to drive out ISIS. Ankara has allied itself with the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), controlled by the Barzani clan, against the PKK.

Tuesday's air strikes, however, killed at least six members of the KRG's peshmerga forces, something that Ankara said it regretted. The attacks may serve to deepen hostility among Iraqi Kurds to the Barzanis' close ties to Turkey.

Wednesday also saw clashes on the Syrian-Turkish border between the YPG and Turkish troops as well exchanges of artillery fire across the border, with the Turkish military targeting both the YPG and Syrian government forces, allegedly in retaliation for attacks against Turkey.

Clashes were also reported in northern Aleppo between the YPG and Turkish-backed militias, which are dominated by the Islamist Ahrar al-Sham, whose forces in Idlib province have joined the Syrian Al Qaeda affiliate.

Meanwhile, the Syrian Kurdish forces have called on the US-led "coalition" to establish a no-fly zone over northern Syria, a measure that would entail a qualitative escalation of the US military intervention, intensifying the threat of a military confrontation with Russia, whose warplanes operate in Syrian airspace.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)