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NATO Deploys Polish Troops to Turkey for War With Syria

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization announced the deployment of Polish troops to Turkey as part of the military bloc's six-year Tailored Assurance Measures for Turkey mission instituted to – as NATO described it – protect Turkey from Syria. That measure was taken after Turkey requested an Article 4 consultation with the other members of the now-thirty-nation military bloc in 2015 (as it did again last year). The following year Turkey began direct military activities inside Syria after harboring, arming and training anti-government insurgents since 2011.

The Turkish government claimed *it* was the victim of aggression and not the nation it had invaded. (As it had invaded northern Iraq in 2008.) The NATO package included and continues to include AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) aircraft, naval activities in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and assistance with Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance.

Two years before that, in 2013, NATO deployed three Patriot (or equivalent) missile defense systems to Turkey on the Syrian border. The batteries have been provided by the U.S., Germany, the Netherlands and Spain,

In 2015 a Turkish F-16 fighter jet shot down a Russian Sukhoi Su-24M attack aircraft near the Syria–Turkey border. The Sukhoi's pilot was shot and killed by Turkish-backed rebels after parachuting from the plane; a Russian soldier assigned to a rescue helicopter was also

killed. As Wikipedia points out, it was the first time a Russian/Soviet military aircraft had been shot down by a NATO member since the Korean War. Five years later Russia sold S-400 anti-aircraft units to Turkey, which it has refused to provide to Syria and Iran.

Following the NATO summit in Brussels in 2018 the military alliance released a declaration that in part stated:

“We remain concerned that Turkey has been hit three times in the last four years by missiles launched from Syria. We continue to monitor and assess the ballistic missile threat from Syria.”

The range of Syrian missiles – based on their own soil for defense of the nation against outside aggression – the alliance stated, “covers part of NATO’s territory and some of our partners’ territories.” (NATO partners in the region at the time were Mediterranean Dialogue members Israel and Jordan.)

Furthermore, NATO said: “The increasing threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles in the vicinity of the south-east border of the Alliance has been and remains a driver in NATO’s development and deployment of a ballistic missile defense system, which is configured to counter threats from outside the Euro-Atlantic area.”

NATO’s southeastern border, courtesy of Turkey, is Syria, Iraq and Iran.

The bloc also pledged the use of its NATO Response Force and the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force as needed. On the first of this year Turkey assumed command of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force as it’s also recently been given the lead role in the NATO training mission in Afghanistan.

NATO has never issued a word, needless to say, about Turkish military incursions into Syria, gross violations of international law. At the same summit NATO assigned a key role in its training of the Iraqi army to Turkey, as it was stated, to “put forward effective combat strategies against PKK and Daesh terrorists.” The PKK is the Kurdish Workers’ Party, against which Turkey has waged a counterinsurgency war since 1978, frequently across its borders, the longest such campaign in the world. It was in the name of combating PKK forces that the Turkish military entered Iraq in 2008.

So now Polish troops, an estimated 80, have been deployed to Turkey to conduct naval patrols in the Mediterranean and surveillance and reconnaissance flights over the Black Sea coordinated with other NATO operations in theater.

Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Błaszczak said of the NATO deployment: “Polish soldiers are present where allied solidarity requires it. They carry out tasks of various nature, ensuring stability and security, as well as transferring their knowledge and skills. Joining the NATO mission in Turkey is another expression of the fact that Poland treats its alliances seriously and works for security on a global scale.”

Yesterday it was Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Afghanistan and Iraq. Today it is Turkey. Tomorrow it may be Ukraine and Belarus. Much closer to home but still on NATO’s global scale.

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