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US shoots down Turkish drone as Turkey bombs Kurdish forces in Syria, Iraq

On Thursday, the Pentagon announced that it had shot down a Turkish armed drone with an F-16 fighter jet because it posed a “threat” to US troops in Syria. It was the first such incident between the two NATO allies.

On Thursday morning, Turkish drones carried out strikes near the Syrian city of Hasakah, about 1 kilometer from US troops, Pentagon spokesman Pat Ryder said. A few hours later, a Turkish drone that came within 500 meters of US troops was deemed a “threat” and shot down by an F-16, according to the statement.

The escalation of tensions in Syria came amid the possible deployment of British troops in the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and the resurgence of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh in the South Caucasus. It points to the danger that the imperialist-backed war for regime change against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, which has been underway since 2011, could be reignited and escalate into a regional conflict.

Around 900 US troops maintain an illegal presence in northeastern Syria, in an area controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) led by Washington’s main proxy force in the region, the Kurdish nationalist People’s Protection Units (YPG). Allied with the SDF, US forces control Syria’s oil resources in the region. Ankara treats the YPG and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) as “terrorist groups.”

Ryder said, “We have no indication that the Turkey was intentionally targeting US forces. It’s a regrettable incident,” before adding: “The secretary has talked to his [Turkish] counterpart. They had the opportunity to have a fruitful conversation.... Turkey does remain a very important and valuable NATO ally and partner to the United States.”

Turkish Defense Minister Yaşar Güler made a statement on the X platform, stating he told his American counterpart that “Turkey is ready for a joint fight with the USA against Daesh [ISIS].”

Speaking to Reuters, a Turkish defense ministry official denied that the drone belonged to Turkey. However, Al-Monitor, citing two US officials, suggested that it belonged to Turkish intelligence (MIT). An unnamed US official also said Turkish military officials had been warned a dozen times before the incident.

Ankara’s air campaign in Syria has continued despite the dangerous escalation between the US and Turkey. On Thursday evening, the Defense Ministry announced that 30 targets controlled by the YPG in northern Syria had been destroyed and many Kurdish militias were killed. The statement said the targets included oil wells and storage facilities. Local sources claimed that civilians were also harmed, an allegation denied by Ankara.

Turkey’s air strikes against Kurdish forces in Syria began after an armed attack on the Turkish National Police headquarters in Ankara last Sunday, in during which two attackers were killed and two policemen were wounded. The stolen car used in the incident belonged to a civilian named Mikail Bozlağan from Kayseri, who was killed before the attack, according to the official statements.

The PKK claimed responsibility for the attack, stating it was intended to “send the necessary message to the relevant places and give them a serious warning.” In reality, the attack only served to provide justification for Ankara’s police-state repression at home and new military operations in Iraq and Syria, contributing to the possibility of a broader conflict in the region.

The legal Kurdish nationalist Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) and Green Left Party (YSP) condemned the Ankara attack as “unacceptable.” However, at least 75 people have been detained so far in police operations mainly targeting the HDP-YSP.

The Turkish Defense Ministry has announced that air strikes have been carried out against PKK positions in northern Iraq since Sunday. On Wednesday, a “security summit” was held in Ankara with the participation of interior and foreign ministers, the head of the intelligence agency and the chief of the general staff.

On the same day, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan alleged that the perpetrators of the Ankara attack were YPG-PKK members coming from Syria. “All infrastructure, superstructure and energy facilities belonging to the PKK/YPG, especially in Iraq and Syria, are from now on the legitimate targets of our security forces, armed forces and

intelligence elements,” he declared in a statement, warning the United States: “I recommend that third parties stay away from PKK/YPG facilities and individuals.

SDF General Commander Mazlum Kobani rejected Ankara’s claim and called on the United States and other NATO allies to protect them. He said, “The perpetrators of the attack in Ankara did not travel there from our region, as the Turkish authorities claim... We expect the guarantor countries and the international community to stand up to these frequent threats and take a stand to ensure stability and peace in the region.”

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