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Turkish-ISIL Oil Trade: US and NATO Culpability (IV)

Mahdi Darius NAZEMROAYA

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The Turkish government is not acting alone in Syria and Iraq. The corrupt leadership of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Britain, Israel, and the United States are also involved. They have all played direct or indirect roles in the theft of oil too. After the role of Turkey in stealing oil from Syria and Iraq was revealed, the US government began work to mask and conceal the oil smuggling operations.

US and NATO Culpability

On December 1, Alexander Grushko, the Russian permanent representative to the North Atlantic

Treaty Organization (NATO) Headquarters, pointed out that the US and NATO gave «political cover» to Turkey for its attack on Russia's Sukhoi Su-24M bomber jet in Syria. On the same day, Russian parliamentarian Irina Yarovaya pointed out that the military alliance is also involved in protecting ISIL and theft of Iraqi and Syrian oil. NATO's response to the Turkish incursion into Iraq was also muted, even after Iraq' Prime Minister Al-Abadi called NATO Secretariat on December 8 asking it to get NATO member Turkey to withdraw its forces.

According to Russian President Vladimir Putin, the US was even given the Su-24M's flight plans. Two days after Turkey shot down the Russian bomber, on November 26, Putin said that it appeared that Washington had given the Su-24's operational plans to Ankara ahead of the incident and that it was «precisely» when the flight plans were passed to the US that Turkish military attacked the Russian jet. To deny culpability and avoid verification, US officials would anonymously reject this.

The US government is fully aware of all the oil smuggling and has deliberately pretended not to know. Both the US and Turkey have violated United Nations Security Council Resolution 2199 as Vitaly Churkin, the permanent representative of the Russian Federation to the UN, pointed out when he told RIA Novosti in an interview that the US and Turkey are legally obliged to give any information they had collected on how ISIL was being financed. Holding a press conference on December 2 out of the National Defense Control Centre in Moscow, Russian military presented detailed evidence showing how Turkey was involved in stealing oil and trading with ISIL through three major smuggling routes. The response from Washington was to whitewash this by saying that the photographs provided by Russia were authentic, but that there was no evidence to show that Turkish checkpoints were being crossed. «*What I have not seen is imagery of the border crossing with trucks crossing the border, and that's because I don't believe that exists*», an unnamed senior US Department of State official commented to Reuters on December 4 under the condition of anonymity.

Russian military released an important statement in English on its social media page. It explained that if the US was not satisfied with Moscow's evidence, then it should watch the video footage collective by Washington's own drones that Russia had observed becoming increasingly active over Syrian-Turkish border and Syria's oil fields.

The Evidence Falls into Place with Turkey's Weapons Smuggling Pattern

Aside from photographs and satellite data, video evidence was presented by Russia where ISIL oil tankers could be seen being allowed to freely cross the Syrian-Turkish border by guards at Turkish checkpoints without being stopped like other vehicles. This is part of a pattern that corresponds to incidents in 2014 where trucks owned by the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT), which were disguised as humanitarian convoys, were caught sending weapons across the Syrian-Turkish border to the insurgents in Syria. Reports began to widely circulate that the head of the MIT, Hakan Fidan, was even reported by Turkey's own state media, the Anadolu Agency, to have said in October 2015 that ISIL is a political reality that needs to be accepted and protected from Russia. The Anadolu Agency would respond by taking legal measures to erase the story and releasing a statement saying that the reports were a fabrication on

October 20, 2015.



On the same day that the Russian Sukhoi Su-24M was attacked by Turkey, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan indirectly acknowledged the MIT's activities. He rhetorically asked his government's domestic critics what was their problem with the MIT sending weapon shipments across the border to Syria. «*I believe that our people will not forgive those who sabotaged this support*», he even told a room full of Turkish teachers in criticism of those who revealed that the MIT was sending weapons to the insurgent inside Syria.

The Turkish government's ties to ISIL are unambiguous. Due to the lack of communication between local authorities and the MIT, arms shipments were discovered in January 2014 by Colonel Ozkan Cokay, the commander of the Adana Provincial Gendarmerie Regiment, and his men. Despite the Turkish government's attempts to hide the facts and persecute the security officials who uncovered the MIT's links to the death squads in Syria, a report authored by the Gendarmerie General Command candidly stated that the MIT trucks were carrying weapons and supplies to Al-Qaeda.

Dividing and Conquering Eurasia

A Machiavellian game is at hand. While the US has been behind disinformation campaign saying that the Russian Federation has not been targeting ISIL in Syria, the truth is that Russia and its partners have heavily downgraded ISIL and its oil smuggling operations. This provoked the ire of Turkish officials, which, as Moscow believes, motivated the attack on its Su-24M bomber jet. The US facilitated the attack by giving the coordinates of the Russian jet to Ankara.

After the December 2 press conference at the National Defense Control Centre in Moscow, a defiant Erdogan accused Russia itself of being behind the ISIL's illegal oil trade. On the other hand, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu on December 9 began accusing Russia of being behind a campaign to «ethnically cleans» the Turkoman in Syria, which Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova would dismiss as «groundless». The irony is that it is Turkey that supports the sectarian death squads that are deliberately trying to fragment Syria.

While Erdogan's greed and pettiness have helped fuel the Russo-Turkish tensions, the clash between Turkey and Russia serves Washington's interests of political and economical destabilization of Eurasia by using its own allies as cannon fodder against its rivals. Mohsen

Rezaei, the secretary of Iran's Expediency Discernment Council, has even warned that the Middle East has become a powder keg that could ignite a world war.

Despite the differences between Iran and the Turkish government and the reduction of Iranian winter gas supplies to Turkey, Tehran has publicly offered to mediate between Ankara and Moscow. Iranian First Vice-President Jahangiri even held a meeting with Erdogan on December 12 at the sidelines of an international conference in Turkmenistan. After speaking to Jahangiri and the Iranian delegation in Turkmenistan, Erdogan's tune mellowed down. Possibly looking for a way out, he returned from Ashgabat to Turkey blaming the dead Russian Su-24M pilot, Lieutenant-Colonel Oleg Peshkov, for Russo-Turkish tensions by saying that bilateral relations between Ankara and Moscow must not be affected by a «mistake of a pilot».