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Armenian National Committee of America
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

To: Foreign Affairs Legislative Aide
From: Aram Hamparian, Executive Director
Date: December 17, 2007

RE: Turkey attacks Iraq - bombs schools and infrastructure

Back in October, Turkey floated the idea here in Washington that we could only hold them back from attacking Iraq by blocking the Armenian Genocide Resolution.

As it turns out, the Administration did exactly that - going all out to delay the adoption of this human rights legislation - only to find that Turkey has attacked Iraq anyway.

This raises, once again, the central question: **Why are we compromising our moral standing under pressure from a foreign government that shares neither our values nor our interest in bringing lasting stability to Iraq?**

Please see attached articles for more information. As always, on any Armenian American issue, please call us at (202) 775-1918 or email us at anca@anca.org.

Last Updated: Sunday, 16 December 2007, 18:04 GMT

Turkish warplanes have bombed suspected Kurdish rebel bases deep inside northern Iraq - in what appears the first time fighter jets have been used.

They targeted the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in areas near the border, officials said. The Turkish media said up to 50 planes were used. Iraqi officials say bombs hit 10 villages, killing one woman, while the PKK reported seven deaths.

Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan hailed the air strikes as a "success". "Our struggle [against the PKK] will continue inside and outside Turkey with the same determination."

Turkey has regularly targeted the PKK inside Iraq in recent months, but this is thought to be the first fighter jet raid outside its own territory. Previous strikes had used artillery or helicopters.

'Comprehensive campaign'

The planes hit the regions of Zap, Hakurk and Avasin as well as areas in the Kandil mountains in an operation lasting three hours, the Turkish military said.

A "comprehensive air campaign" was carried out from 0100 on Sunday (2300 GMT Saturday), aimed at "terrorists" and "not conducted against people living in northern Iraq or local groups not engaged in enemy activity", it added.

One of the sorties hit an area near the Kandil mountains, a region further away from the border into Iraqi territory, and regularly cited by Turkey as a centre of PKK activity. Cross-border artillery barrages followed from the town of Cukurca in Turkish territory, reports say.

Local officials in northern Iraq spoke of families fleeing their homes. Pro-Kurdish media initially reported the death of one woman and the wounding of five other civilians in a village near the Kandil mountains.

The PKK itself reportedly announced on an internet site that five of its fighters and two civilians had been killed in the mountain area, with two fighters wounded. "Many civilians, among them women and children" were also wounded, the group was quoted as saying by AFP news agency. There is no confirmation.

Bitter dispute

Ankara toughened its line against the PKK after a spate of rebel attacks inside Turkey that prompted widespread calls for action.

In October, Turkey's parliament voted to allow the military to launch operations into Iraq to combat the PKK, which had stepped up attacks in Turkey.

Ankara has massed up to 100,000 troops near the mountainous border with northern Iraq, backed by tanks, artillery and warplanes.

But Iraq and the US have urged Turkey not to carry out its threat. ←

As many as 3,000 PKK members are believed to be based inside northern Iraq. Turkey has accused the local Kurdish authorities of supporting them.



Iraq parliament condemns 'cruel' Turkish air strikes

December 17, 2007

BAGHDAD (AFP) - Iraq's parliament on Monday strongly condemned Turkish air strikes on its northern territory, branding them a "cruel attack" on the country's sovereignty that resulted in civilian casualties.

"We strongly condemn this cruel attack on Iraqi sovereignty and on the principle of friendly neighbourhood," the parliament said in a statement, adding that the bombings resulted in "several innocent civilian casualties".

On Sunday, Turkish warplanes bombed several villages in northern Iraq targeting rear-bases of the rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Seven people were killed, including two civilians, the PKK said.

"In the attacks, five guerillas and two civilians became martyrs. Three other guerillas sustained light injuries," according to the PKK internet site.

Locals said schools and bridges were also destroyed in the foothills of the Qandil mountains along the border.

"We all were asleep when the warplanes struck our village," said Hassan Ibrahim, 75, a farmer from the village of Qalatuqa along the Iraq-Turkey border. "When the attack came I got out of the house. We were all suffocating because of the dust." He said Turkish warplanes had been overflying the region for the past month.

"Earlier it was Saddam who destroyed our homes, now it is the Turks," an angry Ibrahim told AFP as he prepared to leave his home.

Witnesses said the bombings had razed dozens of buildings in Qalatuqa, including a soon-to-be-opened school building.

Asaka Abdullah, 40, said she woke up shocked with the noise of the bombings.

"I was asleep when the sound of the explosion woke me up. When I stepped out of my house I saw people fleeing barefoot," she said. "We really have no choice but to flee to the mountains to escape the bombs."

In Baghdad, the parliament statement demanded that Ankara exercise military restraint and adopt the route of dialogue to solve the PKK problem. "We call upon our neighbour Turkey to adopt the route of dialogue and wisdom to solve internal issues," it said.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari had led the Iraqi condemnation prior to the parliament statement. "We understand Turkish concerns over the presence of PKK, but yesterday there was some collateral damages to civilians. ... such action must be coordinated with the Iraqi government," said Zebari, who did not give casualty figures.

The BBC, meanwhile, said on its news website that the US denied reports that Washington had approved the Turkish strikes. On Sunday, Ankara's most senior general Yasar Buyukanit said the US gave its tacit consent for the operation by providing "intelligence" and opening up northern Iraqi airspace.

The BBC report quoted a US embassy official as saying US commanders had not approved the attacks, but had been informed before they took place. The PKK is fighting for self-rule in southeastern Turkey since 1984. More than 37,000 people have died on both the sides since the conflict broke out.