Is Turkey Replacing Washington in the Bloody Relay Race?

Against the background of the US intention to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan and Iraq, thereby closing the bloody pages with the murder of thousands of civilians in these countries, unfortunately, similar sad reports keep coming from the region. Instead of condemning the US military personnel for such actions, the news agencies and media have recently been increasingly publishing articles denouncing similar actions of Turkish soldiers in the region.

Therefore, on August 24, the regional media reported the new air operation in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region with over 20 Turkish warplanes and drones. Zana Rahman, the mayor of Penjwen District, Sulaymaniyah, informed the media that Turkish drones had been striking agricultural areas for 20 minutes since 6:30. The Turkish side confirmed the troop attack and stated that 28 targets were hit in the Asos mountains range north of Penjwen during the aerial operation.

On August 17, Turkish fighter jets bombed a hospital in the Sikeniye village in the Yazidi inhabited area of Sinjar affiliated with the Yazidi Sinjar Resistance Units. Sikeniye is located on the southern side of the Sinjar mountain range. The airstrikes on the Sinjar mountains were carried out on two consecutive days: also, on August 16, an airstrike on the center of Sinjar killed the commander and a member of the Sinjar Resistance Units. As for the bombing of a medical clinic in the village of Sikeniye, the airstrike killed eight people, according to Iraqi media reports. AFP news agency quoted its sources as saying that a total of three drone strikes were carried out, which destroyed the hospital building in Sikeniye and injured some people. The Iraqi leadership, for its part, condemned the actions of the Turkish Armed Forces, calling them a violation of Iraqi sovereignty.

On August 19, regional media published scary footage of Turkey launching a massive strike on Syria. Many homes were destroyed, and dozens of people, including women and children, were injured or killed due to the shelling. The wounded were taken to hospitals in Al-Darbasiyah, Al Hasakah, and Amud.

According to the SANA news agency, Turkish forces fired more than 50 shells on homes and vital Syrian infrastructure earlier in the day. That act of Turkish aggression destroyed dozens of homes and a power station that supplied electricity to 23 villages between the towns of Tell Tamer and Abu Rasayn. According to the North Press Agency, the Turkish shelling of Kurdish settlements with varying intensity has been continuous for ten days.

An artillery shelling from Turkey on August 17 killed a woman in Al-Hasakah Governorate, Syria, news agencies reported, while several other people were injured. Turkish army artillery shelled the outskirts of Abu Rasayn, and shells fell on civilian houses in the village of Dardara. The Turkish artillery fired more than 50 shells, SANA reports.

A man and his three children were killed on August 4 in a Turkish bombing near Ain Issa, East Syria (AANES), also known as Rojava. Other family members, a mother, and another daughter were wounded and taken to a hospital in Raqqa. Turkish army artillery also shelled the al-Safaviya village on 3 August.

In response to Turkey's current policy in the Levant, criticism against Ankara's actions is growing in the region. For example, the Al-Nasr bloc in the Iraqi parliament called at the end of July to end all forms of Turkish interference in Iraq's internal affairs, especially the Turkish military occupation and other forms of interference in the political, security, and economic affairs of the country. Al-Nasr is led by former Iraqi Shiite Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who criticizes Turkey's military presence on Iraq's border. He expresses particular concern about the statements and actions of Turkish pro-government groups seeking to restore Turkish control over Kirkuk and Mosul.
On July 16, Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) Commander-in-Chief Mazloum Abdi called on the international community to investigate the crimes of Turkey and the Syrian opposition under its control in Afrin to end crimes against humanity.

Cairo has also joined the Arab opposition to Turkey’s moves in Syria over the past year. Egyptian and Iraqi leaders Fattah al-Sisi and Barham Salih believe that the Turkish counter-terrorism operation, directed against the Kurds, only worsens the crisis in the region, negatively affecting Syria’s territorial integrity, regional security and political process. Egypt and Iraq hold regular bilateral consultations to support Arab efforts to counter this move by Turkey and preserve the integrity and unity of Syria.

Recently, a particular reason for accusing Ankara was deploying additional military groups in Syria and Iraq “to fight against the Kurdish militias” and constructing two military bases there. At the same time, the regional media began to report that Turkey, not without the apparent participation of London and Washington, allegedly establishes control over oil supplies from Syria to Iraq for the United States and from Iraq and Syria to Turkey. Moreover, the Turkish military base in Iraq, located at the intersection of the two streams in Mosul, allegedly plays an active role in this.

According to the Global Defense, Outlook 2017 report published by Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) of the UK, Turkey has several military bases in the region. In Iraq, for example, Turkey has several military bases in various cities of that country, which Ankara explains by “the fight against the Kurdish group of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party.” Of these Turkish military bases, the Bashiqa base stands out, which has occasionally sparked disputes between the Turkish and Iraqi leadership. The number of Turkish troops on it is 2,500, with Baghdad saying back in 2017 that Turkey would withdraw its forces from Bashiqa after the operation in Mosul.

In addition to accusing Ankara of military intervention and killing civilians, the regional media is increasingly publishing articles accusing Turkey of using the region's water resources to pursue its aggressive policy against the local population. As the Syrian Arab News Agency SANA reported on August 16, the water pumping station Aluk, which provides water to the Syrian city of Al Hasakah and the western part of the province of the same name, stopped working after a power cut. The reason was the illegal use of electricity by the Turkish military and the Ankara-controlled Syrian opposition and attacks on power lines. As a result of this illegal action, the provincial authorities, in cooperation with humanitarian organizations, were forced to supply water to nearly one million people by filling reservoirs located in the streets and public parks.

In the above circumstances, it is appropriate to recall that in autumn 2019, after Ankara launched Operation Peace Spring in Syria against the Kurds, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan stated that Turkey would not withdraw its military from Syria until the people of that country ask for it. However, the Syrian parliament and the country’s population have repeatedly demanded the withdrawal of the Turkish troops, but there has been no response from Ankara. Residents of the Syrian province of Idlib have repeatedly protested against the presence of the Turkish military, accusing Turkey of seizing foreign territory instead of peacekeeping activities. Similar rallies were also held in Aleppo and Hama provinces. Syrian protesters expressed their belief that the Turkish side supports the remnants of radical gangs in several regions.

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