Whenever There's Militants, There's Turkey

Turkey has recently been receiving a considerable amount of attention in the publications of various media outlets. However, much of the reporting revolves around the attitude of Ankara and the Turkish president himself towards various armed conflicts, where Turkey still plays a major role.

One example of this is the Turkish leader's offer to mediate in the Ukrainian crisis, which has been widely reported in the media from different (and not always flattering for Ankara) perspectives. However, Erdogan would continue to pump his combat drones into Ukraine and deepen his military cooperation with Kiev, under which circumstances any reasonable reader is bound to ask: what is the nature of the "mediating role" that Ankara plays here? It looks more like an attempt at fomenting a military crisis with Erdogan aligning himself with Kiev, thus siding with NATO, of which Turkey is a member, as well as with Washington, which has long exercised external control over Ukraine, both directly and through various intermediaries.

Ankara’s continued activity in sending its fighters from Syria to a number of conflict zones has also not been off the newswire. In particular in Libya, where the international community and the members of the 5+5 Joint Military Committee had previously decided that foreign troops stationed on the territory of the North African state should return home. To this notion, Turkey has responded by officially declaring its readiness to withdraw some 150 fighters from Libya. However, Al-Hadath reported on February 17 that at least 150 new Syrian fighters have arrived...
in Libya to take part in military operations there. Most are members of the illegal Muhammad al-Fateh Brigade (banned in Russia), which is linked to groups loyal to Turkey. According to journalists, the mercenaries were recruited with the participation of the Turkish military, which organizes their delivery from Idlib province in Syria to Tripoli. Moreover, according to journalists, the Turkish Defense Ministry allegedly pays for the services of Syrian mercenaries in Libya, in particular paying up to $200-250 to field commanders. The supply or exchange of pro-Turkish mercenaries in Libya has been a regular occurrence in recent months. Along with armed gangs, militants represent one of the main challenges to the peace process in that country.

The director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), Rami Abd al-Rahman, also confirmed the information about Turkey’s ongoing deployment of Syrian mercenaries in western Libya on the Libyan television channel Al Masar on February 22. According to him, Erdogan continues to import groups into Libya under the guise of the agreement made with the former Tripolitan Government of National Accord (GNA). The militants are recruited by Turkish intelligence in Syria and then given legal cover in an African state through a security company. However, Al-Rahman stressed that a number of Arab media outlets were unwilling to cover the issue and expressed his suspicions about the existence of agreements between Erdoğan and some countries in the region in the context of the media war.

The media, however, continues to uncover Turkey’s involvement not only in sending fighters to other countries, but also in producing forged papers for them and former members of terrorist groups, including DAESH (banned in Russia). They allow militants to travel freely not only to Libya, but also all over Europe, as well as the United States.

The Guardian, for example, has managed to track down those who make and sell fake documents for dozens of radicals linked to DAESH, who then quietly cross the border into Syria, presenting such documents, and travel around the world. Such documents cost $5,000 to $15,000, and the holder of a fake passport receives an almost one hundred per cent guarantee that he will cross the border into Turkey without incident. British journalists have been able to track down one of the clandestine document forgery firms run by an Uzbek national living in Turkey. His business is going so well that he has set up a special Telegram channel with the serious name Istanbul Global Consulting. Answering the journalists’ question about whether terrorists or dangerous extremists might use his products to evade justice, the businessman said he did not ask his customers what group or movement they belonged to.

It begs the question: why aren’t the Turkish authorities and law enforcement agencies themselves interested in this “business” and covering it up?

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the activities of such “businessmen” from Turkey and his colleagues in other states have been expanding recently, as such firms take advantage of the residents of refugee camps in Syria, such as Al-Hol camp, which hosts some 60,000 women and children associated with DAESH militants. In addition, according to The Guardian, since the Taliban (banned in Russia) seized power in Afghanistan, there have been many Afghan refugee “clients” in Turkey who use fake passports to board a plane to a Western country in Turkey and then apply for asylum upon arrival.

The products of such clandestine firms also allow individuals to disappear without a trace - simply order a fake death certificate for just $500 and send it to the consulate of the client’s country, as no one will go to the morgue to check who is really lying there.

In addition, it was recently reported in the media that Turkey has become the largest source of military equipment for radical Islamists. The Turkish Financial Crimes Investigation Board (MASAK) has also confirmed this information, publishing a new report that reveals the involvement of three construction companies from the port city of Mersin in the arms trade with DAESH militants. Weapons and components for the UAVs were purchased for the most part in China and then transported by sea through Ankara-controlled territory to the militants. The harbor, where local firms were based, occupied a central part in the supply chain. MASAK officials report that Altun İnci Construction supplied several million dollars worth of already well-known Turkish UAVs and weapons to DAESH in 2015-2016. In its report, MASAK notes that the Turkish Intelligence Service (MIT), among others, monitored the firm and its leader. However, it is not entirely clear why the criminal DAESH arms supply network was not exposed and dismantled earlier?

And this is a fairly incomplete list of information circulating in various media about Turkey and its links to militant and extremist groups, including in Ukraine. Let’s keep an eye on it together!

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