



Turkey Builds Up Forces Near Border With Iraq

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ANKARA (Xinhua) -- Turkish has been building up forces near the border with Iraq as of Wednesday, the Daily News reported on Thursday.

The move came days after Washington hinted that it was no longer concerned over earlier warnings by Ankara that it might opt for military action inside northern Iraq to fight the outlawed Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) there.

Hundreds of tanks and military vehicles arrived in the southeastern town of Yuksekova in Hakkari province last week, the Dogan News Agency reported on Wednesday.

Commando units from divisions based in the central provinces of Kayseri and Isparta and the northwestern province of Tekirdag have been sent to several towns in Hakkari and deployed near the border, the agency said.

Earlier this summer, Turkey reinforced troops along its border with Iraq as a measure against terrorists' infiltration from Iraqi territory. However, Turkish officials denied reports of cross-border operations into Iraqi territory, saying that the deployment was a routine measure to prevent PKK infiltration from its bases in northern Iraq.

After the killing of 15 Turkish soldiers in three days by PKK in mid-July, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened to take military action inside Iraq unless the United States and Iraq took actions to remove the PKK threat originating from Iraq.

In recent days, Ankara has again avoided talk of cross-border operations, expressing hope that Iraq will come up with measures against the PKK.

Washington has almost simultaneously hinted that it was no longer concerned over Turkish military action.

Turkey says that thousands of armed PKK militants have taken refuge in northern Iraq since 1999, using Iraq's Kurdish-run region as a base to launch attacks on the Turkish soil.

On Aug. 2, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani said that his country will do its utmost to stop the PKK from using Iraqi land against Turkey, and he had already closed some offices for pro-PKK groups.

More than 30,000 people have been killed since the PKK, which was listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union, launched an armed campaign for an ethnic homeland in southeastern Turkey in 1984.

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