



## Turkey Forms Alliance With Iran Against Kurds

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U.S. ally Turkey and U.S. arch-enemy Iran have formed a military alliance to drive opposition Kurds from bases in northern Iraq they have used since 2004 to launch guerrilla operations inside Iran, rebel leaders told Newsmax at a secret base in the Qandil mountains.

Both Iran and Turkey have vowed to send troops into northern Iraq, but until now evidence of active military cooperation between them has remained a closely-held secret.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has stepped up political and diplomatic threats in recent days, telling the United States he would cut off U.S. access to the strategic Incirlik airbase in eastern Turkey if the U.S. tried to prevent Turkey from sending troops against the Kurdish bases in northern Iraq.

Leaders of the Party of Free Life of Iranian Kurdistan, known as PJAK, provided Newsmax with extensive evidence of the Iran-Turkey alliance in two days of exclusive interviews at a secret guerrilla base deep in the Qandil mountains. An Iranian Revolutionary Guards outpost was visible on a nearby mountain peak.

"Iran and Turkey attacked jointly on August 16 against our forces inside Iran and against Turkish self-defense forces in northern Iraq," a PJAK commander using the nom de guerre Xerat told Newsmax at the Iranian rebel base.

The Iranian Revolutionary Guards "attacked us across a broad front in the areas of Sardasht, Piranshahr, Shaho, Urmieh, and along the border line," Xerat said, citing the names of major cities in Iranian Kurdistan where PJAK rebels have been operating.

While those ground operations were underway, Iranian and Turkish artillery simultaneously began shelling civilian villages inside Iraqi Kurdistan from Metina, Zaab, Haftani, and Hakurke in the north, to Haji Oumran, Qalatdizza, Zeh, Marado, and Xinera in the south, he added.

Turkish artillery hit the northern villages, while Iranian gunners hit the southern ones.

Iranian troops attempted to cross into Iraq through the mountain passes, but PJAK fighters held the line.

"The goal of the Iranians is to drive us from the border area," rebel leader Biryar Gabar told Newsmax. "They want to turn this area into a no-man's land, so they can use it to smuggle weapons and Islamist guerillas into Iraq to fight the Americans."

He called the Iran-Turkey entente "an anti-American alliance," not just an anti-Kurdish agreement, and said that it resulted from deliberate decisions from the ruling Islamist AKP party of Prime Minister Erdogan to transform Turkey into an increasingly Islamist state.

A senior European official, who was involved in talks to bring Turkey into the European Union, told Newsmax recently he had been "stunned" by the hard-line toward the Kurds taken by AKP party leader Abdullah Gul, now Turkey's president.

"He was totally uncompromising," the official said. "He took a harder line than the Turkish military."

Iran has been offering Turkey an economic agreement with Iran in July to build a strategic pipeline that will bring Iranian natural gas to Europe, in defiance of a U.S. led effort to increase the economic squeeze on Iran.

During a press conference in August while he was still foreign minister, Gul defended Turkey and Iran's joint action against Kurdish guerillas in Iraq.

"They pose a threat to Turkey as well as to other neighbors. Therefore, every country has the right to defend its borders and take legitimate measures for its own security," Gül said.

On Sept. 9, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani publicly called on PJAK and Turkish Kurdish militamen to leave Iraq, or limit themselves to purely political activities.

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Since the liberation of Iraq by the Coalition, PJAK has maintained control of the Iran-Iraq border in this area, and prevented infiltration by Iran or al-Qaida-related terrorists.

The U.S. military sent liaison officers to meet with PJAK in 2003 and again in 2005 to discuss Iranian efforts to infiltrate Iraq, but have not pursued discussions further, PJAK officials said.

"From August 16-24, the Iranians tried to cross the border along the mountain ridge line, but we pushed them back," Biryar Gabar said.

During the Iranian ground attacks, PJAK learned from its operatives on the ground inside Iran that Turkish officers were acting as military advisors to the Iranian troops, he told Newsmax.

Additional information was gleaned from the interrogation of an Iranian Revolutionary Guards soldier captured by PJAK guerillas who is now being held inside Iraq, and from papers taken from the bodies of 60 Iranian guards troops killed during the clashes.

PJAK fighters have killed 200 Revolutionary Guards troops and lost seven of their own soldiers since the fighting began on Aug. 16, Biryar Gabar said. Another PJAK fighter was wounded, he added.

Since the failed ground offensive by the Iranians, Turkish officers have begun training Iranian Revolutionary Guards troops in counter-insurgency operations at the Soleiman training camp near the Iranian city of Urmieh.

"The Iranians had little experience in counter-insurgency operations, so the Turks are training them," guerilla leader Xenat said.

"Our friends saw Turkish officers coordinating the operations of the Iranian army in the Kelaresh area," he added. Kelaresh is in the border region outside of Salmas and Urmieh, Iran.

An exclusive Newsmax source in Iran reported in late August that eight Turkish officers were then in Urmieh, coordinating the anti-Kurdish military campaign with Iran's Revolutionary Guards.

At the command level, Iranian and Turkish military officers have held monthly coordination meetings in the Turkish cities of Harakeh, Van, Bashakale, and in the Iranian cities of Urmieh, Mahabad, and Salmas, PJAK officials said.

The Iranian government sent a 12-member delegation to Hakkari, Turkey, for a summit meeting with Turkish officials on Sept. 10, PJAK officials said.

The Iranian delegation included the governor of Urmieh province, Hassan Gaffari Azer, and the deputy commander of the border guards, Colonel Gurban Ali Muhubi.

They met with the governor of the Hakkari district, Ayhan Nasuhbeyoglu, security chief Cavit Cevik, the commander of the local gendarmerie, Colonel Zuhuri Atilla Ataal, and the governors of two adjoining districts.

PJAK guerilla leaders also pointed to the recent creation by Iran of civilian village guards, known as "jash," in the Iranian Kurdish areas, as another sign of Turkish military cooperation with Iran.

"The Turkish army used a similar tactic when fighting the PKK in the 1990s," said Xenat, a former PKK fighter who is originally from Turkey but joined PJAK once the PKK dissolved its military wing in early 2000.

The "jash" village guards act as spies for the Revolutionary Guards to identify PJAK guerilla fighters., he said. They are also dressing up in Kurdish guerilla uniforms and attacking Iranian villagers, pretending to be PJAK fighters.

"The Turks have been fighting a dirty war in anti-guerilla operations for 30 years. Now they are teaching this to the Iranians," Xenat said.

PJAK leaders said they were countering the Iranian disinformation efforts through political work on the ground inside Iran, and by attacking Revolutionary Guards units and Iranian officials such as judges who had sentenced PJAK guerilla fighters and political operatives to death.

Unlike earlier Iranian Kurdish guerilla groups, PJAK has integrated women into both its political and military wing.

For example, on Sept. 10, PJAK launched a reprisal attack against a Revolutionary Guards base near Shaho, in northwestern Iran, that was coordinated by a female guerilla fighter, said Arsham Kurdman, the head of the PJAK women's movement.

Twelve Iranian troops were killed during that particular attack, she told Newsmax, while PJAK had no losses.

War materiel captured during that attack is now being used by PJAK fighters inside Iran, she added.

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