

October 29, 2007

Who's Behind the PKK? In a word: Washington

The recent **threat** by the Turks to invade Iraq in hot pursuit of **PKKterrorists** has the administration **scrambling** to appease Ankara and stave off a major blow to the claim that the U.S. occupation has provided "**stability**" to the region. Kurdistan, after all, has been **touted** up until now as a model of peace, prosperity, and unalloyed happiness – a foretaste of the country's golden future, provided "defeatists" in the U.S. don't **pull the rug out** from under our **imminent victory**. To see this veritable utopia smashed by Turkish force of arms would be a disaster for Washington – but even worse would be the revelation of how we got ourselves into this wholly untenable position to begin with. Worse, that is, for whoever would be indicted and prosecuted for pulling off what may turn out to be one of the most ambitious, and dangerous, "rogue" operations since **Iran-Contra**.

The **serial numbers** of arms captured from PKK fighters have been traced back to U.S. shipments to Iraqi military and police units. Responding to Turkish complaints, the Americans claim these arms were diverted by the Iraqis – presumably the Kurdish regional government – but the Turks aren't buying it: if the large quantity of U.S.-made arms (**1,260 seized so far**) turns out to have been directly provided to the PKK by the Americans, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul warned, U.S.-Turkish "**relations would really break apart**." U.S. diplomats immediately rebuffed this suggestion, and Washington dispatched the Pentagon's general counsel, William J. Haynes, to the scene, where he met with top Turkish military leaders. According to at least **one report**, "The meeting discussed an ongoing investigation by the U.S. Department of Defense into reports that U.S. arms were being sold by U.S. troops in Iraq."

Another clue to what is really going on here is provided by **the news** that the FBI has volunteered to help the Turks find out where the PKK is getting its funding and weapons – and doesn't that strike you as odd? FBI director Robert Mueller said, "We are working with our counterparts elsewhere in Europe and in Turkey to address the PKK and work cooperatively, to find and cut off financing to terrorist groups, be it PKK, al-Qaeda," or whatever. Yet why would the FBI get involved at all, unless, of course, Americans were somehow involved? Foreign Minister Gul confirmed this to the Turkish media, **stating**:

"1,260 weapons captured from the PKK are American-made. We documented it to the U.S. These are of course not given directly to the PKK by the U.S. These are the ones that were given to the Iraqi army. Unfortunately some U.S. officers were corrupt. The Department of Defense informed us that a serious investigation is underway."

Is it that a few bad apples are "corrupt" – or something else?

As Seymour Hersh has **reported**, the U.S. and Israel are financing and otherwise aiding the Kurdish Party of Life, known as "**Pejak**," founded to "liberate" western Iran, which has a large and restive Kurdish population. Furthermore, the ties between the PKK and Pejak are more than merely fraternal: they are basically **the same organization**, sharing not only bases in the mountainous Quandil region of Kurdistan, but also common personnel and leadership.

The sudden outbreak of PKK violence – two spectacular ambushes, one of which resulted in the killing of **12 Turkish soldiers** and the capture of eight, who are now being used as bargaining chips – also requires some explanation. Up until this point, the PKK had carried out low-level operations, with groups of six to eight militants planting bombs and generally harassing the Turks on a small scale. In recent months, however, the overall level of attacks has undergone a radical **increase**, with hundreds of PKK fighters

deployed in a single attack and a new sophistication in terms of both firepower and the technical equipment required to pull off complex operations such as the recent ambush-and-capture.

Ever since the Syrians **stopped** supporting the PKK in the late 1990s, the group was largely incapable of launching major operations and had to content itself with terrorist actions directed at tourist facilities. Membership was down, cut virtually in half, and the capture of their leader, Abdullah Ocalan, demoralized large sections of the PKK, amid reports of **splits**. The revival of the group's fortunes coincided with news of the Pejak-U.S. connection and – tellingly – the disappearance of U.S. munitions and other equipment from Iraq.

Nearly one out of every 25 weapons provided to the Iraqis by the U.S. has **disappeared**. Furthermore, the system for tracing them never functioned. 370,000 light weapons have been sent to Iraq by the U.S. since 2003, yet just 3 percent had their serial numbers recorded by the U.S. Defense Department prior to being handed over. For some unfathomable reason, the general who was in charge of that particular task – by the name of **Petraeus** – has never been held accountable for what is one of the biggest scandals of the war.

The idea that "corrupt" U.S. soldiers sold weapons on the black market to PKK guerrillas is not all that far-fetched, but the absence of any system to account for all these guns invites larger-scale suspicions. Could it have been set up that way precisely because the Pentagon – or someone else – wanted to make sure the weapons couldn't be traced? This would certainly facilitate the arming of groups like Pejak, to put pressure on the Iranians and give the **serial regime-changers** in the Pentagon a huge weapons cache from which to draw at will.

We know that both the U.S. and Israel have been aiding Pejak, and surely this allowed the PKK to feed off of the arms pipeline, albeit "indirectly." The Israeli factor is yet another angle to this story: Seymour Hersh also **reported** that the Israelis have taken out a rather large stake in Kurdistan, not only investing in several major business operations but also involving themselves in the **training** of Kurdish "commandos." Could some of these commandos possibly be PKK operatives?

Both Iran and Turkey have **pledged** to cooperate in eradicating the Kurdish threat, and this cooperation is yet another reason for the general decline in relations between Ankara on the one hand and Washington and Tel Aviv on the other. What was once a tight alliance started to unravel when the Turks **refused** to let the U.S. use their territory as a launching pad for the invasion of Iraq, and things have gone rapidly downhill since. The regime-changers inside the administration, centered around **Dick Cheney's office** and the **civilian upper reaches** of the Pentagon, may have decided that the Turks have to be thrown overboard now that the campaign to **target Tehran** is going **full-gear**. If the Kurds' price for subverting the Iranian regime is covert aid for their continuing assault on Turkey, then it hardly beggars belief that the War Party is willing to pay it: loyalty is not one of their strong suits, as Iraq's Shi'ites can **readily attest**.

I have a great deal of difficulty believing that the large number of confiscated American weapons that apparently found their way into the hands of PKK fighters just happened to show up on the black market, without any knowledge or complicity by higher authorities. How high the "corruption" goes, remains to be seen. What we do know is this: **the War Party** isn't shy about engaging in "**rogue**" operations and doing **end-runs** around the properly constituted authorities when it suits their purposes.

A recent demonstration by Turkish students against PKK terrorism had the protesters denouncing both the Kurds and the U.S. government: "Down with the PKK!" – **they shouted** – "Down with the U.S.!" In Turkey, at least, they seem to know who and what is behind the wave of terrorism that has shaken the country.

In America, however, it's a different story altogether: the "news" media **hasn't** really said anything about the FBI investigation and the possible involvement of Americans, nor do we hear **much** about the U.S. – or Israeli – connection to the Kurdish "liberation" groups, such as Pejak, except from Hersh and a **few others**. As far as the "mainstream" media is concerned, what's going on between the Turks and the Kurds is just another of those ancient, endless Middle Eastern blood feuds. No one bothers to ask: Why is this old problem escalating *now*?

That the PKK and Pejak have turned themselves into pawns of the War Party is quite understandable: after all, they want to liberate their people and unite them in the age-old dream of a "**Greater Kurdistan**."

Like Ahmed Chalabi's **Iraqi National Congress**, they are ready, willing, and able to use the Americans in order to advance their own agenda. The question for the U.S. Congress, however, is whether the American taxpayers are now subsidizing terrorism directed at the Turks in order to further the War Party's agenda.

Find this article at:

<http://www.antiwar.com/justin/?articleid=11828>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.