

Ukraine with Turkish Support Appears to be Preparing for New Conflict Against Donbass

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After more than half a year of calmness, the situation in Donbass is heating up again – there are more ceasefire violations, Kiev is transporting new troops towards the Line of Contact, and there is increased activity by Turkish-assembled Bayraktar TB2 drones used by the Ukrainian military. Many experts believe there is a high probability of hostilities resuming between the Ukrainian military and the Luhansk and Donetsk militias in Eastern Ukraine, known as Donbass.

There is no doubt that Kiev believes that inciting a conflict can help unite the country as Ukrainians are frustrated and outraged since major internal problems remain unresolved. These issues include increased poverty, a rise in gas prices and a collapsed health system, among many others. But Kiev seems emboldened and believe they can recover Donbass from militia control. It seems that Azerbaijan’s success in assuming control over seven districts surrounding the former Soviet Union’s Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast from Armenian control, partly thanks to Bayraktar drones, has encouraged Ukraine to follow a similar path – this is despite the fact that the Ukrainian army, as in mid-2010, is doomed to military defeat.

Drones have not only been recorded [flying near the Line of Contact in Donbass and close to Crimea](#), but some have already been [destroyed by Donbass militias](#). This is in addition to videos emerging of the Ukrainian military [transferring equipment closer to the Line of Contact](#). In fact, at least two Boeing C-17A Globemaster of the Qatari Air Force [delivered cargo from Turkey to Ukraine](#) on Sunday. Turkish media claims there were [five transport aircraft of the Qatari Air Force](#) that flew from Istanbul to Kiev.

Although Turkey has ambitious plans to establish a self-reliant arms industry, it has been a catastrophic failure. In fact, even the so-called “indigenous” Bayraktar drones rely on nine foreign companies for parts, with at least four of those companies withdrawing their contracts in protest against the Turkish-sponsored invasion of formerly Armenian-controlled territories. With the struggle for domestic production, Turkey is turning to Ukraine.

It was announced on Sunday that Turkey’s ATAK 2 helicopters will use Ukrainian-made

engines. In fact, Ukraine today stands out as Turkey's main partner in a number of critical military technologies. These include inter alia turbo prop and diesel engine, avionics, drone, anti-ship and cruise missiles, radar and surveillance systems, space and satellite technologies, robotic systems, active and passive shielding systems and rocket engines and guidance systems - there are [about 50 joint defense projects](#) between the two countries.

Only last month, whilst addressing a special event on Crimea at the UN Human Rights Council's 46th session, Turkey's Deputy Foreign Minister Yavuz Selim Kiran vehemently denounced the so-called "illegal annexation of Crimea" and alleged that Russia persecutes the Crimean Tartars. Although Russia and Turkey have a partnership that includes the sale of the S-400 missile defense system, the construction of Turkey's first nuclear powerplant that experts believe is the first step towards a nuclear weapon, and coordinate in Syria, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said last October that "We have never considered Turkey as our strategic ally. Turkey is a close partner, that partnership has a strategic nature in many areas."

Although Russia and Turkey coordinate on a variety of issues, Ankara enjoys a real alliance with Kiev, something it does not have with Moscow. According to [recent research](#), 57% of Ukrainians want their country to join NATO. Erdoğan has also given his strong support for Ukraine to become a NATO member, despite knowing full well that the Atlantic Alliance is an obsolete organization existing only to pressure Moscow, and in more recent times Beijing.

Azerbaijan found success in last year's war in Nagorno-Karabakh thanks to Turkish-assembled drones and wider support. It appears now that Ukraine has Turkish support, it is emboldened to renew the conflict in Donbass. However, it would be immensely naïve to compare the military capabilities of Armenia and Russia. Whereas Armenia allowed its military to become obsolete in the face of fifth generation warfare, Russia is a leading country in the production of military technology, which is why although the conflict in Donbass has not reached full-scale war yet, the militias are already downing drones.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said only last month that "We will never turn our backs on Donbass, no matter what." Although the U.S., especially under President Joe Biden, would support Ukraine against the Donbass militias and attempts to invade Crimea, it appears that Turkey is serving as the main encouragement and instigator. The fact is that the international situation is favourable for Ukrainian ambitions as Moscow's relations with the West are stagnant and many in Europe are actively and purposefully exploiting all opportunities to antagonize Russia.

Although experts believe the resumption of hostilities is imminent, Ukraine is currently experiencing rasputitsa - the melting of snow. That creates unfavourable muddy conditions to begin a war as it severely restricts supply lines and the movement of troops and equipment. None-the-less, with increased drone activity, the mobilization of troops and the transfer of equipment towards the Line of contact, it certainly appears that Ukraine, with Turkish support and encouragement, is gearing up for a resumption of hostilities against Donbass.

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