

Will NATO and Turkey become Actively Involved in Syria War?

Interview

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As the Syrian crisis escalates, Turkey, Syria and Poland are all under NATO's constraint these days. Was a bilateral arrangement of Poland with the US a mistake? Should Poland develop its own missiles interception system integrated into or with NATO?

Interview with Mr. Rick Rozoff, manager of Stop NATO website .

Can you give our listeners an update on what's going on with NATO?

NATO's been keeping a very low profile for several weeks. Their website, for example, has not updated for at least three weeks, perhaps a month. I'm not sure what to attribute that to. It may be a conscious decision to keep a low profile as the Syrian crisis escalates. So that should they become involved – a likely scenario, of course, is in alleged defense of Turkey – if border skirmishes develop that they will not have tipped their hand or signaled what they want to do...In terms of a new commander at NATO's Norfolk command, which is called Allied Command Transformation, it was the first major NATO headquarters – and the only one to date – in the United States...

You talked about defending Turkey. Now Turkey recently made some statements regarding the fact that they're against a military intervention in Syria.

I believe Turkish officials said that to Russian officials. And I would imagine that's what Ankara thinks Moscow wants to hear. We should recall that last week Turkey moved 25 tanks as well as missile batteries and armored personnel carriers along with troops to within two kilometers of the Syrian border, allegedly engaging in a military exercise aimed at the Kurdistan Workers' Party, but in fact claiming that a political party on the other side of the border, in Syria, is linked with the Kurdistan Workers' Party and intimating if not stating quite openly that Turkey reserves the right to intervene militarily against supporters of the PKK, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, inside Syria.

So a scenario could come into existence whereby Turkey stages a provocation. You probably saw today's news, John, that Turkey is claiming they've killed something like 117 Kurdistan Workers Party fighters in southeastern Turkey near the Iraqi border. So things are heating up there. And if it's the intent, not only of Turkey, but if it's the intent of the West as a whole to stage a direct military intervention into Syria, then the most likely pretext for doing so would be a clash between Turkish and Syrian forces near the border, on either side of the border, and then Turkey once again returning to NATO and asking for assistance from its

fellow NATO members.

Do you have any information on what's going on in Aleppo? Several high officials, I believe, were captured when the Syrian Army took Aleppo back under its control.

An English-language Iranian website mentioned that a Turkish general had been captured by Syrian forces in Aleppo. And I personally spoke with a Syrian émigré whose brother is in pretty influential circles in Damascus and he mentioned that six or seven foreign officers were captured in Aleppo within the last 24-48 hours. And he mentioned them being not only Turkish, but Arabic-speaking, presumably Saudi, Qatari or other Persian Gulf Arab States. This shouldn't surprise us that, trying to throw together an organized insurgency, funded certainly and based abroad, would also entail having probably special operations officers, maybe of fairly high rank, from Turkey and from Arab Gulf states involved in the fighting in Aleppo and earlier in Damascus.

You're saying six or seven generals were captured in Aleppo.

The term that was used in my conversation was generals, but I think we're probably safe in assuming they were officers of some ranking, perhaps not generals.

They were commanding officers, but were they from different countries?

That's correct.

Have you heard anything about training camps that have been set up on borders of Syria?

That's an established fact. That Saudi Arabia supplied the funding for a training camp for fighters. Roughly, I believe, 40 kilometers from the Syrian border, if I'm not mistaken, inside Turkey. But this has been going on for quite a while. As long ago as, say, last November or October as I recollect even the Daily Telegraph in Britain was quoting an official of so-called Free Syrian Army stating there were 15,000 fighters – he didn't specify their nationality, incidentally – but 15,000 fighters inside Turkey receiving material support and training. That's probably a hyperbolic figure. He was probably exaggerating for propaganda purposes. But it's an indication this has been going on for some time. The Saudis funding the creation of a special training camp inside Turkey that close to the Syrian border is an escalation of the conflict.

Can you tell us about the problems that NATO has had supplying the troops in Afghanistan?

For five days now what was to be the resumption of NATO supplies from Pakistan into Afghanistan has been held up, supposedly because of security concerns, as I understand it, but as recently as yesterday two NATO vehicles were torched in the Pakistani province of Balochistan. So what we're seeing, in fact, is a resumption of attempted supplying of NATO forces in Afghanistan and we're seeing exactly the same situation that obtained at the time they were occurring before the attack on the Pakistani border outpost in Salala last November that killed 25 Pakistani troops. What we're seeing is that NATO supply vehicles are being attacked and set afire.

What can you say about Polish President's announcement a couple of days ago? He said that it had been a mistake to agree with NATO on building ABM infrastructure in Poland.

That is a fascinating question. I've been trying to make sense of that since the story broke. I'm not quite sure if he was alluding to the earlier George W. Bush administration plan to put Ground-based Midcourse, longer-range, interceptor missiles or if it's an allusion to what's called the European Phased Adaptive Approach of the Obama administration, which is planning to put 24 Standard Missile-3, advanced Standard Missile-3, interceptors in Poland by 2018. It's unclear whether he's talking about the Bush program that's already been superseded or the Obama program that's still in the works. But in any event, the paraphrase of his comments that I've read suggested that a bilateral arrangement with the United States was a mistake and that Poland should develop its own missile interception system and integrate it into or with NATO.

He was repeatedly asked who they would be defending themselves against. He refused to answer the question.

Of course he refused to answer because the answer is not one that the United States wants him to provide. That country is Russia. The argument that the original Ground-based Midcourse interceptors were meant to hit Iranian missiles...one has to in one's imagination conjure up a map of the world and try to imagine, first of all, how Iran would have the capability of launching basically intercontinental ballistic missiles over Poland, presumably over the Arctic Circle to hit the United States. That's an impossibility, fallacious from the very beginning.

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