

ARE TURKEY AND NATO CONTEMPLATING A MILITARY INTERVENTION AGAINST SYRIA AHEAD OF THE CHICAGO SUMMIT?

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Global Research, April 15, 2012
[Stop NATO](#) 15 April 2012

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On April 11 Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan told reporters accompanying him to China that Turkey is considering asking the 28-nation North Atlantic Treaty Organization to invoke its Article 5 collective military assistance clause against Syria after a reported brief cross-border skirmish between Syrian military forces and what were identified as refugees, whether armed or otherwise remains unclear. Turkey unabashedly provides refuge for and, though not publicly acknowledged, assistance to thousands of Free Syrian Army fighters in its south.

The Turkish head of state insisted that “NATO has a responsibility to protect Turkish borders,” in what could only be interpreted as an allusion to the military bloc’s founding document provision mentioned above, the bulk of which states:

“The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them...will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.”

Turkey joined NATO along with Greece in 1952 as the culmination of the 1947 Truman Doctrine, the inauguration of which signaled the beginning of the Cold War, and after both countries served their NATO apprenticeship by supplying troops for the war in Korea.

It is the eastern-most member of the alliance, bordering Greece and Bulgaria to its northwest and Syria, Iraq, Iran, Armenia and Georgia – all potential flashpoints for future military conflicts – to its south and east.

Earlier this year the Turkish government agreed under NATO obligations to host a U.S. Forward-Based X-Band Radar as the advance guard of the Western global missile interception system being extended from Europe into the Middle East and the broader Asia-Pacific region.

According to the Zaman newspaper, Prime Minister Erdoğan also warned: “Turkey has a unique attitude; history is evidence of this. Turkey will at least take the position other countries would take in a similar situation. Syria should put itself in order. If Syria continues its violence, then, Syria should be ready to pay the consequences of this violence. Yesterday also there were armed attacks across our border with Syria. In terms of international law, it

is clear what Turkey should do in terms of border violations.”

NATO spokesman Carmen Romero later told Agence France-Presse that in relation to Article 5 obligations, “We take our responsibility to protect NATO allies extremely seriously.”

The U.S. and NATO can exploit Turkey’s bordering Syria to intervene against the latter in the name of alleged collective defense. [1]

Article 5 has only been acted on once before in the 63 years of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in October of 2001 after the attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C. of the preceding month.

That decision was the genesis of NATO’s involvement in the over decade-long war in Afghanistan, which also includes Alliance warplanes and troops stationed in bases in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and deadly NATO attacks conducted inside Pakistan.

The activation of Article 5 also resulted in NATO AWACS surveillance aircraft being deployed along the Eastern Seaboard of the United States and the launching of Operation Active Endeavor, a permanent NATO naval surveillance and interdiction mission that controls all access to and from the Mediterranean Sea from the Strait of Gibraltar to the Suez Canal and the Dardanelles Strait.

Less than three years afterward, with direct relevance to the current situation, the closest approximation of an Article 5 mobilization occurred when a month before the U.S. and British invasion of Iraq the NATO Defence Planning Committee authorized the deployment of three Patriot interceptor missile batteries from the Netherlands and two AWACS aircraft to the Turkish air base in Konya, used by U.S. Air Forces in Europe, including as the site of Operation Anatolian Eagle joint U.S.-Turkish air warfare exercises held several times a year, often with the participation of other NATO member states and partners. Partnership participants have included Mediterranean Dialogue members Israel and Jordan, Istanbul Cooperation Initiative member the United Arab Emirates (which has provided fighter jets and troops for NATO’s wars in Libya and Afghanistan) and Pakistan.

The Pentagon bases an estimated 90 B61 tactical nuclear bombs at the Incirlik Air Base in Turkey as part of its nuclear sharing agreement with NATO. That is, the U.S. has nuclear weapons (as well as a new missile radar base) in a nation bordering Syria and Iran under an arrangement with NATO.

With the Washington Post bluntly calling for NATO armed intervention in the West African nation of Mali and The Guardian demanding the same in Syria [2], all efforts must be extended to demand the disbanding of the lawless military bloc ahead of its summit in Chicago next month before it triggers an even larger crisis than it has in its previous wars in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Libya.

1) Turkish Actions Designed To Trigger NATO Confrontation With Syria? Stop NATO June 21, 2011

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2011/06/21/turkish-actions-designed-to-trigger-nato-confrontation-with-syria/>

2) NATO nations must help restore order in Mali, The Washington Post, April 5, 2012

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/nato-nations-must-help-restore-order-in->

mali/2012/04/05/gIQAFK1LyS_story.html

Simon Tisdall, Obama and Nato should act before the Syria crisis spreads further, The Guardian, April 10, 2012

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/apr/10/obama-nato-syria-crisis-spread>

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