



The map was then [presented](#) by an American colonel at the NATO's Defense College in Rome while Turkish officers were attending. An uproar ensued and the U.S. had to apologize.

In July 2016 parts of the Turkish military attempted a coup against Erdogan. Turkish jets which attacked the capitol Ankara had launched from the U.S. and NATO base in Incirlik. When the attempt failed several NATO countries granted asylum to Turkish officers who did not want to return to their home country.

After the failed coup Turkey decided to buy Russian air defense systems. The move makes sense. The alternative U.S. systems are suspected to be ineffective against attacking U.S. planes and missiles. The Russian S-400 systems is designed to counter threats from U.S. weapons.

Turkey is a partner in the U.S. F-35 fighter jet program. It has plans to purchase one hundred of them. Now the U.S. Air Force [suggests](#) that the deal could be restricted:

If Turkey moves forward with its buy of a Russian air defense system, it will not be permitted to plug into NATO technology, and further action may be forthcoming that could affect the country's acquisition or operation of the F-35, a top Air Force official said Wednesday.

...

Analysts worry that Turkey operating both the S-400 and F-35 together could compromise the jet's security, as any data collected by the air defense system and obtained by Russia could help expose the joint strike fighter's vulnerabilities. For a platform like the F-35, whose major strengths are its stealth and data fusion capabilities, that would be a disaster.[The deputy undersecretary of the Air Force for international affairs, Heidi] Grant, agreed that a S-400 acquisition creates issues for Turkey's use of the F-35.

...

Her comments echoed those of **Gen. Petr Pavel**, chairman of NATO's military committee. In October, Pavel said that Turkey is free, as a sovereign nation, to make its own decisions in regards to military procurement, but will face "consequences" if a S-400 buy goes through.

Buying a Russian air defense system is not unprecedented for a NATO state. In 1997 Cyprus bought Russian S-300 systems, ironically to defend against Turkish jets. The [Cyprus Missile Crisis](#) ensued and the weapons ended up in Greece where they also serve to keep the Turks

away. Greece also flies U.S. made jets.

In Syria the U.S. is arming, training and fighting together with the YPK, a sister organization of the Kurdish PKK which is pursuing a guerrilla campaign against the Turkish army and state.

The personal disparaging of Turkish politicians by NATO, U.S. involvement in a coup attempt, restrictions on weapon buys and U.S. cooperation with Turkey's enemy are amounting to an open affront.

It is obvious that NATO is no longer a reliable ally for Turkey. This view is independent of who holds the Turkish presidency. The strategic situation would not change if Erdogan would be replaced by some secular nationalist figure.

Turkey fields NATO's second biggest army. With more than 80 million people it is a large emerging military and economic power. It controls the Bosphorus and thereby access to the Black Sea. It has influence in the Balkans as well as in the Central Asian "Stans". It is a crossing point for major energy pathways including the new Russian TurkStream pipeline which will deliver Russian gas to south-Europe.

There is little that hinders Turkey from leaving NATO and from joining a tacit alliance with Russia. Russian fighter jets are as good as the U.S. designed F-35. Even Turkey's economic interests seem to be better aligned with Russia's than with north-Europe or the United States. The voices in Turkey that demand a realignment are gaining ground. The editors of the Erdogan friendly *Daily Sabah* [write](#):

The U.S. is not the enemy, but neither is it acting like a friend. Its actions are against Turkey's interests as well as its own. Now is the right time for Turkey to formulate its own independent regional policy. Russia and Iran with their sounder anti-Daesh and counterterrorism policies need to be at the center of measures Turkey will implement from now on. After all that's happened, one thing is certain: The U.S. should definitely be kept out of Turkey's regional policy concerns.

The Zionist lobby in the U.S. has [long argued](#) to kick Turkey out of NATO. Such a separation may indeed come true. But it would be Turkey that would leave NATO and not the other way around. The effects would be quite different than those expected a decade ago.

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