

NATO Adds to Turkey's Chagrin. Turkish Good-Bye to NATO?

By Moon of Alabama

Global Research, November 19, 2017

Moon of Alabama 17 November 2017

Region: Middle East & North Africa

Theme: Intelligence, Militarization and

WMD, US NATO War Agenda

There has long been <u>speculation</u> about <u>a Turkish</u> good-bye <u>to NATO</u>.

The U.S. and its military proxy organization in Europe are doing their best to <u>further</u> such a move:

The image of Atatürk was displayed as a target during the drill at NATO's Joint Warfare Center in Stavanger, Norway held between Nov. 8 and Nov. 17, while a NATO soldier posted defamatory words about Erdoğan on the social media.

Atatürk is the founder of the secular Turkey. He was designated as "target" during a desktop drill. NATO's Joint Warfare Center is not a low level school but an elite officer training institution led by a Major-General. The 40 Turkish soldiers who attended the training course were immediately ordered back home.

Secularists in Turkey have long suspected NATO as promoting "moderate Islamists". That belief is not without factual ground. U.S. President Obama allied with the Muslim Brotherhood during the so called "Arab Spring". But the second incident at the very same NATO institution points to a more comprehensive anti-Turkish position:

A Kurdish-origin Norwegian officer signed up to a social networking website within NATO, using a fake account in the name of President Erdoğan and sharing posts against the organization.

To vilify the Turkish secularist hero Atatürk and its Islamist President Erdogan in related occasions is a comprehensive move against the whole country.

NATO's political spokesperson Jens Stoltenberg, a Norwegian politician, <u>apologized</u> for the incidents. It will soothe no one.

A comparable incident happened in 2006. U.S. Lt. Colonel Ralph Peters <u>published a map</u> with redrawn borders of Middle East in the *Armed Forces Journal*. The map showed a "Free Kurdistan" and Turkey cut to half its size.



The map was then <u>presented</u> 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 <u>suggests</u> 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.

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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.

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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 <u>Cyprus Missile</u> <u>Crisis</u> 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 Bosporus 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.

The 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 <u>long argued</u> 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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