

Turkey launches airstrike against Kurds on Syria-Iraq border



Damascus, October 8 (RHC)-- Only hours after U.S. President announced his country's troops pull out of northern Syria, there have been reports Monday that Turkey launched airstrikes against Kurdish and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) positions in al-Hasakah province in northeastern Syria, according to SANA news agency.

According to the al-Ikhbariya broadcaster, Turkish planes attacked the headquarters of the SDF in Hasakah province. While other reports suggested that the airstrikes targeted Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which are part of the SDF. No casualties have been confirmed so far. Trump threatened to "totally destroy and obliterate" Turkey's economy if Ankara takes a planned military strike in Syria too far even though the U.S. leader himself has opened the door for a Turkish incursion.

The major policy shift, which hands Turkey responsibility for thousands of jihadist prisoners, was denounced as a "stab in the back" by the Kurdish-led forces who have been Washington's partner in fighting the Islamic State group in Syria.

A U.S. official said troops had withdrawn from two observation posts on the border, at Tel Abyad and Ras al-Ain, and had told the commander of the SDF that the United States would not defend the SDF from an imminent Turkish offensive. U.S. troops elsewhere in Syria -- illegally deployed there without the permission of Damascus -- remain in position.

The pullback will initially be limited in scope to a patch of territory near the Turkish border where both countries had been working to establish a special security area, a U.S. official told Reuters Monday.

The official, who spoke to Reuters on condition of anonymity, did not say whether the troops would leave the country or reposition elsewhere in Syria, where the United States has around 1,000 forces.

The U.S. withdrawal will leave Kurdish-led forces in Syria that have long allied with Washington vulnerable to a planned incursion by the Turkish military. A move that Ankara has repeatedly threatened to carry out against U.S.-backed Kurdish fighters in northeastern Syria who have links to Kurdish guerrillas operating next door in Turkey.

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