

---

## TCA STATEMENT ON THE PKK-YPG CONNECTION

- 19.01.2018

---

The Turkish Coalition of America is concerned about the recent disagreement between the United States and Turkey regarding apparent U.S. plans to help a PKK-linked Syrian Kurdish militia set up a 30,000 person Syrian Border Security Force. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called the move nothing short of establishing a terror army along Turkey's border and warned of the unintended consequences as Turkey vows to suffocate the terrorists.[i] The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs also issued a statement condemning the US for not consulting with Turkey as a member of the anti-ISIL coalition and for its continued cooperation with the PKK-linked Peoples Protection Units (YPG).[ii]

Turkey has vociferously opposed the U.S.-led coalition's close cooperation with the YPG since the Obama administration. In May 2017, the Trump Administration began to directly arm the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF.) The primary component of the SDF receiving U.S. military assistance has been the YPG Kurdish militia, which is the armed wing of the Syrian Peoples Democratic Party (PYD), which is a subdivision of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK.) The PKK is an armed terrorist organization, listed as such by the United States under section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Turkey perceives the creation of a PKK-affiliated Border Security Force as a national security threat along its southern border. While the Trump administration still views the YPG as the most effective fighting force against ISIL, it apparently fails to acknowledge Turkey's decades-long fight against PKK terrorism. The US also has provided no guarantees that the equipment being provided to the YPG will not work its way into the hands of PKK terrorists inside Turkey. Further, the US has provided no timetable for the eventual disbanding and disarming of this force.

U.S. officials have previously acknowledged on record that the YPG and PKK are the same organization.

- During an April 28, 2016 testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, former Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, when asked by Senator Lindsey Graham whether the PYD and its military wing, the YPG were aligned with the PKK, Secretary Carter unambiguously said yes.[iii] In his testimony Carter underlined that the PKK is a terrorist organization, not only in the eyes of the Turkish government, but in the eyes of the U.S. Government...[iv]
- Gen. Raymond Thomas, the commander of U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM), when speaking on a panel at the 2017 Aspen Security Forum, stated that the U.S. had asked the YPG to re-brand because of its alleged links to the PKK.[v]
- The Tactical Action Report (TAR), conducted by the US Army Training and Doctrine Command

(TRADOC) has confirmed the affiliation between the PKK and the PYD/YPG. TRADOC, in a 2016 unclassified report for public release, has noted that the YPG had formed an alliance with the PKK in Syria.[vi]

A number of Members of the Congress have also expressed their concern with the U.S. decision to arm the YPG.

- Senate Foreign Relations member Chris Murphy, D-Conn., has argued against President Trump's decision to arm the Syrian Kurdish forces as it would antagonize Turkey and invite more problems.[vii]
- Both the Senate Armed Services Chairman John McCain, R-AZ, and committee member Lindsey Graham, R-SC, have long argued that relying on the YPG to destroy ISIL is not an effective strategy. Sen. Graham said: Turkey is of the view that this strategy will never work and will never result in destroying [IS]. And they're very worried that the training of the Kurdish forces inside of Syria is going to flow into their side of the border. I cannot tell you how upset they are with our Syria policy.[viii]

This blatant arming of a terrorist-affiliated military by the US puts enormous strain on ties with its NATO ally Turkey. It widens the rift in the already-stressed bilateral relationship. Providing arms to the YPG also impedes a future reconciliation process that will have international support. A permanent rupture in the US-Turkey relationship over this issue would be a loss for both sides. We urge the US to reconsider its decision on the Border Security Force and recommit to its strategic partnership with Turkey.

<https://resize.yandex.net/mailservice?url=http%3A%2F%2Ffiles.constantcontact.com%2F7e5c1fe4601%2F>

Screenshot

Image not found or type unknown

depicting YPG guerillas after they dedicated the fall of Raqqa to PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan and unfurled an imposing flag with his image. [ix] Ocalan is serving a life sentence in prison in Turkey.

- [i] Turkey's President Assails U.S.-Trained Kurdish Border Force, The New York Times, January 15, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/15/us/politics/syria-turkey-kurds-border.html>
- [ii] No: 15 14 January 2018, Press release regarding the statements on the establishment of a so-called Syrian Border Security Force under the PYD/YPG terrorist organizations command, [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_15\\_14\\_terror-orgutu-pydypg-komutasinda-sozde-suriye-sinir-guvenligi-gucukurulacagi-yonundeki-beyanlar-hk\\_en.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_15_14_terror-orgutu-pydypg-komutasinda-sozde-suriye-sinir-guvenligi-gucukurulacagi-yonundeki-beyanlar-hk_en.en.mfa)
- [iii] United States Senate Hearing to Receive Testimony on Counter-ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) Operations and Middle East Strategy, Thursday, April 28, 2016, U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, Washington, D.C., [https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/16-51\\_04-28-16.pdf](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/16-51_04-28-16.pdf)
- [iv] Former Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter on PYD-YPG-PKK connection during Senate hearing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCWYaEZ6B4w>
- [v] SOCOM Commander: U.S. asked YPG to re-brand because of alleged terrorist link, Military Times, July 22, 2017, <https://www.militarytimes.com/2017/07/22/socom-commander-us-asked-ypg-to-re-brand-because-of-alleged-terrorist-link/>
- [vi] Battle for Sinjar, Iraq, TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration, April 2016, <https://info.publicintelligence.net/USArmy-BattleforSinjar.pdf>
- [vii] Congress unsure what's next after Trump decides to arm Syrian Kurds, Al-Monitor, May 9, 2017, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/en/originals/2017/05/congress-unsure-trump-decision-arm-ypg-kurds-syria-turkey.html>
- [viii] Will Congress rein in US support for Syrian Kurds?, Al-Monitor, April 12, 2016, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/04/congress-syria-kurds-support-turkey-ypg-pkk-isis.html>
- [ix] <https://twitter.com/DefenceUnits/status/920979562720321537/video/1>

---

Kaynak/Source: