



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on February 15, 2016

Turkey's Erdogan Condemns U.S. Support of Syrian Kurdish PYD Rebels

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan (shown), during a speech in Ankara to provincial officials last week, strongly criticized the United States for its support of Syrian Kurdish PYD rebels.

"Are you on our side or the side of the terrorist PYD and PKK organization?" Erdogan openly asked U.S. government officials.

A Reuters report on February 10 noted that Turkish authorities regard the PYD as a terrorist organization, and have cited its ties to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which since 1984 has carried out a violent insurgency for Kurdish autonomy in Turkey's predominantly Kurdish southeast region.



There is a justifiable basis for Erdogan's complaint. As *The New American's* foreign correspondent Alex Newman:

The self-styled Kurdish People's Protection Units, known as Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (YPG) in Kurdish, are essentially the military wing of the Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (PYD) [Democratic Union Party]. The PYD is basically the Syrian affiliate of the communist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an oftentimes ruthless outfit that was officially designated as a terrorist group by the U.S. government in 1997 for myriad bombings and attacks targeting civilians. Since then, the group, formed with backing from the Soviet Union, has continued to slaughter civilians in its quest for a Marxist-Leninist regime to lord over Kurdish communities in the region.

The links between the PYD and the PKK are strong. The PYD considers jailed PKK founder Abdullah Öcalan to be its ideological leader, and recognizes the People's Congress of Kurdistan (Kongra-Gel, PKK's political spin-off) as the supreme legislative authority of the Kurdish people.

Despite this connection, the United States does not consider the PYD to be a terrorist organization, even though the United States, the European Union, and NATO have all listed the PKK as such.

The PKK's communist origins are undeniable. The red flag that it adopted in 1978 and used until 1995 bore the communist hammer and sickle like that of the Soviet Union, and subsequent flags used a star design resembling the flag of communist China.

In another report on February 15, Reuters cited a statement made to reporters by Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu while on a plane en route to Ukraine detailing how the Turkish military used artillery fire to prevent Kurdish YPG fighters from capturing the northern Syrian town of Azaz. "YPG elements were forced away from around Azaz. If they approach again they will see the harshest reaction. We will not allow Azaz to fall," Davutoglu said.



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As noted above, the YPG is the military wing of the PYD, which is closely connected to the PKK, which is designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. State Department.

The Reuters report noted that the U.S. government does not regard the YPG as terrorists, and supports them as allies in the fight against ISIS.

YPG's operations aimed at supporting PYD's objectives of establishing Kurdish autonomy within Syria have caused its objectives to become enmeshed with other forces involved in the Syrian civil war. Some U.S.-backed rebels fighting against the Assad government in Syria have claimed that YPG is fighting with the Syrian military against them, but YPG denies this.

Of course, the main terrorist threat that most Westerners are concerned about these days is ISIS, the radical Islamic group that has captured much territory in both Iraq and Syria. As has been noted many times, among the major factors that made ISIS such a powerful force were the vacuum created when our government removed Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq and our support of the so-called moderate rebels fighting against Assad in Syria. In fact, at least two of the administration's top officials — Vice President Joe Biden and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Martin Dempsey — have publicly discussed the role of Obama's "anti-ISIS" coalition in building up the terrorist group.

Now, in addition to anti-Assad rebels, some of whom are opposed to ISIS and some of whom were allied with ISIS, we are faced with the existence of Kurdish militant groups who may be either supportive of Assad or against him. Some of these Kurdish militants may also be perceived as a threat by Turkey, which happens to be a member of NATO, and, therefore, an ally we are bound by treaty to defend.

The only certainty in the Middle East is that it is such a complicated hornet's nest of forces competing for control that the only wise course for the United States is never to intervene there.

Photo of Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan: AP Images

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