

REVENGE ATTACK

Turkish army strikes Kurd rebel bases in Iraq, 5 killed

AFP
ANKARA

THE Turkish air force has struck Kurdish rebel hide-outs in neighbouring northern Iraq after an attack inside Turkey left two soldiers dead, the military said late Friday.

"After detecting that anti-aircraft fire was opened on (Turkish) helicopters from various positions across the border, the air force fired on those positions" for an hour Friday afternoon, the army said in an online statement.

"It has been observed that those positions were destroyed," it said.

The operation against the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has rear bases in Iraq, began after a group of about 25 rebels attacked a commando unit near the border village of Daglica Friday morning, killing two soldiers.

The statement confirmed

that at least five PKK militants were killed in the ensuing clashes.

"Operations in the region are continuing and it is believed that the losses of the terrorists are higher," it said.

The Turkish army has staged a series of air raids against PKK bases in northern Iraq since December 2007, often with the help of US intelligence, and in February 2008 carried out a week-long ground incursion.

In October 2007, Daglica, nestled among rugged mountains, was the scene of one of the bloodiest PKK attacks in recent years in which rebels sneaking in from Iraq ambushed a patrol, killing 12 soldiers and wounding 17 others.

The attack turned up pressure on the government for cross-border military action against the PKK, paving the way for subsequent parliamentary authorisation to that effect, which expires in October.



Village guards near a road at Silvan, in Diyarbakir province, recently. (AFP)

Blast at Iraqi cop's home kills 3, injures five

AP
BAGHDAD

BOMBS planted inside the home of a policeman in northern Iraq exploded on Saturday, killing him, his mother and one other resident, a security official said.

The bombing was one of several attacks around Iraq's north that killed a total of nine people since Friday evening, a sign that authorities are struggling to maintain security as the country's politicians clamour over the shape of a new government two months after an inconclusive election.

The early morning attack took place on a home in the town of Amirli, just south of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, and injured five other people.

The Kirkuk area is home to an uneasy mix of Iraq's sectarian and ethnic groups. While violence has dropped dramatically over the years, a steady low-level unrest continues, fueled in large part by distrust and animosity between the country's Kurds and Arabs, as well as Sunnis and Shiites.

Much of the drop in violence has been attributed to Sunni tribes forming so-called Awakening Councils and turning against their erstwhile Al Qaeda allies, dealing a massive blow to the insurgency.

The insurgents, however, continue to extract their



Residents gather at the scene of a bomb attack in Tikrit, near Baghdad, on Friday. (REUTERS)

revenge, and on Friday night gunmen firing from a speeding car killed four Awakening Council members at their checkpoint south of Kirkuk, according to a security official.

Four other members of the council were injured and the three gunmen escaped, the official added, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the press. "Armed men have started

to destabilise the security situation and target the security forces, including the Awakening members," said Sheik Hussein Ali, the head of the local branch of the Awakening Council in Hawija, west of Kirkuk.

"The members of Awakening are frustrated now because the government doesn't take care of them and delays their salaries for many months," he added. The councils were once

funded by the US military, which has since turned that responsibility over to the Iraqi government, with mixed results.

Gunmen late Friday night also attacked a car in downtown Kirkuk carrying two members of the Peshmerga, the military force of the nearby Kurdish autonomous region, killing one and injuring the other, according to Col. Sherzad Morferi of the local police.

The steady violence in Iraq has also been accompanied by a rise in crime, especially kidnapping, which has evolved from a political act into a commercial enterprise.

The kidnapped teenage son of a wealthy Sufi sheikh was found dead on Saturday, said Brig. Gen. Najimuddin Kadir, the police chief of Sulaimaniyah, a Kurdish city in northern Iraq some 50 miles (80 kilometers) east of Kirkuk.

Syrian lawyer awarded human rights prize

AFP
GENEVA

LEADING international campaign groups have awarded the 2010 Martin Ennals award for human rights defenders to an imprisoned Syrian lawyer, Muhammad al Hassani, the organisers said on Friday.

The chairman of the jury,

Hans Thoolen, described Hassani as "a man of an exceptional courage, arbitrarily detained in unacceptable conditions for defending the rule of law and the right to organise a human rights organisation."

Hassani, the president of the Syrian Organisation for Human Rights, is due to appear in court in Damascus on May 27 after

being arrested in July 2009 and charged with spreading false information, the Ennals award said in a statement.

It added he was being held in Adra prison, where he was reportedly in poor condition without access to proper medical care. The Ennals award, named after a British activist and founder of Amnesty

International, was set up by ten of the biggest human rights advocacy groups including Amnesty, Human Rights Watch and the International Federation for Human Rights.

Laureates since 1993 include Chinese dissident Harry Wu, Pakistani lawyer and UN rapporteur Asma Jahangir, as well as activists

from Iran, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Chad, Colombia, Russia, Palestinian territories, Syria, Zimbabwe and Uzbekistan.

Hassani has been invited to collect the award at a ceremony in the Swiss city of Geneva on October 15, but the Ennals committee said Syrian authorities have imposed a travel ban on him for the past six years.

2 Egyptian peacekeepers killed in Darfur ambush

AFP
KHARTOUM

TWO Egyptian peacekeepers serving with the joint UN-African Union mission in Darfur were killed in an ambush on Friday, UNAMID said, describing the attack as a "war crime."

Three other Egyptians were badly wounded when they were attacked in the war-torn western region of Sudan, the peacekeeping force's communications chief Kemal Saiki told AFP.

Saiki, reading from a statement, said that the victims were in a UNAMID convoy when they came under fire in South Darfur at mid-morning from unidentified gunmen.

"On Friday at about 11:30 am (1430 GMT) a military convoy from UNAMID's Egyptian contingent, with three vehicles and 20 personnel, was ambushed near Katila village, 85 kilometres (53 miles) south of Edd al-Fursan, South Darfur, by a group of unidentified armed men who indiscriminately opened fire, without warning, on the peacekeepers," he said.

"The attackers fled when the convoy returned fire. The attack left two peacekeepers killed in action and three seriously wounded."

UNAMID special represen-



A convoy of the joint United Nations-African Union force, in the southern village of Kashalongo, south of Nyala in southern Darfur, recently. (AFP)

tative Ibrahim Gambari expressed "outrage at this cowardly attack," according to the statement.

In New York, UN spokesman Martin Nesirky said: "The secretary-general is equally incensed" by this attack.

The joint UN-African Union mission called on the Sudanese government "to identify, capture and swiftly bring the perpetrators to justice and reminds all parties that any attack against peacekeepers constitutes a war crime."

The statement also said that UNAMID "remains undaunted and unwavering in its commitment to carrying out its mandate in the service of peace" despite the bloodshed.

"There is absolutely no reason why our peacekeepers should have been attacked.

This is a criminal act of violence that we are forcefully denouncing," Saiki said on UN radio.

Friday's latest deaths bring to 24 the number of UNAMID members killed in Darfur since the force was deployed there in January 2008.

AU chief Jean Ping also confirmed the deaths earlier in a statement to AFP in Addis Ababa, expressing "shock and regret" at the deaths of the two Egyptians.

In April four South African peacekeepers who had been held in Darfur were freed unharmed after 15 days in captivity.

Their abductors said the kidnapping occurred in order to show the world "that security conditions in Darfur did not allow for elections".

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