



# Covering the Bases

## Reassessing U.S. Military Deployments in Turkey After the July 2016 Attempted Coup d'État

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**John Cappello, Patrick Megahan,  
John Hannah, and Jonathan Schanzer**

*Foreword by Ambassador Eric Edelman*

August 2016





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## Foreword

The modern Republic of Turkey remains one of the “pivotal” states in the international system. The country’s role as a U.S. treaty ally sitting astride the division between Europe and the Middle East, as a Black Sea littoral state bordering on a revanchist Russia, and an important energy hub insures that it will remain a crucial player. Since the 9/11 attacks, the U.S.-Turkish relationship has been on a rollercoaster ride of highs and lows.

While bumpy patches have been more the norm lately, there have been eras of warm ties. The EU decision to open accession talks with Turkey in December 2004 – a long-time objective of U.S. national security policy since the 1960s – stands out in that regard (and it is no coincidence that U.S. standing among the Turkish public, as measured in the Pew Charitable Trust’s poll, was at its highest then). More often than not, however, the relationship has been marked by serious differences over the political future of Iraq (and the best way to deal with the PKK challenge to Turkey emanating from the Kurdish north), how to deal with a nuclearizing Iran, and most acutely, the roiling conflict in Syria and the rise of the Islamic State (IS). It is an unfortunate fact that on occasion these differences have given rise to outbursts of popular anti-Americanism in the often febrile Turkish media.

Even before 9/11, the rise of the Islamist-oriented Justice and Development Party (AKP), and the convulsions that followed in the Middle East, the U.S.-Turkish relationship had been marked by ups and downs. The one steady element in the relationship always appeared to be the military-to-military ties that bound the two countries together. Turkey had the second largest military establishment in NATO, one of the largest International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs in the world, and important bases near the Soviet Union that made it an important military partner for the United States during the Cold War. In particular, for over 70 years, the Incirlik Air Base near Adana in southeastern Turkey played a vital

role in U.S. military planning and in maintaining the “northern tier” strategy of blocking Soviet access to the eastern Mediterranean and Persian Gulf.

When the Cold War ended, some analysts questioned the continuing utility of Incirlik and the ongoing U.S. presence, but the first Gulf War quickly brought that debate to an end. President Turgut Ozal’s courageous decision, overruling his then chief of defense, to join the U.S.-led coalition to reverse Saddam Hussein’s aggression against Kuwait ushered in an era of very close U.S.-Turkish collaboration. By the end of the decade, President Bill Clinton proclaimed a U.S.-Turkish “strategic partnership” in his speech to the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Today, in the wake of the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016, those words seem increasingly hollow.

Even before the botched effort by elements of the military to overthrow the AKP government, Turkey was on a domestic trajectory marked by increasing authoritarianism and troubling government relationships with dangerous Islamist groups. In the wake of the coup, a rising tide of officially sanctioned and, in some cases, government-instigated anti-Americanism, coupled with the hollowing out of the Turkish military and continuing terrorist attacks by both Kurdish and Islamist extremists, have once again raised the question of the future utility of America’s continued presence at Incirlik.

Although I join most observers in continuing to believe that the U.S.-Turkish relationship is crucial and that Incirlik’s role is particularly important in the context of the anti-IS struggle, it is clearly time to face the possibility that the U.S. may, against its will, be forced to leave. This would be a serious discontinuity in the NATO alliance and the U.S.-Turkish relationship, and it ought not to be approached in a “fit of absence of mind.”

This meticulous Foundation for Defense of Democracies study provides the broader context for considering the prospects for Incirlik’s future. It not only charts the history of the base’s role and our military-to-military ties,

but it lays out the serious issues that would follow from a U.S. exit, and it also canvasses the alternatives.

The best outcome would clearly be for the U.S. to remain in Incirlik for reasons that include the effectiveness of the campaign against IS and the ongoing need for U.S. extended nuclear deterrence in Europe. Yet, suggesting that the U.S. has alternatives may serve an important purpose. It can help Turkish officials recognize the importance of the U.S. connection to Turkey. It might even help preserve it.

***Eric S. Edelman***

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*Former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy*

## Introduction

The Republic of Turkey has been a reliable staging point for U.S. forces for more than six decades. Turkish bases have historically provided the U.S. military easy access to multiple theaters without having to build new infrastructure or forge new agreements. Today, American forces in Turkey are targeting the Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Iraq, manning key components of the European integrated missile defense system, providing logistics for regional operations, and deterring a resurgent Russia.

However, the attempted coup of July 2016 and the war in Syria have revealed growing fractures in the U.S.-Turkish security relationship. Statements by Turkish officials in the wake of the coup suggesting that American officials were behind the failed putsch indicate that trust between the two countries is plummeting. More worrisome, these statements are now inciting anti-American sentiment across Turkey. Turkey's decision to shut down U.S. operations against IS in the immediate aftermath of the coup, albeit temporarily, was also cause for alarm, even if it was a precautionary measure.

Even before the failed coup, tensions between the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), led by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the West were on the rise. At home, Erdogan has been transforming Turkey into a more authoritarian and Islamist state, undermining the rule of law and freedom of the press. Turkey's foreign policy choices, particularly those that have empowered destabilizing forces in the Middle East, have been increasingly at odds with Washington. Specifically, Ankara's support for known terrorist groups and its deliberately poor regulation of its Syrian border have exacerbated security challenges in the region. The strains have grown so great that some have suggested Turkey's place in NATO is in question. Though Turkish actions have raised fundamental questions about the nation's basic foreign policy orientation, there is no mechanism to expel a NATO member. Moreover, because Ankara's place within NATO remains crucial, Washington has

endeavored to address these issues in muted tones. Indeed, access to Turkish facilities have been vital for the war against IS and will likely remain so for future crises. Keeping these installations open and secure are the top priority.<sup>1</sup>

But continued cooperation does not mean the continuation of the status quo. In the wake of the coup, as the Turkish government engages in an extensive purge of domestic foes (both real and imagined), Turkey is unstable and unpredictable. It is now essential to determine if the estimated 3,000 U.S. servicemen or the sensitive U.S. hardware based in Turkey are in any way jeopardized. In short, an assessment is needed to examine alternative basing options in the eastern Mediterranean. Such contingency planning is crucial to protect U.S. interests. But it should not supplant or encumber ongoing efforts to restore Turkish-American ties to their previous levels of trust.

## History of U.S.-Turkish Security Ties

Turkey's security partnership with the U.S. began with the Cold War, when the two allies worked closely together to contain Soviet expansion. Cooperation with Washington was natural given the increasing threat from Moscow, while Turkey's pro-Western, burgeoning multi-party democracy also appeared to share values with the West. Turkey was the recipient of U.S. assistance under the Truman Doctrine because of Soviet threats to annex

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 1. Giulia Paravicini, "NATO: Turkey's membership 'not in question,'" *Politico*, August 10, 2016. (<http://www.politico.eu/article/nato-turkeys-membership-not-in-question/>); Soner Cagaptay, "Turkish-Russian Ties After the Erdogan-Putin Breakthrough," *The Washington Institute on Near East Policy*, August 9, 2016. (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/turkish-russian-ties-after-the-erdogan-putin-breakthrough>); Asli Aydintasbas, "Friends again: Erdoğan meets Putin," *European Council on Foreign Relations*, August 9, 2016. ([http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_friends\\_again\\_erdogan\\_meets\\_putin7095](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_friends_again_erdogan_meets_putin7095))

Turkish territory and control the Straits in 1945.<sup>2</sup> Turkey was a natural choice when the United States sought a base close to Soviet territory.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Turkey's unique geography allowed U.S. forces excellent access to Soviet territory from the south, as well as coverage of the Mediterranean Sea, Southern and Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. Symbolically, the arrival of the U.S.S. Missouri to Istanbul in 1946 represented the first evidence of Turkey's entrance into the Western alliance.<sup>4</sup>

In 1951, the U.S. began building an airfield outside the southern city of Adana. In exchange for establishing this base and its contribution during the Korean War, Turkey was granted NATO membership and a bilateral mutual security agreement with the United States in 1952.<sup>5</sup> Turkey and the U.S. signed a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) in 1954, paving the way for the U.S. to operate inside Turkey.<sup>6</sup> In late 1954, the Turkish Air Force and the U.S. agreed to share the base.<sup>7</sup> The following year, the

first American host unit, the 7216<sup>th</sup> Air Base Squadron, was established at Adana Air Base, which in 1958 was renamed Incirlik.

The U.S. began using the base to launch U-2 reconnaissance flights over the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup> These flights quietly ended after the downing of Francis Gary Powers, a U-2 pilot, in 1960. The U.S. soon started rotating fighter squadrons through Incirlik for contingency purposes. In 1970, the Turkish Air Force even granted American squadrons access to the Konya air-to-ground and air-to-air ranges, allowing U.S. forces to conduct important training.<sup>9</sup>

During the 1958 Lebanon crisis, when forces backed by Egypt and Syria threatened the pro-Western president, Camille Chamoun, the U.S. Air Force flew show-of-force missions, reconnaissance sorties, and leaflet drops from Incirlik.<sup>10</sup> However, this was done without Turkish permission, owing to a loophole in the existing SOFA. American forces based in Turkey were under U.S. authority, not NATO. Moreover, the U.S. did not need Turkish permission to deploy forces to Incirlik. Providing only advance notice was sufficient. So in 1969, when Turkey and the United States signed a new accord, known as the Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA), it emphasized that bases in Turkey were to be used for NATO missions only.<sup>11</sup>

To deter Soviet aggression and demonstrate U.S. commitment to the alliance, as it had throughout

2. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "The Truman Doctrine, 1947," accessed July 28, 2016. (<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/truman-doctrine>); Ahmed Sükrü Esmer, "The Straits: Crux of World Politics," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1947. (<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/1947-01-01/straits-crux-world-politics?destination=/articles/turkey/1947-01-01/straits-crux-world-politics>)

3. U.S. Air Force, 39<sup>th</sup> Air Base Wing Historian, "Incirlik Air Base History," May 17, 2013. (<http://www.incirlik.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/300814/incirlik-air-base-history>)

4. Suhnaz Yilmaz, *Turkish-American Relations, 1800-1952: Between the Stars, Stripes and the Crescent*, (New York: Routledge, 2015), page 119.

5. Selin M. Bölme, "The Politics of Incirlik Air Base," *Insight Turkey*, 2007, page 85. (<http://www.academia.edu/4485712/The-Politics-of-Incirlik-Air-Base>)

6. U.S. Department of State, "5 UST 1465 Status of United States Forces in Turkey," June 23, 1954. (<http://photos.state.gov/libraries/turkey/461177/pdf/5t1465.pdf>)

7. U.S. Department of State, "United States Treaties and Other International Agreements," 1986, page 3354. (<http://books.google.com/books?id=Z5ePAAAAAAAJ&pg=PA3354&dq=december+1954+incirlik+agreement&source=bl&cots=3mdHifhgkN&sig=9QZqVcztRuz8C4uE2ZKsoib30og&hl=en&sa=X&ei=L0NHVtWHNPLsASOtoKYDA&ved=0CE0Q6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=december%201954%20incirlik%20agreement&f=false>)

8. John Pike, "Senior Year U-2/TR-1," *Federation of American Scientists*, March 5, 2000. (<http://www.fas.org/irp/program/collect/u-2.htm>)

9. U.S. Air Force, 39<sup>th</sup> Air Base Wing Historian, "Incirlik Air Base History," May 17, 2013. (<http://www.incirlik.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/300814/incirlik-air-base-history>)

10. U.S. Air Force, 39<sup>th</sup> Air Base Wing Historian, "Incirlik Air Base History," May 17, 2013. (<http://www.incirlik.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/300814/incirlik-air-base-history>)

11. Selin M. Bölme, "The Politics of Incirlik Air Base," *Insight Turkey*, 2007, page 85. (<http://www.academia.edu/4485712/The-Politics-of-Incirlik-Air-Base>)

Europe, the U.S. deployed nuclear weapons to Turkey in 1959. The nuclear delivery systems in Turkey included Honest John unguided rockets, Jupiter ballistic missiles, gravity bombs, and atomic artillery shells. As part of a secret deal, in exchange for Soviet nuclear missiles being removed from Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the U.S. withdrew its Jupiter missiles from Turkey in 1963 (against Turkish protests). What remained were tactical nuclear weapons meant to buy time for NATO reinforcements in the event of a Soviet land invasion of Turkey.<sup>12</sup>

After the Cold War, the U.S. kept only a limited number of B-61 nuclear bombs in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, and Turkey.<sup>13</sup> Media reports suggest that at least 50 nuclear weapons are believed to still be stored at Incirlik for use by American aircraft, although their reported presence and the specific numbers remains classified. Today, the aircraft and crew certified for nuclear missions are no longer permanently stationed at the base. Moreover, Turkish air crews, who were once trained to drop nuclear weapons as part of the NATO nuclear sharing policy, are no longer certified to do so.<sup>14</sup>

During the 1991 Gulf War, even though it was not a NATO-led war, Turkey granted the U.S. permission

to use Incirlik to launch strikes inside Iraq.<sup>15</sup> After the war, the base supported NATO's Operation Provide Comfort in 1991, and then the UN-approved Operation Northern Watch in 1997.<sup>16</sup>

Military ties between the U.S. and Turkey have been warm, but not without turbulence. For example, after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, the U.S. imposed an arms embargo on Turkey. The U.S. agreement in 1947 to provide assistance to Turkey stipulated that Ankara had to first receive consent from Washington to use any of its American-supplied equipment. President Lyndon Johnson, in a now infamous letter, reminded Turkey of this obligation in 1964 when an invasion of Cyprus was first contemplated.<sup>17</sup> Though the letter delayed a Turkish intervention in Cyprus for a decade, it also prompted Turkey to increase economic ties with the Soviet Union and develop its own domestic defense industry. When the invasion did occur in 1974, Turkey was better prepared to sacrifice American assistance and turn the tables on the U.S. by revoking the 1969 DCA, suspending American military operations in the country, and allowing only NATO operations at Incirlik.<sup>18</sup> In 1978, the U.S. folded, lifting the embargo and signing another agreement with Turkey: the 1980 Defense and Economic

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 12. Aaron Stein, "Nuclear Weapons in Turkey are Destabilizing, But Not for the Reasons You Think," *War on the Rocks*, July 22, 2016. (<http://warontherocks.com/2016/07/nuclear-weapons-in-turkey-are-destabilizing-but-not-for-the-reason-you-think/>)  
 13. Tom Sauer and Bob Van Der Zwaan, *U.S. Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Europe After NATO's Lisbon Summit: Why Their Withdrawal is Desirable and Feasible*, (Cambridge: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 2011), pages 6-27. (<http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/us-tactical-nuclearweapons-in-europe.pdf>)  
 14. Alexandra Bell and Benjamin Loehrke, "The status of U.S. nuclear weapons in Turkey," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, November 23, 2009. (<http://thebulletin.org/status-us-nuclear-weapons-turkey>)

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 15. Clyde Haberman, "War in the Gulf: Turkey; Turkey's Role in Air Assault Sets Off Fear of Retaliation," *The New York Times*, January 20, 1991. (<http://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/20/world/war-in-the-gulf-turkey-turkey-s-role-in-air-assault-sets-off-fear-of-retaliation.html>)  
 16. U.S. Air Force, 39<sup>th</sup> Air Base Wing Public Affairs, "Operation Northern Watch," November 14, 2006. (<http://www.incirlik.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/300859/operation-northern-watch-history>)  
 17. Lyndon B. Johnson, Letter, "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Turkey," *U.S. Department of State*, June 5, 1964. (<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v16/d54>)  
 18. U.S. Air Force, 39<sup>th</sup> Air Base Wing Historian, "Incirlik Air Base History," May 17, 2013. (<http://www.incirlik.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/300814/incirlik-air-base-history>)

Cooperation Agreement (DECA), which remains in effect today.<sup>19</sup>

The DECA is crucial to understanding America's current position in Turkey. It defines Incirlik as an "air operations and support" base to be used for "joint defense measures" between the two countries.<sup>20</sup> American aircraft are "authorized to be stationed at Incirlik in support of NATO defense plans."<sup>21</sup> The agreement does not permit the U.S. to use the base for its own purposes and even empowers the Turkish government to determine whether the U.S. can use the base to conduct NATO missions. Turkey can also cancel U.S. access to Incirlik with three days' notice.<sup>22</sup>

During the 2003 war to topple Saddam Hussein, Ankara did not allow the U.S. to stage U.S. forces in Turkey for combat operations in Iraq. American war planners remained frustrated that they were not given

permission to launch a northern front from Turkey at the outset of the war. According to former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, the U.S. war might have yielded better results had Turkey welcomed American operations.<sup>23</sup> The Turkish government did, however, give the U.S. permission to use the base for logistical operations to move men and equipment in and out of Iraq.<sup>24</sup> By 2008, 74 percent of the cargo transferred to Iraq traveled through Incirlik. Had the U.S. been forced to rely on alternative routes, it would have added \$160 million per year to the cost of operations in Iraq.<sup>25</sup>

## U.S. and NATO Assets Currently in Turkey

Today, Turkish facilities are crucial to a number of vital U.S. and NATO missions. One of the most important is NATO's Allied Land Command (LANDCOM) in Izmir, Turkey, which provides support and interoperability to all NATO ground forces. NATO first established a headquarters in Izmir in June 1952, then known as the Allied Land Forces Southeastern Europe, commanded by an American general with Turkish and Greek deputies. In 2003, this command converted to NATO's Air Component Command, and in 2012 repurposed to LANDCOM.<sup>26</sup> As of June 2014, 43 U.S. personnel are permanently stationed in Izmir to support

19. Selin M. Bölme, "The Politics of Incirlik Air Base," *Insight Turkey*, 2007, page 85. ([http://www.academia.edu/4485712/The\\_Politics\\_of\\_Incirlik\\_Air\\_Base](http://www.academia.edu/4485712/The_Politics_of_Incirlik_Air_Base))

20. U.S. Government Printing Office, "The Code of Federal Regulations of the United States of America," 1984, page 1023. ([https://books.google.com/books?id=1QM7AAAAIAAJ&pg=PA1023&lpg=PA1023&dq=Article+I,+Supplementary+Agreement+Number+3+Between+the+Governments+of+the+United+States+of+America+and+of+the+Republic+of+Turkey+on+Installations&source=bl&ots=lj\\_klGNppP&sig=Chd\\_kQ\\_iUTHByVYtQkcgESILSB30&hl=en&sa=X&ei=nHriVN2RAaKiNq73g4AE&ved=0CCAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Article%20I%2C%20Supplementary%20Agreement%20Number%203%20Between%20the%20Governments%20of%20the%20United%20States%20of%20America%20and%20of%20the%20Republic%20of%20Turkey%20on%20Installations&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=1QM7AAAAIAAJ&pg=PA1023&lpg=PA1023&dq=Article+I,+Supplementary+Agreement+Number+3+Between+the+Governments+of+the+United+States+of+America+and+of+the+Republic+of+Turkey+on+Installations&source=bl&ots=lj_klGNppP&sig=Chd_kQ_iUTHByVYtQkcgESILSB30&hl=en&sa=X&ei=nHriVN2RAaKiNq73g4AE&ved=0CCAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Article%20I%2C%20Supplementary%20Agreement%20Number%203%20Between%20the%20Governments%20of%20the%20United%20States%20of%20America%20and%20of%20the%20Republic%20of%20Turkey%20on%20Installations&f=false))

21. Agreement for Cooperation on Defense and Economy Between the Government of the United States of America and of the Republic of Turkey in Accordance with Articles II and III of the North Atlantic Treaty, United States-Republic of Turkey, March 29, 1980, 32 U.S.T. 3323, Article IX. (<http://photos.state.gov/libraries/turkey/461177/pdf/32t3323.pdf>)

22. Jim Zanotti, "Turkey: Background and U.S. Relations," *Congressional Research Service*, October 5, 2015. (<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R41368.pdf>)

23. Thom Shanker, "Rumsfeld Faults Turkey for Barring use of Its Land in '03 to Open Northern Front in Iraq," *The New York Times*, March 21, 2005. (<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/21/politics/21military.html>)

24. David S. Cloud, "Military Seeks Alternatives in Case Turkey Limits Access," *The New York Times*, October 12, 2007. ([http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/12/world/europe/12military.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/12/world/europe/12military.html?_r=0))

25. Selin M. Bölme, "The Politics of Incirlik Air Base," *Insight Turkey*, 2007, page 85. ([http://www.academia.edu/4485712/The\\_Politics\\_of\\_Incirlik\\_Air\\_Base](http://www.academia.edu/4485712/The_Politics_of_Incirlik_Air_Base))

26. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Allied Land Command, "Mission," accessed July 21, 2016. (<http://www.lc.nato.int/about-us/mission>)

LANDCOM and the nearby Çiğli air station as part of the 425<sup>th</sup> Air Base Squadron.<sup>27</sup>

Turkey also plays an important role in NATO’s integrated ballistic missile defense system. In response to the growing threat to Europe from Iranian ballistic missiles, the Obama administration launched the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) in 2009.<sup>28</sup> The EPAA places U.S. missile defense assets in Eastern Europe, and Aegis-equipped warships patrol the Mediterranean and Black Seas. These systems are connected to an early-warning radar in Kürecik, Turkey that became operational in early 2012.<sup>29</sup> The radar’s position in Turkey provides for critical early warning to detect, track, and intercept incoming missiles from Iran.

As the war in Syria intensified in 2012, Turkey requested that NATO deploy air defense batteries along its southern border to protect against ballistic missiles and hostile aircraft. Beginning in January 2013, the U.S., Italy, Spain, Germany, and the Netherlands contributed Patriot and ASTER SAMP/T missile systems on rotational deployments.<sup>30</sup> As of July 2016, only Spain and Italy maintain their deployments, despite Turkish requests for additional NATO support.<sup>31</sup> The U.S.

did, however, deploy High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) to Turkey in May 2016 to counter IS rocket fire coming from Syria and support the offensive on IS-held territory along the border.<sup>32</sup>

As the U.S. began its campaign against the Islamic State in 2014, it requested that Turkey allow U.S. forces to use Incirlik for combat operations.<sup>33</sup> Despite consecutive pledges of support, the Turkish government delayed approval – as was historically the case with many U.S. requests.<sup>34</sup> In March 2015, Turkey permitted two armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to operate from Incirlik.<sup>35</sup> While this provided improved capabilities beyond the three unarmed UAVs being used for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions, it still severely limited operations in Syria and Iraq.<sup>36</sup> It was not until an IS suicide bomber killed 32 people inside Turkey on July 20, 2015 that Ankara gave the green light to launch U.S. fighter aircraft from

27. U.S. Air Force, Incirlik Air Base, “425<sup>th</sup> Air Base Squadron Information,” July 1, 2014. (<http://www.incirlik.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/724852/425th-air-base-squadron-information>)

28. The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “Fact Sheet U.S. Missile Defense Policy A Phased, Adaptive Approach for Missile Defense in Europe,” September 17, 2009. (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/fact-sheet-us-missile-defense-policy-a-phased-adaptive-approach-missile-defense-eur>)

29. “Part of NATO missile defense system goes live in Turkey,” *CNN*, January 16, 2012. (<http://www.cnn.com/2012/01/16/world/europe/turkey-radar-station/index.html>)

30. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Public Policy Division, “Augmentation of Turkey’s Air Defence,” July 2016. ([http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2016\\_07/20160704\\_1607-factsheet-patriot\\_en.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_07/20160704_1607-factsheet-patriot_en.pdf))

31. Robin Emmott, Sabine Siebold, and Phil Stewart, “Turkey urges NATO to keep up its patriot defenses,” *Reuters*, October 8, 2015. (<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-nato-idUSKCN0S20HJ20151008>)

32. Humeyra Pamuk, “Turkish minister says U.S. to deploy rocket launchers near Syrian border,” *Reuters*, April 26, 2016. (<http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-turkey-usa-idUKKCN0XN11Q>)

33. Liz Sly and Craig Whitlock, “Turkey denies reaching accord with U.S. on the use of air base against Islamic State,” *The Washington Post*, October 13, 2014. ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/turkey-denies-reaching-accord-with-us-on-use-of-air-base-against-islamic-state/2014/10/13/9f705cd0-52da-11e4-809b-8cc0a295c773\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/turkey-denies-reaching-accord-with-us-on-use-of-air-base-against-islamic-state/2014/10/13/9f705cd0-52da-11e4-809b-8cc0a295c773_story.html))

34. “Turkish Government Gets OK for Military Operations in Syria, Iraq,” *Hurriyet* (Turkey), October 2, 2014. (<http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/turkish-government-gets-ok-for-military-operations-in-syria-iraq.aspx?pageID=238&nID=72482&NewsCatID=338>)

35. Sevil Erkus, “Turkey, US agree on deployment of armed drones to Incirlik Airbase,” *Hurriyet* (Turkey), March 26, 2015. (<http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/turkey-us-agree-on-deployment-of-armed-drones-to-incirlik-airbase.aspx?PageID=238&NID=80202&NewsCatID=338>)

36. Aaron Mehta, “Experts: As Operation Continues, ISR Demand to Grow in Syria,” *Defense News*, September 27, 2014. (<http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/archives/2014/09/28/experts-as-operation-continues-isr-demand-to-grow-in-syria/78694270/>)

Incirlik.<sup>37</sup> Eventually, coalition partners from the United Kingdom, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Denmark, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar could also deploy aircraft in support of operations against IS from Incirlik.<sup>38</sup>

**“In hindsight, Turkey’s eagerness to pressure the White House into action in Syria appears to be on the right side of history with the death toll still rising more than five years later.”**

It should be noted that Turkey, shortly after the Syrian civil war erupted, requested the U.S. to establish safe zones inside Syria as a condition to expanding Incirlik’s role.<sup>39</sup> This request would have required a significant increase in America’s presence and role in the Syrian civil war, one that the Obama administration was unwilling to accept. This, coupled with the Obama administration’s equivocation over

its chemical weapons “red line” in 2013,<sup>40</sup> placed great strain on the U.S.-Turkey relationship. In hindsight, Turkey’s eagerness to pressure the White House into action in Syria appears to be on the right side of history with the death toll still rising more than five years later.

Between September and November 2015, after U.S. aircraft began operating out of Incirlik, the number of weapons striking IS targets increased by 30 percent.<sup>41</sup> The short distance between bases in Turkey and IS-held territory allowed strike aircraft to spend more time over target areas and greatly reduced fuel and maintenance costs. Coalition ISR and electronic warfare platforms are also able to linger longer over targets in Syria, thus increasing the amount of intelligence collected.<sup>42</sup> The operations tempo increased with KC-135 tankers and A-10 attack aircraft flying approximately a dozen sorties from Incirlik per day. The number of U.S. personnel based in Turkey has risen from 1,300 in the beginning of 2015 to roughly 3,000 in July 2016 as a result of increased operations.<sup>43</sup>

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37. Liz Sly and Karen DeYoung, “Turkey agrees to allow U.S. military to use its base to attack Islamic State,” *The Washington Post*, July 23, 2015. ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/turkey-agrees-to-allow-us-military-to-use-its-base-to-attack-islamic-state/2015/07/23/317f23aa-3164-11e5-a879-213078d03dd3\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/turkey-agrees-to-allow-us-military-to-use-its-base-to-attack-islamic-state/2015/07/23/317f23aa-3164-11e5-a879-213078d03dd3_story.html))

38. “Saudi, UAE military equipment arrive in Turkey,” *Al Arabiya* (UAE), February 26, 2016. (<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2016/02/26/GCC-military-equipment-personnel-arrive-at-Turkey.html>); Mehul Srivastava and Sam Jones, “Saudi war planes begin arriving at Turkey’s Incirlik air base,” *Financial Times* (UK), February 25, 2016. (<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/059d3690-dbb5-11e5-98fd-06d75973fe09.html#axzz43bySS15s>); Ali Unal, “Qatar deploys warplanes to Turkish air base,” *Daily Sabah* (Turkey), September 4, 2015. (<http://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2015/09/05/qatar-deploys-warplanes-to-turkish-air-base>)

39. Lolita C. Baldor, “Hagel: US Wants Use of Turkey Base, Help Training,” *Associated Press*, October 9, 2014. (<http://www.usnews.com/news/us/articles/2014/10/09/hagel-us-wants-use-of-turkey-base-help-training>)

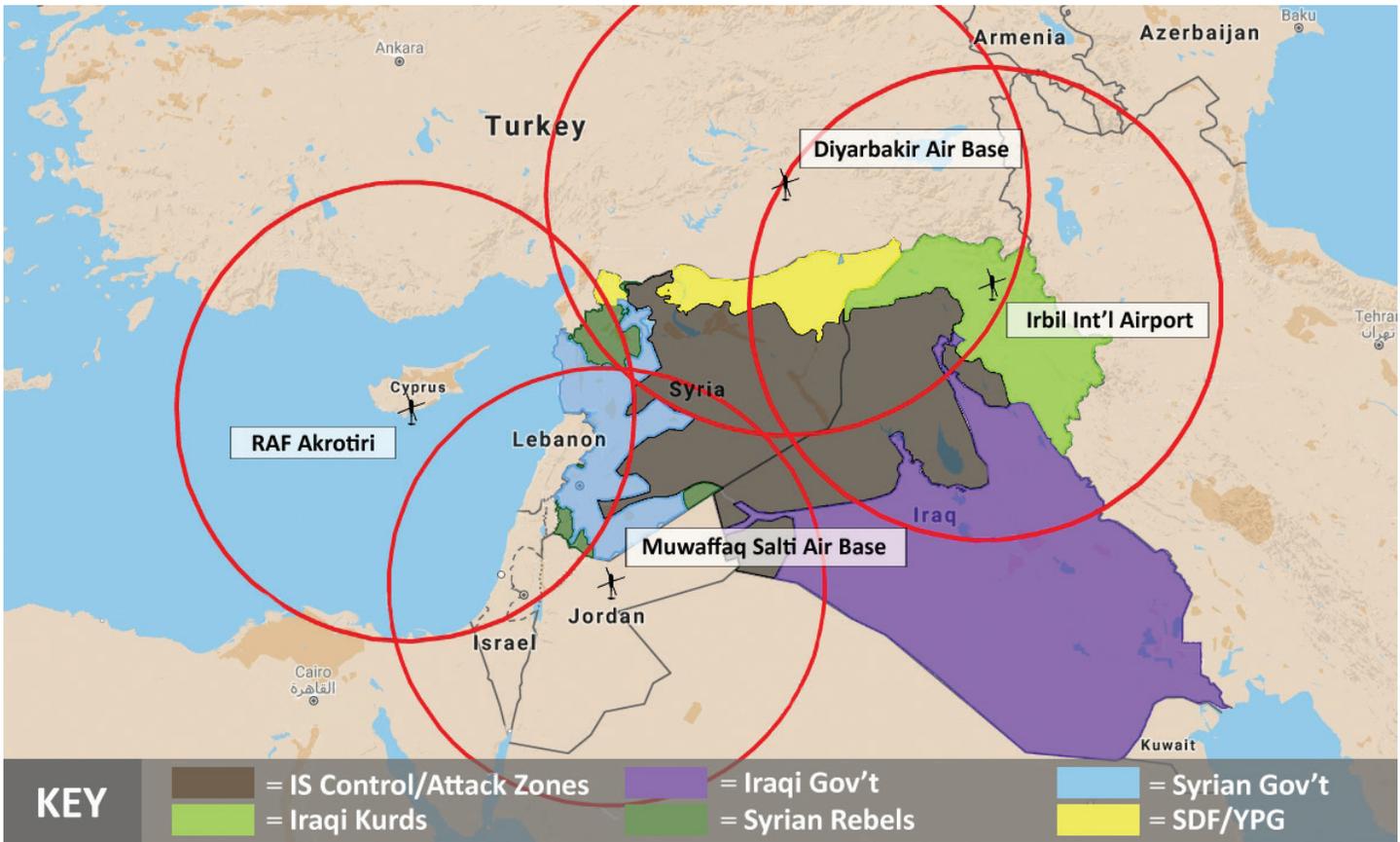
.....  
40. “Obama’s ‘red line’ on Syria crossed long ago: Turkish PM Erdogan,” *Hurriyet* (Turkey), May 9, 2013. (<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-may-consider-us-led-action-in-syria-pm-erdogan.aspx?pageID=517&nID=46604&NewsCatID=359>)

41. Andrew Tilghman, “U.S. footprint expands at Turkey’s Incirlik Air Base,” *Military Times*, December 15, 2015. (<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/pentagon/2015/12/15/us-footprint-expands-turkeys-incirlik-air-base/77362216/>)

42. Dave Majumdar, “Drone ‘Shortage’ Hampers ISIS War,” *The Daily Beast*, November 18, 2014. (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/11/17/drone-shortage-hampers-isis-war.html>)

43. Andrew Tilghman, “U.S. footprint expands at Turkey’s Incirlik Air Base,” *Military Times*, December 15, 2015. (<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/pentagon/2015/12/15/us-footprint-expands-turkeys-incirlik-air-base/77362216/>); Terri Moon Cronk, “U.S. Personnel in Turkey Safe, Pentagon Spokesman Says,” *DoD News*, July 18, 2016. (<http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/848659/us-personnel-in-turkey-safe-pentagon-spokesman-says>)

**HH-60G Pave Hawk CSAR combat radius (220 nautical miles)**



In October 2015, the U.S. Air Force was, after a long delay, also able to position a Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) unit with 300 airmen at Diyarbakir Air Base in southern Turkey.<sup>44</sup> These units are essential for conducting recovery operations for downed pilots. From bases in Turkey, CSAR teams flying in tilt-rotor V-22 Ospreys are able to reach deep into Syria in under one hour.<sup>45</sup> In CSAR missions, minutes can mean life or death for a pilot evading capture behind enemy lines.

44. Jeff Schogol, "Air Force search-and-rescue crew deploys to Turkey," *Air Force Times*, October 1, 2015. (<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/10/01/air-force-search-and-rescue-crew-deploys-turkey/73131442/>)

45. Taimur Khan, "60 Minutes to Save a Pilot Behind Enemy Lines," *The National* (UAE), February 11, 2015. (<http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/60-minutes-to-save-a-pilot-behind-enemy-lines#full>)

In the case of the Jordanian pilot downed in December 2014, U.S. Marines based in Kuwait were dispatched on a rescue mission but failed to reach him in time.<sup>46</sup> The incident led to the subsequent suspension of operations by the UAE because the Emiratis believed American CSAR assets were not located close enough to Syria.<sup>47</sup>

46. Dan Lamothe, "Marines had airborne rescue mission underway for pilot killed by Islamic State," *The Washington Post*, May 18, 2015. (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2015/05/18/marines-had-airborne-rescue-mission-underway-for-pilot-killed-by-islamic-state/>)

47. Helene Cooper, "United Arab Emirates, Key U.S. Ally in ISIS Effort, Disengaged in December," *The New York Times*, February 3, 2015. (<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/04/world/middleeast/united-arab-emirates-key-us-ally-in-isis-effort-disengaged-in-december.html?hpw&rref=world&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&module=well-region&region=bottom-well&WT.nav=bottom-well&r=3&referrer>)

Finally, the addition of more than 300 American and coalition special operation forces (SOF) to northern Syria in 2016 increased the need to use Turkey as a staging and logistics base.<sup>48</sup> Sustaining a prolonged SOF presence on the ground requires strike, ISR, CSAR, and logistics capabilities nearby. Ground forces require air assets to respond in a timely manner when in contact with enemy forces. The U.S. has some of these assets stationed in neighboring Jordan and Iraq, but with the bulk of the fighting against IS occurring in the north of Syria, positioning them in Turkey is tactically preferable.

## Mounting Stresses in U.S.-Turkish Relations

The failed military coup in July 2016 demonstrated that, while the U.S.-led coalition finally has much of the access it needs, preserving Turkey as a stable and reliable base of operations is still fraught with challenges. As forces loyal to the president quelled the putsch, they also cut electrical service to Incirlik and closed the airspace over the base for approximately 24 hours. The government defended these actions because Turkish KC-135 tankers based at Incirlik assisted the putsch.<sup>49</sup>

The shutdown resulted in an interruption of operations against IS targets. It is unclear if the pause in operations also applied to the CSAR unit stationed at Diyarbakir Air

Base.<sup>50</sup> The interruption was short-lived, but according to U.S. Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, the subsequent purge of Turkish officers is having a negative effect on anti-IS coordination.<sup>51</sup> A spike in anti-American sentiment, punctuated by small protests outside the gates of Incirlik, have also raised troubling questions about the long-term viability of the arrangement, including the safety and security of the American servicemen and the reported nuclear weapons stationed there.<sup>52</sup> U.S. officials, however, dispute that any weapons are at risk.<sup>53</sup>

And these are not the only concerns plaguing Ankara's ties with the U.S. and NATO. There is ample evidence to suggest that Turkey's southeastern frontier – the territory along Turkey's 565-mile border to Syria – has become a gateway for an entire generation of jihadists seeking to join the war in Syria.<sup>54</sup>

As IS seized areas along Turkey's Syrian border in 2013, Ankara was deliberately slow to crack down

48. Delil Souleiman, "US forces on ground in Syria aiding key anti-IS fight," *Agence France Presse*, May 26, 2016. (<https://www.yahoo.com/news/us-forces-ground-syria-aiding-key-anti-fight-152709722.html?ref=gs>); "British special forces 'operating inside Syria alongside rebels,'" *The Telegraph* (UK), June 6, 2016. (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/06/british-special-forces-operating-inside-syria-alongside-rebels/>); Jack Moore, "France Admits Special Forces Operating on Ground with Rebels in Syria," *Newsweek*, June 9, 2016. (<http://www.newsweek.com/france-admits-special-forces-operating-ground-rebels-syria-468434>)

49. David Axe, "How Fighter Jets Almost Killed a President," *The Daily Beast*, July 19, 2016. (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/07/19/how-fighter-jets-almost-killed-a-president.html>)

50. John Vandiver, "Turkey closes airspace over Incirlik, grounding US aircraft at base," *Stars and Stripes*, July 16, 2016. (<http://www.stripes.com/news/middle-east/turkey-closes-airspace-over-incirlik-grounding-us-aircraft-at-base-1.419447>)

51. Warren Strobel, "Turkey military purge harming fight against Islamic State: Clapper," *Reuters*, July 28, 2016. ([http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-usa-purge-idUSKCN1082U8?utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=DFN%20EBB%207.29.16&utm\\_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-usa-purge-idUSKCN1082U8?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=DFN%20EBB%207.29.16&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief))

52. James Drew, "Turkey Coup Raises Questions About NATO's B61 Nuke Posture," *Aviation Week*, July 20, 2016. (<http://aviationweek.com/defense/turkey-coup-raises-questions-about-nato-s-b61-nuke-posture>)

53. Barbara Starr and Ryan Browne, "How safe are US nukes in Turkey?" *CNN*, July 19, 2016. (<http://www.cnn.com/2016/07/19/politics/us-nuclear-weapons-turkey-attempted-coup/>); Amy F. Woolf, "U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Turkey," *Congressional Research Service*, August 2, 2016. (<https://news.usni.org/2016/08/12/document-report-congress-u-s-nuclear-weapons-turkey-2>)

54. Kren Leigh, "Q+A: On Foreign Fighters Flowing Into Syria," *News Deeply*, December 2, 2013. (<http://www.syriadeeply.org/articles/2013/12/2628/qa-foreign-fighters-flowing-syria/>); Kadri Gürsel, "Has Turkey Become The 'Pakistan of the Middle East?'" *Al Monitor*, September 24, 2013. (<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2013/09/time-act-al-qaeda-turkey-jabhat-al-nusra.html>)

on foreign fighters and supplies flowing through its territory. Former U.S. government officials report that Ankara believed the jihadists would topple the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria. This was a dangerous gamble, and one that ultimately resulted in a growing presence of jihadists inside the country. Indeed, Turkey was soon home to IS recruiters and logistical figures.<sup>55</sup> It was only a matter of time before IS began to carry out attacks inside Turkey. The Pentagon, concerned by the heavy infiltration of Turkey by IS and other jihadists, ordered American military dependents living in Turkey to leave in March 2015.<sup>56</sup> Sure enough, IS carried out a spate of attacks in the country in 2015 and 2016 that killed over 200.<sup>57</sup> Turkey has since made efforts to crack down on the jihadists inside its borders, but these efforts are still insufficient. French intelligence assessed in July 2016 that as many as 100 individuals per week entered Syria from Turkey to join IS.<sup>58</sup>

Western governments are also concerned by the fact that Turkey has been a key market for IS oil.<sup>59</sup> At its

peak, between \$1 and \$2 million worth of oil was smuggled daily to bordering territories and sold through middlemen.<sup>60</sup> According to Turkey's main opposition party, \$800 million worth of oil from IS-occupied regions may have been sold in Turkey in 2014.<sup>61</sup> Eventually the fall in oil prices and persistent coalition airstrikes on oil fields led to a drop in profits for IS. The crackdown on smuggling by Turkish authorities played only a minimal role.<sup>62</sup>

IS has also profited from smuggling antiquities into Turkey, primarily through the border crossing near Tel Abyad before it was seized by Kurdish forces.<sup>63</sup> It is difficult to calculate the exact amount IS receives from the antiquities trade, but according to reports, Turkey, along with Lebanon, has served as a key hub for smuggling classical coins from which IS profits.<sup>64</sup>

Turkish authorities have also been accused of actively providing material support and assisting fighters

55. Ceylan Yeginsu, "ISIS Draws a Steady Stream of Recruits From Turkey," *The New York Times*, September 15, 2014. ([http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/16/world/europe/turkey-is-a-steady-source-of-isis-recruits.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/16/world/europe/turkey-is-a-steady-source-of-isis-recruits.html?_r=0))

56. Andrew Tilghman, "U.S. military dependents ordered to leave Turkey," *Military Times*, March 29, 2016. (<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/2016/03/29/us-military-dependents-ordered-leave-turkey/82377984/>)

57. Jack Moore, "Turkey Begins ISIS Crackdown After Istanbul Bomb Attack," *Newsweek*, January 13, 2016. (<http://www.newsweek.com/turkey-detains-68-isis-suspects-across-country-after-istanbul-bomb-attack-415081>)

58. John Irish, "100 jihadis still entering Syria from Turkey each week – Le Figaro," *Reuters*, July 20, 2016. (<http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-idUKKCN1000VK>)

59. Mike Giglio, "This Is How ISIS Smuggles Oil," *BuzzFeed*, November 3, 2014. (<http://www.buzzfeed.com/mikegiglio/this-is-how-isis-smuggles-oil>); Anthony Faiola and Souad Mekhennet, "In Turkey, a late crackdown on Islamist fighters," *The Washington Post*, August 12, 2014. ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/how-Turkey-became-the-shopping-mall-for-the-islamic-state/2014/08/12/5eff70bf-a38a-4334-9aa9-ae3fc1714c4b\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/how-Turkey-became-the-shopping-mall-for-the-islamic-state/2014/08/12/5eff70bf-a38a-4334-9aa9-ae3fc1714c4b_story.html)); "Turkey Cracks Down on Oil Smuggling Linked to IS," *Associated Press*, October 6, 2014. (<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/turkey-cracks-down-on-oil-smuggling-with-isis-in-mind/>)

60. David Sanger and Julie Hirschfeld Davis, "Struggling to Starve ISIS of Oil Revenue, U.S. Seeks Assistance From Turkey," *The New York Times*, September 13, 2014. ([http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/14/world/middleeast/struggling-to-starve-isis-of-oil-revenue-us-seeks-assistance-from-Turkey.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/14/world/middleeast/struggling-to-starve-isis-of-oil-revenue-us-seeks-assistance-from-Turkey.html?_r=0)); Mike Giglio, "This Is How ISIS Smuggles Oil," *BuzzFeed*, November 3, 2014. (<http://www.buzzfeed.com/mikegiglio/this-is-how-isis-smuggles-oil>)

61. Sibel Uktu Bila and Güler Vilmaz, "Opposition MP Says ISIS is Selling Oil in Turkey," *Al Monitor*, June 13, 2014. (<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/business/2014/06/Turkey-syria-isis-selling-smuggled-oil.html#>)

62. Justice for Life Observatory in Deir Ezzor, "How Airstrikes are Cutting ISIS's Revenue," *Newsweek*, March 6, 2016. (<http://www.newsweek.com/how-airstrikes-cutting-isis-revenue-433581>)

63. Amr al-Azm, Salam al-Kuntar, and Brian I. Daniels, "ISIS' Antiquities Sideline," *The New York Times*, September 2, 2014. ([http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/03/opinion/isis-antiquities-sideline.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/03/opinion/isis-antiquities-sideline.html?_r=1))

64. Yaya J. Fanusie and Alexander Joffe, "Monumental Fight: Countering the Islamic State's Antiquities Trafficking," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, November 2015. ([http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/Monumental\\_Fight.pdf](http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/Monumental_Fight.pdf))

crossing the border.<sup>65</sup> Reports suggest that extremist financiers (mainly from Gulf countries such as Qatar and Kuwait) have camped out in hotels along the southeastern Turkish frontier, meeting with jihadist groups since 2012.<sup>66</sup> Turkey was also alleged to have supplied weapons to jihadi groups operating along its border.<sup>67</sup> Since 2013, accusations have come from former Turkish government officials and current

opposition parties.<sup>68</sup> On January 1, 2014, for example, the Turkish gendarmerie reportedly stopped a truck in Turkey's Hatay province en route to Syria. They found weapons and ammunition that allegedly belong to Turkey's intelligence agency.<sup>69</sup> About two weeks later, on January 19, soldiers stopped and searched another group of trucks in Adana, also carrying weapons and also linked to the intelligence agency.<sup>70</sup> Testimonies by two Turkish truck drivers involved in the Adana case pointed to direct Turkish government involvement.<sup>71</sup> According to the Turkish government, the cargo was destined for Turkmen rebels fighting in northern Syria.<sup>72</sup> However, Idlib province, which borders Hatay, was home to both Turkman rebels as well as several jihadi groups such as the al-Qaeda-linked group, Jabhat al-Nusra (rebranded Jabhat Fath al-Sham in July 2016).

And while some of this activity appears to have been curtailed, Turkey's role within the coalition effort against IS has been decidedly problematic. In October 2014, Ankara agreed to host training for

65. Adam Entous and Joe Parkinson, "Turkey's Spymaster Plots Own Course on Syria," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 10, 2013. (<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303643304579107373585228330>); Alev Scott and Alexander Christie-Miller, "Exclusive: ISIS Starts Recruiting in Istanbul's Vulnerable Suburbs," *Newsweek*, September 12, 2014. (<http://www.newsweek.com/2014/09/19/exclusive-how-istanbul-became-recruiting-ground-islamic-state-269247.html>); Katrin Elger, Hasnain Kazim, Christoph Reuter, and Holger Stark, "The Caliphate Next Door: Turkey Faces Up to its Islamic State Problem," *Spiegel International* (Germany), September 29, 2014. (<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-jihadist-activity-in-northern-syria-forces-Turkey-hand-a-994392.html>); Barney Guiton, "ISIS Sees Turkey as Its Ally: Former Islamic State Member Reveals Turkish Army Cooperation," *Newsweek*, November 7, 2014. (<http://www.newsweek.com/isis-and-Turkey-cooperate-destroy-kurds-former-isis-member-reveals-Turkish-282920>)

66. U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "Treasury Further Exposes Iran-Based Al-Qa'ida Network," October 18, 2012. (<http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1741.aspx>); "You Can Still See Their Blood," *Human Rights Watch*, October 11, 2013. (<http://www.hrw.org/node/119645/section/11>); Chana Ya'ar, "Report: Turkey Supports Funding to Syrian Jihadist Rebels?" *Arutz Sheva* (Israel), October 3, 2013. ([http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/166047#.VEAx\\_vldVps](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/166047#.VEAx_vldVps)); Email correspondence with Barak Barfi, February 8, 2014.

67. "BDP: Türkiye El Nusra'ya Silah Verdi (BDP: Turkey Gave Arms to Al Nusra)," *Radikal* (Turkey), July 30, 2013. ([http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/bdp\\_Turkiye\\_el\\_nusraya\\_silah\\_verdi-1144124](http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/bdp_Turkiye_el_nusraya_silah_verdi-1144124)); "El Nusra Silahları Türkiye Üzerinden Tirlarla Gönderiyordu (Al Nusra Was Sending the Weapons with Semis Through Turkey)," *Dicle Haber Ajansı* (Turkey), June 23, 2014. (<http://www.diclehaber.com/tr/news/content/view/407656?page=4&from=942074458>); Cansu Çamlıbel, "Türkiye'den Silah Geliyor (Weapons Arriving from Syria)," *Hürriyet* (Turkey), January 27, 2014. (<http://www.Hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/25661278.asp>)

68. "Ex-Deputy PM: Turkey Supplying Heavy Weaponries to al-Nusra Terrorists in Syria," *Fars News Agency* (Iran), September 8, 2013. (<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13920617000433>); Thomas Seibert, "The Turks to ISIS: 'Let's Make a Deal,'" *The Daily Beast*, September 21, 2014. (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/09/21/the-Turks-to-isis-let-s-make-a-deal.html>)

69. Fevzi Kızılkoyun, "Hatay'da Silah Yüklü TIR (Semi Filled with Weapons in Hatay)," *Hürriyet* (Turkey), January 2, 2014. (<http://www.Hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/25484247.asp>)

70. Fehim Tastekin, "Turkish intelligence service trucks reveal secrets," *Al Monitor*, January 20, 2014. (<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/01/turkish-intelligence-trucks-smuggle-syria.html>)

71. "Kılıçdaroğlu'ndan Davutoğlu'na Yanıt: 'Belge mi İstiyorsun, Al Sana Belge' (Kilicdaroglu's Response to Davutoglu: You Want a Document, Here is a Document for You)," *HaberTurk* (Turkey), October 14, 2014. (<http://www.haberTurk.com/gundem/haber/999337-Kilicdaroglundan-davutogluna-yanit-belge-mi-istiyorsun-al-sana-belge>)

72. Humeyra Pamuk and Nick Tattersall, "Exclusion: Turkish intelligence helped ship arms to Syrian Islamist rebel areas," *Reuters*, May 21, 2016. (<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-turkey-arms-idUSKBN0O61L220150521>)

2,000 moderate Syrian rebels.<sup>73</sup> But even before the program was launched, it hit repeated delays because of disagreements between the U.S. and Turkey over whether the rebels would target IS or the Assad regime.<sup>74</sup> The program was eventually disbanded because it could not attract enough Syrian recruits willing to fight only IS and not the regime – as Turkey had advocated.<sup>75</sup>

The question of support for Kurdish fighters has also been a challenge. Kurdish forces have proven to be the most effective indigenous force fighting IS in Syria. However, Turkey intentionally obstructs efforts to support them.<sup>76</sup> Turkey protested U.S. efforts to resupply Kurdish forces battling the terror group during the siege of Kobani in October 2014, and it did so as its own army sat idly watching the battle from across the border.<sup>77</sup> Ankara eventually allowed Iraqi Kurdish fighters (Peshmerga) to cross through Turkish territory to reinforce the fledgling defenders of Kobani, hoping to prevent further U.S. air drops to the People’s Protection Units, or YPG, defending Kobani. Turkey remained sternly opposed to coordinating with the YPG, who they see as the Syrian branch of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK),

73. Adam Entous, Ayla Albayrak, and Asa Fitch, “Turkey Agrees to Train Syrian Opposition on Home Soil to Fight Islamic State,” *The Wall Street Journal*, October 11, 2014. (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-draws-closer-to-capturing-syrian-city-of-kobani-1413029310>)

74. Missy Ryan, “U.S. program to train new Syrian forces faces logistics, diplomatic headaches,” *The Washington Post*, April 3, 2015. ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/plan-to-train-new-syrian-force-already-facing-logistics-diplomatic-hurdles/2015/04/03/46a6f3e8-d958-11e4-b3f2-607bd612aeac\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/plan-to-train-new-syrian-force-already-facing-logistics-diplomatic-hurdles/2015/04/03/46a6f3e8-d958-11e4-b3f2-607bd612aeac_story.html))

75. Roy Gutman, “What really happened to the U.S. train-and-equip program in Syria?” *McClatchy*, December 21, 2015. (<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/article50919765.html>)

76. “Turkish PM confirms shelling of Kurdish forces in Syria,” *Reuters*, February 13, 2016. (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/13/turkey-shells-kurdish-forces-in-syria-in-retaliation-for-attack-on-border-posts>)

77. Gulsen Solaker and Ece Toksabay, “Turkey’s Erdogan says U.S. weapons airdrop on Kobani was wrong,” *Reuters*, October 22, 2014. (<http://news.yahoo.com/turkeys-erdogan-says-u-weapons-airdrop-kobani-wrong-130953458.html>)

a designated terror group.<sup>78</sup> Turkey remains opposed to Washington’s close coordination with the YPG, which currently includes providing air strikes, ammunition, and special forces advisors.

With U.S. help, the YPG successfully pushed IS out of northeast Syria.<sup>79</sup> But these efforts carved an expansive Kurdish-controlled region along the Turkish border that Ankara perceives as a threat. The territory IS currently holds between the Mara line and Euphrates River, known as the “Manbij pocket,” is where Turkey wants to establish a buffer zone to prevent the YPG from establishing a wider foothold. Washington and its European allies, by contrast, are more concerned that Manbij could serve as IS’s hub to launch attacks into Europe. After months of delay, the Pentagon struck a compromise with Turkey in May 2016 to have Arab units within the multi-ethnic Syrian Democratic Force (SDF) – backed by U.S. Special Forces – lead the offensive towards Manbij.<sup>80</sup>

As part of the deal, the U.S. agreed that the Kurdish components of the force would withdraw back across the Euphrates River after the operation’s success. Vice President Joe Biden reiterated this promise during his trip to Turkey after Manbij’s liberation in August 2016, warning that the U.S. would pull its support for the YPG if this was not done.<sup>81</sup> Turkey, seemingly unconvinced that

78. Constanze Letsch, “Kurdish peshmerga forces arrive in Kobani to bolster fight against ISIS,” *The Guardian* (UK), November 1, 2014. (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/01/kurdish-peshmerga-kobani-isis-syria>)

79. Tom Perry, “Syrian alliance welcome U.S. support, wants more,” *Reuters*, April 25, 2016. (<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-sdf-idUSKCN0XM100>)

80. Maria Abi-Habib and Margaret Coker, “U.S. Compromises Won Turkey’s Backing for Kurdish-led Offensive,” *The Wall Street Journal*, July 15, 2016. (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-compromises-won-turkeys-backing-for-kurdish-led-offensive-1468539313>)

81. “US urges PYD to not cross Euphrates, lends support to Turkish ops,” *Hurriyet* (Turkey), August 24, 2016. (<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/us-urges-pyd-to-not-cross-euphrates-lends-support-to-turkish-ops-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=103177&NewsCatID=358>)

Kurdish forces would pull-back, shelled YPG positions and launched an operation against IS in Jarabulus hoping to head-off further advances by Kurdish forces. At the time this report went to print, the Jarabulus operation was still ongoing with Arab Syrian rebel groups – backed by Turkish air and ground forces, and U.S. intelligence and air cover<sup>82</sup> – seizing much of the town. Still it is unclear if the operation represents a significant shift of Turkish policy towards IS or merely a move to counter YPG advances.

And while Turkey did finally allow the coalition to operate from Incirlik, Turkey’s own contribution to the campaign has been limited.<sup>83</sup> This is largely the result of the November 2015 downing of a Russian fighter by Turkish F-16s. The incident sparked a series of escalations between Moscow and Ankara, resulting in the introduction of Russian advanced air defense systems in Syria, and a subsequent reluctance of the Turkish Air Force to enter Syria. Turkish forces have since been limited to shelling IS positions along its borders. With such limited support, rebel groups have struggled to push IS away from the Turkish border and are frequently targeted by pro-regime forces, causing the U.S. to turn more of its support to the YPG and SDF.<sup>84</sup>

The problems extend beyond the fight against the Islamic State, too. Ankara has allowed a number of Hamas operatives to operate unhindered within its borders for more than five years. For example Saleh

Arouri, the founder of the West Bank’s Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades,<sup>85</sup> was suspected of raising funds for Hamas and of directing Hamas’ operations in the West Bank from Turkey until his departure (due to American pressure) in 2015.<sup>86</sup> Among other things, Arouri was also believed to have launched a plot to take down the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank in 2014.<sup>87</sup> Imad al-Alami, a long-time Hamas liaison with Iran, also reportedly went to Turkey for medical treatment.<sup>88</sup>

While Arouri may have relocated to Qatar, Turkey remains the home of two noteworthy Hamas financial figures. According to the Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Seyassah*, Bakri Hanifa plays a significant role in an ongoing financial operation to move “tens of millions of dollars” to Turkey from Qatar.<sup>89</sup> According to a report in *Palestine Press News Agency*, Maher Ubeid, another

85. Alex Fishman, “Leaving prison, returning to terror,” *Ynet* (Israel), October 21, 2013. ([www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4443522,00.html](http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4443522,00.html))

86. David Barnett, “Israel indicts more Palestinian terror cells,” *The Long War Journal*, April 18, 2013. ([www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2013/04/israel-indicts-more-palestina.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2013/04/israel-indicts-more-palestina.php)); “מעורבות פעיל ששחרר ב'עסקת שליט' בהכוננת טרור” (Involvement of Operative Released in Shalit Deal Involved in Directing Terrorism), *Shin Bet* (Israel), accessed on July 16, 2013. ([www.shabak.gov.il/publications/publications/Pages/shotef170413.aspx](http://www.shabak.gov.il/publications/publications/Pages/shotef170413.aspx)); “هنية في القاهرة اليوم وأبو مرزوق مسؤول الإعلام” (Haniyeh in Cairo Today, Abu Marzouk Official in Charge of Media), *Al Hayat* (UK), April 24, 2013. (<http://alhayat.com/Details/506404>); Yoav Limor, “There is no third intifada,” *Israel Hayom*, January 10, 2014. ([www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter\\_article.php?id=14651](http://www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter_article.php?id=14651))

87. Mitch Ginsburg and AP, “Israel says it foiled Hamas plan for massive attacks on Israel, coup against PA,” *The Times of Israel*, August 18, 2014. ([www.timesofisrael.com/israel-says-it-foiled-hamas-plan-for-coup-against-pa-in-west-bank/](http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-says-it-foiled-hamas-plan-for-coup-against-pa-in-west-bank/))

88. Jonathan Schanzer and Grant Rumley, “Hamas’s Main Man From Turkey to Tehran,” *Foreign Policy*, December 8, 2014. (<http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/12/08/hamas-main-man-from-turkey-to-tehran-imad-al-alami-iran/>)

89. “معارضون لأردوغان يطلعون جهات غربية على النشاط المشبوه لحماس” (Erdogan’s opponents inform Western authorities of suspected activities of Hamas), *Al Seyassah* (Kuwait), September 14, 2014. (<http://al-seyassah.com/معارضون-لأردوغان-يطلعون-جهات-غربية-على-النشاط-المشبوه-لحماس/>)

82. Dian Nissenbaum and Carol E. Lee, “U.S. Joins Turkish Forces to Launch Push Against Islamic State in Syria,” *The Wall Street Journal*, August 24, 2016. (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-joins-turkish-forces-to-launch-push-against-islamic-state-in-syria-1472016805?mod=e2tw>)

83. Gordon Lubold and Dion Nissenbaum, “Turkey to Join Coalition’s Airstrikes Against ISIS,” *The Wall Street Journal*, August 26, 2015. (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/turkey-to-join-coalitions-airstrikes-against-isis-1440535062>)

84. “Pentagon chief praises Kurdish fighters in Syria,” *Agence France Presse*, March 17, 2016. (<http://news.yahoo.com/pentagon-chief-praises-kurdish-fighters-syria-200543941.html>)

Hamas financial operative, receives funds from Turkish official sources and transfers them to Hamas in Gaza via Turkish money changers.<sup>90</sup> Other reports suggest that members of Hamas' military wing may have undertaken training in Turkey, with the knowledge, support, and assistance of local authorities.<sup>91</sup> After the normalization agreement between Turkey and Israel in the spring of 2016, it is unclear whether these activities are ongoing.

There are indications that the government of Turkey is involved in other malign behavior, too. In February 2015, for example, Libya's internationally recognized prime minister, Abdullah al-Thinni, accused Turkey of sending weapons to the Islamist rebels.<sup>92</sup> And in 2013, it was widely reported that senior Turkish AKP ministers were involved in a massive sanctions evasion scheme known as "Gas-for-Gold" that yielded Iran some \$13 billion.<sup>93</sup>

Turkish domestic politics have also been a major concern. Under Erdogan's tenure as prime minister and then president, long before the failed coup attempt, press freedom in Turkey has dropped precipitously. Twitter accounts are regularly shut down, and hundreds of Erdogan critics have been sued or prosecuted for allegedly being supporters

of Fethullah Gulen – a cleric and Erdogan's rival living in self-imposed exile in the U.S. since 1999.<sup>94</sup> Multiple opposition media outlets have been seized by the government and Turkey ranked as the fifth worst jailer of journalists in 2015.<sup>95</sup> According to a November 2015 report by the European Commission, Turkey's independent judiciary has also been undermined with the passage of new laws that are at odds with EU standards.<sup>96</sup> The judiciary was particularly compromised when the government blocked all inquiries in 2013 and 2014 into alleged corruption charges against high-level government officials by an Istanbul prosecutor.<sup>97</sup>

The July 2016 attempted coup has given Erdogan an excuse to further tighten his grip on power. Within days of its failure, the government began to purge the country's state institutions of suspected Gulen supporters – the man Erdogan alleges was behind the putsch. By way of background, Erdogan and Gulen, representing two strands of political Islam in Turkey, were in a strategic political alliance in the years following the AKP's ascendance to power. But a feud that developed between the two in 2012-2013

94. Senada Sokollu, "Erdogan shuts down Twitter," *Deutsche Welle* (Germany), March 22, 2014. (<http://www.dw.com/en/erdogan-shuts-down-twitter/a-17513812>)

95. Scott Martelle, "Turkey's muzzling of its free press deserves more than finger-wagging from the international community," *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 2016. (<http://www.latimes.com/opinion/opinion-la/la-ol-turkish-journalists-sentenced-prison-20160509-story.html>); "Number of jailed journalists in Turkey 'dramatically increases' in 2015: CPJ report," *Hurriyet* (Turkey), December 16, 2015. (<http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/number-of-jailed-journalists-in-turkey-dramatically-increases-in-2015-cpj-report.aspx?pageID=238&nID=92618&NewsCatID=339>)

96. "EU criticizes Turkey over human rights and democracy," *BBC News* (UK), November 10, 2015. (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34774624>)

97. Gulsen Solaker, "Turkey bans reporting on corruption investigation of ex-ministers," *Reuters*, November 26, 2014. (<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-corruption-idUSKCN0JA1OR20141126>)

90. Adnan al-Tamimi ناشيونال انترست: موقف الدوحة من حماس " National Interest: Doha's stance on Hamas and Palestine will not change even if Mashaal leaves for Turkey," *The New Khalij* (UAE), January 18, 2015. (<http://www.thenewkhalij.com/ar/node/8711>)

91. Paul Auster, "Suspensions of Turkey, Hamas alliance stoke fears in Israel," *Fox News*, March 4, 2015. (<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/03/04/turkey-red-carpet-for-hamas-stokes-fears-in-israel/>)

92. Ahmed Tolba and Ayman al-Warfalli, "Libyan PM says Turkey supplying weapons to rival Tripoli group," *Reuters*, February 27, 2015. (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/27/us-libya-security-turkey-idUSKBN0LV1S120150227>)

93. Jonathan Schanzer and Mark Dubowitz, "Iran's Turkish Gold Rush," *Foreign Policy*, December 26, 2013. (<http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/12/26/irans-turkish-gold-rush/>)

has spiraled into dire proportions, with Erdogan declaring Gulenist followers to be members of a terrorist organization and ultimately blaming the network for the July coup. Since the putsch, tens of thousands of Turks in the civil service, judiciary, security establishment, media, and academia have been fired and thousands have been detained, including one-third of the Turkish generals and admirals. They were charged with supporting the coup plot.<sup>98</sup> According to Amnesty International, detainees have been beaten and tortured during the crackdown.<sup>99</sup> While Gulen's personal role in the coup has yet to be proven, Turkey has demanded that the U.S. extradite him, and repeatedly suggested that failure to do could jeopardize the U.S.-Turkey alliance.

The post-coup purges will also undoubtedly impact the fight against the Islamic State and the ongoing effort to temper Russian aggression. Many experienced officers that spent years building relationships with their U.S. and NATO counterparts have been jailed.<sup>100</sup> According to former NATO Supreme Commander James Stavridis, the fallout

“will have a chilling effect on military readiness and performance.”<sup>101</sup> Statements by the commander of U.S. Central Command, Joseph Votel and National Intelligence Director James Clapper have voiced similar concerns.<sup>102</sup> By extension, the hollowing out of the second largest military in NATO, which is responsible for securing the border with Syria, undermines the alliance at a time when it is being challenged along its flanks.<sup>103</sup>

To make matters worse, the activities of U.S. and NATO are now also viewed with increased suspicion in Turkey. This is because several Turkish Air Force members reportedly involved in the plot were stationed alongside coalition forces at Incirlik.<sup>104</sup> After the failed coup, numerous Turkish officers working at Incirlik, including the base commander, were arrested.<sup>105</sup> Some senior Turkish officials accused the U.S. of supporting the coup, despite a clear pledge of

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 98. “Turkey coup attempt: Crackdown toll passes 50,000,” *BBC News* (UK), July 20, 2016. (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36842073>); Ishaan Tharoor, “Almost one-third of Turkey’s top military officers charged in coup plot,” *The Washington Post*, July 20, 2016. (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/07/20/almost-one-third-of-turkeys-top-military-officers-charged-in-coup-plot/>)  
 99. “Turkey unity rally draws thousands as post-coup torture claims emerge,” *Agence France Presse*, July 24, 2016. (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/25/turkey-unity-rally-draws-thousands-as-post-coup-torture-claims-emerge>); Serkan Demirtaş, “Turkey to temporarily suspend European Convention on Human Rights after coup attempt,” *Hurriyet* (Turkey), July 21, 2016. (<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-to-temporarily-suspend-european-convention-on-human-rights-after-coup-attempt.aspx?pageID=238&nID=101910&NewsCatID=338>)  
 100. Humeyra Pamuk and Gareth Jones, “Turkish military a fractured force after attempted coup,” *Reuters*, July 26, 2016. (<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-military-insight-idUSKCN10619L>)

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 101. James Stavridis, “Turkey and NATO: What Comes Next is Messy,” *Foreign Policy*, July 18, 2016. (<http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/07/18/turkey-and-nato-what-comes-next-is-messy-coup-erdogan-incirlik-air-base-nuclear-weapons/>)  
 102. Tara Copp, “Gen. Votel: Turkey unrest could affect Islamic State fight,” *Stars and Stripes*, July 28, 2016. (<http://www.stripes.com/news/middle-east/gen-votel-turkey-unrest-could-affect-islamic-state-fight-1.421432>); Warren Strobel, “Turkey military purge harming fight against Islamic State: Clapper,” *Reuters*, July 28, 2016. (<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-usa-purge-idUSKCN1082U8>)  
 103. “Carter: Threats Arising on NATO’s Southern Flank,” *Defense News*, October 10, 2015. (<http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/warfare/2015/10/10/carter-threats-arising-natos-southern-flank/73652714/>)  
 104. John Vandiver, “Incirlik airspace reopened; Turkish base commander detained,” *Stars and Stripes*, July 17, 2016. (<http://www.stripes.com/news/incirlik-airspace-reopened-turkish-base-commander-detained-1.419571>)  
 105. Umar Farooq, “Top officers at Incirlik Air Base arrested in Turkey coup attempt,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 17, 2016. (<http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-turkey-coup-20160717-snap-story.html>)

support for the government by U.S. officials.<sup>106</sup> Even Erdogan, responding to Votel’s concerns about the operational impact of the purges, alleged the general was supporting the coup plotters, further enflaming anti-American sentiment.<sup>107</sup>

Negative attitudes towards the U.S. and the West among the Turkish public were already on the rise before the coup. Attacks by Turkish citizens against American servicemen stationed in Turkey had been documented in recent years.<sup>108</sup> With tensions now at an all-time high, U.S. and NATO personnel could very well be in danger.

## Assessing Challenges and Opportunities

While past challenges associated with U.S. military forces stationed in Turkey have been resolved through determined diplomacy, the troubling trends and questions of growing instability in the country necessitate a thorough review of the consequences of continuing to station sensitive and strategic military assets there. This is not to suggest that the U.S. should immediately seek to withdraw assets from Turkey. Indeed, it is still too early for that conversation. Turkish installations continue to provide important tactical and

strategic solutions for U.S. objectives. Moreover, any suggestion that the U.S. is scaling down or abandoning its bases in Turkey could drive further divisions between Ankara, Washington, and NATO. However, it would be irresponsible, given recent events and continuing trend lines, not to examine options for alternative basing for critical strategic assets.

**“It would be irresponsible, given recent events and continuing trend lines, not to examine options for alternative basing for critical strategic assets.”**

Thanks to the campaign against IS, some viable alternatives are already in use and could offer an alternative to Turkish installations. And it is not uncommon for the United States to rebalance its assets, depending upon the political climate. For example, at its peak, Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia supported as many as 5,000 troops and 200 aircraft.<sup>109</sup> However, after the Saudis refused to allow American aircraft to launch strikes from Saudi territory into Afghanistan in 2001 and during the second Iraq war,<sup>110</sup> the U.S. moved many of the assets to al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar in 2003. Moreover, the Saudis also never signed a Status of Forces Agreement, which would have protected American servicemen from being tried in local courts.<sup>111</sup> But most importantly, the Saudis were never entirely comfortable with the presence of non-Muslim forces on their soil (a point that al-Qaeda exploited).

106. Nike Ching, “With Anti-American Sentiment High in Turkey, Washington Calls for Restraint,” *Voice of America*, July 18, 2016. (<http://www.voanews.com/content/anti-american-sentiment-high-turkey-us-calls-for-restraint/3423926.html>)

107. “US general is on side of coup platters: Erdogan,” *Hurriyet* (Turkey), July 29, 2016. (<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/us-general-is-on-side-of-coup-platters-erdogan-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=102242&NewsCatID=341>)

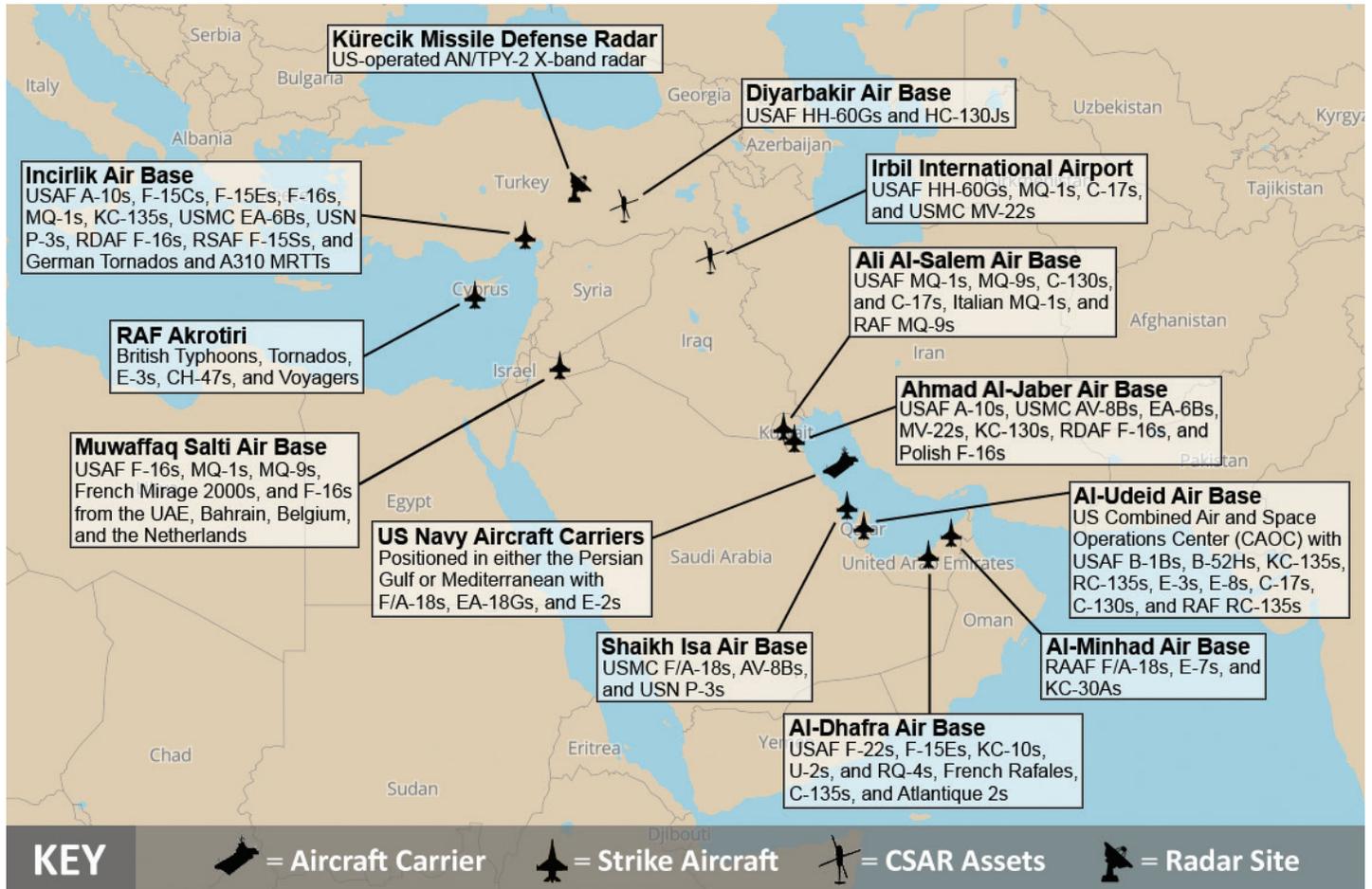
108. Jamie Crawford, “U.S. sailors attacked in Turkey; bags placed over their heads,” *CNN*, November 12, 2014. (<http://www.cnn.com/2014/11/12/politics/turkey-navy-sailors-bags-over-heads/>); “Turks who tried to put sack over US soldier’s head released,” *Associated Press*, April 18, 2016. (<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/04/18/two-turkish-youths-detained-after-accosting-us-soldier-at-air-base.html>)

109. “Prince Sultan Air Base,” *GlobalSecurity.org*, May 7, 2011. (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/prince-sultan.htm>)

110. Don Van Natta Jr., “Last American Combat Troops Quit Saudi Arabia,” *The New York Times*, September 22, 2003. (<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/22/international/middleeast/22SAUD.html>)

111. Elaine Sciolino and Eric Schmitt, “U.S. Rethinks Its Role in Saudi Arabia,” *The New York Times*, March 10, 2002. (<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/03/10/world/us-rethinks-its-role-in-saudi-arabia.html>)

**Middle East installations known to host U.S. and coalition air and radar assets (\*listed aircraft reflect current or recent deployments)**



The decision to move assets from Prince Sultan Air Base to al-Udeid was a relatively simple equation. Pentagon planners had an alternative that was close by and in a country eager to host U.S. forces. There are similar alternatives for Turkey today. Many of the other installations around the region that are currently being used, particularly those in the Gulf states, are not ideal solutions given their distance from ongoing theaters of operation – thus the strong desire to use Turkey’s bases. But a handful of options within neighboring countries could absorb assets based in Turkey while retaining close access to key areas. The following are some alternatives to Incirlik, should they become necessary.

## RAF Akrotiri, Cyprus

One secure installation with convenient access to the eastern Mediterranean is the British Royal Air Force (RAF) base at Akrotiri. Located on the southern tip of Cyprus, RAF Akrotiri sits on a peninsula that became sovereign UK territory under the 1960 Treaty of Establishment, which granted independence to the Republic of Cyprus.<sup>112</sup> The airfield was established in 1955 when the island’s main civil airport was closed due to terrorist attacks. It quickly grew as British forces withdrew from outposts east of Suez, peaking in the 1960s and 1970s,

112. Treaty Concerning the Establishment of the Republic of Cyprus, Nicosia, December 12, 1960. ([http://www.mfa.gr/images/docs/kypriako/treaty\\_of\\_establishment.pdf](http://www.mfa.gr/images/docs/kypriako/treaty_of_establishment.pdf))

when it hosted several RAF squadrons. However, by the end of the 1980s, only one RAF squadron remained. The base has supported recent British and allied operations during the 1991 Gulf War, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the 2006 evacuation of noncombatants from Lebanon, the 2011 Libyan intervention, and the current campaign against IS in Syria and Iraq.<sup>113</sup>

As of December 2015, the base supported as many as ten RAF Tornado strike aircraft, six Typhoon fighters, three C-130 transports, a Voyager tanker aircraft, four Griffin helicopters, and four CH-47 heavy-lift helicopters – many of which are supporting the campaign against IS.<sup>114</sup> According to the RAF, the base contains “sufficient bulk aviation fuel stores, explosive storage and dispersed aircraft parking for high-tempo air operations.” The British government is presently refurbishing the air base to accommodate larger aircraft.<sup>115</sup>

The U.S. has frequently used RAF Akrotiri during the last four decades. In 1974, the U.S. stationed U-2 spy planes at the base to monitor the ceasefire between Israel and Egypt.<sup>116</sup> U-2 missions continued from the British facility in 2008 and 2013 to monitor Hezbollah in Lebanon, gather intelligence over Turkey and northern Iraq, and allegedly performed ISR missions over Syria.<sup>117</sup>

The U.S. also used the base to evacuate American citizens from Lebanon in 2006.<sup>118</sup>

The British government has welcomed other allies to use the base, too. The French Air Force was invited to launch strikes from Akrotiri in the wake of the November 2015 Paris terror attacks.<sup>119</sup>

As of December 2014, the facility lacks key support facilities, including a hospital.<sup>120</sup> With a minor investment, however, the base could become a vital asset for both the U.S. and UK. Given the close political and military relationship between the historical allies, it would be reasonable to expect that the U.S. would be granted long-term access to the base. As is the case with Turkey, this would not mean uninhibited use of RAF Akrotiri for unilateral U.S. interests, but with the U.S. and UK “special relationship” far more in step than with Ankara, an improvement in operational flexibility is likely. Additionally, in times of crisis, there would likely be few objections to operational use of assets stationed there.

## Muwaffaq Salti Air Base, Jordan

One Jordan-based facility, which has played a prominent role in the battle against IS, is another attractive location. Muwaffaq Salti Air Base is located

113. UK Royal Air Force, “Station Information,” accessed August 18, 2016. (<http://www.raf.mod.uk/rafakrotiri/stationinformation/index.cfm>)

114. “RAF Akrotiri Deployments,” *Open Source IMINT*, April 4, 2015. (<http://osimint.com/2015/04/04/raf-akrotiri-deployments/>); “PM: UK airstrikes will help bring political deal in Syria,” *ITV* (UK), December 3, 2015. (<http://www.itv.com/news/update/2015-12-03/four-extra-typhoon-jets-touchdown-at-raf-akrotiri/>)

115. UK Royal Air Force, “Station Information,” accessed August 18, 2016. (<http://www.raf.mod.uk/rafakrotiri/stationinformation/index.cfm>)

116. UK Parliament, “RAF Akrotiri,” *Hansard*, June 15, 1990. (<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/written-answers/1990/jun/15/raf-akrotiri>)

117. Richard Norton-Taylor and David Leigh, “UK overruled on Lebanon spy flights from Cyprus, Wikileaks cables reveal,” *The Guardian* (UK), December 2, 2010. (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/01/wikileaks-cables-cyprus-rendition-torture>)

118. Tim Ripley, *Middle East Air Power in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (Casemate Publishers, 2010). (<https://books.google.com/books?id=IMq7fhIe-yYC&pg=PA401&clpg=PA401&dq=u.s.+evacuation+lebanon+2006+akrotiri&source=bl&cots=OjbLqjprDu&sig=GLA1IKVXDEp6qorDGDAC1Ttqdj4&hl=en&sa=X&ei=88ZBVcy8Ksm6ggSNk4HACg&ved=0CFoQ6AEwCw#v=onepage&q=u.s.%20evacuation%20lebanon%202006%20akrotiri&cf=false>)

119. Ben Farmer, “Britain says French can use Cyprus RAF base for Syria strikes on ISIL,” *The Telegraph* (UK), November 23, 2015. (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/12011727/Britain-says-French-can-use-Cyprus-RAF-base-for-Syria-strikes-on-Isil.html>)

120. Mark Urban, “‘Morale poor’ among UK crews at RAF Akrotiri, Cyprus,” *BBC News* (UK), December 5, 2014. (<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-30338659>)

in Azraq, eastern Jordan, and was first used by U.S. aircraft in 1996 to support the no-fly zones over Iraq. Today, Muwaffaq supports a range of coalition aircraft striking IS.<sup>121</sup> The base, also referred to as Shaheed Muwaffaq, has two runways capable of accommodating all aircraft in the U.S. inventory. Situated about 35 miles from the Syrian border, it could also be used to support ground operations, including training Syrian rebels.<sup>122</sup> While Jordan has a number of available airfields, this one is particularly attractive, given its size and remote location.

U.S. ties with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan are strong. As one of the most reliable allies in the region, the U.S. granted Jordan major non-NATO ally (MNNA) status in 1996.<sup>123</sup> Jordan hosts the annual Eager Lion training exercise, a large-scale multilateral exercise inaugurated in 2011 that now includes up to 20 coalition partners and more than 12,500 participants, simulating a variety of military scenarios.<sup>124</sup> In 2013, in response to the Syrian civil war, Central Command built a forward command center at the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center (KASOTC) near Amman.<sup>125</sup> That

121. Douglas Jehl, "Jordan Allowing U.S. to Use Its Air Base for Flights Over Iraq," *The New York Times*, April 9, 1996. (<http://www.nytimes.com/1996/04/09/world/jordan-allowing-us-to-use-its-air-base-for-flights-over-iraq.html>)

122. Richard Spencer, "US troops operating in Jordan near Syria border," *The Telegraph* (UK), October 10, 2012. (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9598851/US-troops-operating-in-Jordan-near-Syria-border.html>)

123. Jeremy Sharp, "Jordan: Background and U.S. Relations," *Congressional Research Service*, January 27, 2016. (<http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33546.pdf>)

124. U.S. Central Command, Press Release, "Jordanian Armed Forces Announce Exercise Eager Lion 2014," May 19, 2014. (<http://www.centcom.mil/news/news-article/jordanian-armed-forces-announce-exercise-eager-lion-2014>)

125. Tom Shanker, "With Eyes on Syria, U.S. Turns Warehouse Into Support Hub for Jordan," *The New York Times*, August 15, 2013. ([http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/16/world/middleeast/for-the-us-in-jordan-command-central-is-a-steel-warehouse.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/16/world/middleeast/for-the-us-in-jordan-command-central-is-a-steel-warehouse.html?_r=0))

same year, the U.S. deployed Patriot missile batteries and a squadron of F-16s, which participated in Eager Lion. The F-16s remained in Jordan following the exercise to reinforce Jordan's defenses,<sup>126</sup> and were later used to conduct strikes on IS from Muwaffaq.<sup>127</sup> The U.S. has increased its strike missions from Jordan against IS targets and has positioned HIMARS to provide additional fire support to Syrian rebels fighting IS along the border.<sup>128</sup> As the coalition supports the expansion of a southern front against IS, the U.S. will likely deploy more resources to Jordan.<sup>129</sup>

Increasing the American presence in Jordan is not risk-free, however. The country has become less stable with the influx of more than one million refugees.<sup>130</sup> In June 2016, Russian aircraft reportedly bombed outposts near the Jordan-Syria border that were used by U.S. and U.K. Special Forces to support local forces battling IS.<sup>131</sup> IS has also conducted at least one attack on the border, killing seven Jordanian guards in June 2016. Additional attacks – while not claimed by IS – have targeted Jordanian intelligence

126. Hendrick Simoes, "US participating in international Eager Lion exercise in Jordan," *Stars and Stripes*, June 12, 2013. (<http://www.stripes.com/news/us-participating-in-international-eager-lion-exercise-in-jordan-1.225511>)

127. "US in Jordan war games as conflict rages next door in Syria," *Agence France-Presse*, May 15, 2014. (<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/May-15/256517-us-in-jordan-war-games-as-conflict-rages-next-door-in-syria.ashx#axzz3IdQIX2bp>)

128. Thomas Gibbons-Neff, "U.S. rocket artillery based in Jordan is being used to strike Islamic State targets in Syria," *The Washington Post*, March 11, 2016. (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/03/11/u-s-rocket-artillery-based-in-jordan-is-being-used-to-strike-islamic-state-targets-in-syria/>)

129. "Coalition aims to open new anti-IS front in Syria," *Agence France Presse*, July 27, 2016. (<http://www.france24.com/en/20160727-coalition-aims-open-new-anti-front-syria-us>)

130. "Syria conflict: Jordanians 'at boiling point' over refugees," *BBC News* (UK), February 2, 2016. (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35462698>)

131. Adam Entous and Gordon Lubold, "Russia Bombed Base in Syria Used by U.S.," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 21, 2016. (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/russian-strikes-on-remote-syria-garrison-alarm-u-s-1469137231>)

officers at the Baqaa Palestinian refugee camp in June, and two Americans were killed at a training facility in Amman in November 2015.<sup>132</sup>

Risks notwithstanding, Jordan has contributed significantly to the IS campaign and has pursued IS operatives relentlessly within its borders.<sup>133</sup> After IS killed a downed Jordanian pilot in early 2015, the kingdom responded with three consecutive days of strikes into Syria. It then expanded strikes into Iraq, and even deployed ground troops to the border as a show of force.<sup>134</sup> The U.S., seeking to encourage Jordan, has pledged a wide range of support, including a more rapid delivery of arms to combat IS.<sup>135</sup> Further, in early May 2015, Jordan became the first site for the U.S.-led train and equip program for Syrian rebels to combat IS.<sup>136</sup>

**“As the coalition supports the expansion of a southern front against IS, the U.S. will likely deploy more resources to Jordan.”**

Finally, it is worth noting that a number of coalition partners have deployed aircraft to Jordan to support the fight against IS. Both the UAE and

132. Rana F. Sweis, “ISIS Is Said to Claim Responsibility for Attack at Jordan-Syria Border,” *The New York Times*, June 27, 2016. ([http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/28/world/middleeast/islamic-state-jordan-suicide-attack.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/28/world/middleeast/islamic-state-jordan-suicide-attack.html?_r=0))

133. Suha Ma’ayeh, “How Jordan Got Pulled Into the Fight Against ISIS,” *Time*, February 26, 2015. (<http://time.com/3721793/jordan-fight-against-isis/>)

134. Moufaq Khatib, “Jordan Moves ‘Thousands’ of Troops to Iraq Border: Jordanian Sources,” *NBC News*, February 10, 2015. (<http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/jordan-moves-thousands-troops-iraq-border-jordanian-sources-n303441>)

135. “U.S. to Resupply Jordan With Munitions for Campaign Against ISIS: Officials,” *Reuters*, February 13, 2015. (<http://www.newsweek.com/us-resupply-jordan-munitions-campaign-against-isis-officials-306885>)

136. “US says Syrian rebel training starting in Jordan,” *Associated Press*, May 7, 2015. (<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2015/05/07/us-says-syrian-rebel-training-starting-in-jordan/>)

Bahrain deployed there to benefit from the country’s proximity to the battlefield.<sup>137</sup> France, Belgium, and the Netherlands also deployed fighters to Jordan to conduct strikes within Iraq.<sup>138</sup>

In short, Muwaffaq is an ideal forward base geographically, and its facilities are robust, enabling a full spectrum of missions. No less important, Jordan is an eager partner in the fight against IS, and its politics as a moderate Arab state are crucial for coalition building.

## Bases in Iraq

The United States operated dozens of bases in Iraq between the launch of the war in 2003 and the 2011 withdrawal of coalition forces. Many of these bases have remained empty since the American departure and could be repurposed. However, with the addition of more U.S. ground forces, including the “expeditionary targeting force” for direct action against IS, and an expanding train and equip mission, the fate of the bases is still being determined.<sup>139</sup> As of March 2016, roughly

137. Adam Schreck, “From Jordan Base, UAE Resumes Airstrikes on Islamic State,” *Associated Press*, February 10, 2015. ([http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2015/02/10/from\\_jordan\\_base\\_uae\\_resumes\\_airstrikes\\_on\\_islamic\\_state\\_125557.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2015/02/10/from_jordan_base_uae_resumes_airstrikes_on_islamic_state_125557.html)); “Bahrain deploys warplanes to Jordan for war against IS,” *Agence France-Presse*, February 16, 2015. (<http://news.yahoo.com/bahrain-deploys-warplanes-jordan-war-against-094504678.html>)

138. Janene Van Jaarsveldt, “Final Netherlands F-16s Headed to Jordan, ISIS Fight,” *NL Times* (Netherlands), October 3, 2014. (<http://www.nltimes.nl/2014/10/03/final-netherlands-f-16s-headed-jordan-isis-fight/>); “France to Send 6 Mirage Jets to Jordan Against Islamic State,” *Agence France-Presse*, November 26, 2014. (<http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/mideast-africa/2014/11/26/france-to-send-6-mirage-jets-to-jordan-against-islamic-state/19549083/>); “Belgium to offer fighter jets for ISIS strikes,” *Agence France-Presse*, September 24, 2014. (<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/09/24/Belgium-to-offer-fighter-jets-for-ISIS-strikes-.html>)

139. Ben Kesling, “Marine’s Death in Iraq Points to Deeper U.S. Involvement,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 21, 2016. (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/death-of-u-s-marine-in-iraq-points-to-deeper-u-s-involvement-1458574821>)

5,000 U.S. troops are dispersed throughout a handful of Iraqi installations, including Baghdad International Airport, Irbil International Airport, Al-Asad air base, al-Taqaddum air base, the Besmaya Combat Training Center, and Camp Taji.<sup>140</sup> Many of these installations provide capabilities to support American artillery, attack helicopters, and SOF.<sup>141</sup>

There are still multiple risks associated with bases in Iraq due to the proximity of IS forces and Iranian-backed militias.<sup>142</sup> A U.S. Marine was killed on March 19, 2016 in northern Iraq when an IS rocket attack struck an American firebase 12 miles from the front line.<sup>143</sup> In February 2015, IS forces penetrated the perimeter of Al-Asad, at the time home to 300 American personnel, before being repelled.<sup>144</sup>

140. Loveday Morris, “The U.S. military is back training troops in Iraq, but it’s a little different this time,” *The Washington Post*, January 8, 2015. ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the-us-military-is-back-training-troops-in-iraq-but-its-a-little-different-this-time/2015/01/08/11b9aa58-95f2-11e4-8385-866293322c2f\\_story.html?Post+generic=%3Ftid%3Dsm\\_twitter\\_washingtonpost](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the-us-military-is-back-training-troops-in-iraq-but-its-a-little-different-this-time/2015/01/08/11b9aa58-95f2-11e4-8385-866293322c2f_story.html?Post+generic=%3Ftid%3Dsm_twitter_washingtonpost)); Missy Ryan, “The U.S. military has a lot more people in Iraq than it has been saying,” *The Washington Post*, March 21, 2016. ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/03/21/the-u-s-military-has-a-lot-more-people-in-iraq-than-it-has-been-saying/?tid=sm\\_tw](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/03/21/the-u-s-military-has-a-lot-more-people-in-iraq-than-it-has-been-saying/?tid=sm_tw))

141. Brian Everstine, “A-10 suffers engine failure, flying again after 5 days at Iraq base,” *Air Force Times*, April 24, 2015. (<http://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/2015/04/24/iraq-a-10-engine-failure/26295325/>); James Gordon Meek and Justin Fishel, “Delta Force Commandos Kill Key ISIS Leader in Ground Raid in Syria,” *ABC News*, May 16, 2015. (<http://abcnews.go.com/International/delta-force-commandos-kill-key-isis-leader-ground/story?id=31092834>)

142. “U.S. Reinforcements Arrive at Anbar’s Ayn Al-Asad Base, Following IS Assault,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, December 23, 2014. (<http://www.rferl.org/content/under-black-flag-islamic-state-us-reinforcements-anbar/26759152.html>)

143. Ben Kesling, “Marine’s Death in Iraq Points to Deeper U.S. Involvement,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 21, 2016. (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/death-of-u-s-marine-in-iraq-points-to-deeper-u-s-involvement-1458574821>)

144. Julian E. Barnes, “ISIS Attacks Iraqi Base Used by U.S. Trainers,” *The Wall Street Journal*, February 13, 2015. ([http://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-militants-attack-iraqi-air-base-1423843057?mod=wsj\\_nview\\_latest](http://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-militants-attack-iraqi-air-base-1423843057?mod=wsj_nview_latest))

Furthermore, several Shia-militia groups, designated as terrorist groups by the U.S. and supported by Iran, are operating in Iraq with impunity.<sup>145</sup> Thus, the two most viable options are both in the largely pro-American, semi-autonomous Kurdish region.

## Irbil International Airport, Iraqi Kurdistan

Irbil International Airport in Iraqi Kurdistan is in a relatively secure location.<sup>146</sup> The Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), which maintains a long and warm relationship with the United States, controls the facility. After the U.S. invaded Iraq and toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein, the KRG worked closely with U.S. forces.<sup>147</sup> During this time, Irbil and particularly its airport received significant investment from the KRG to attract foreign business. The facility has grown and can now easily accommodate large aircraft.<sup>148</sup>

The airport hosts two runways. The biggest, at 4,800 meters (15,700 feet), is one of the longest runways in the world.<sup>149</sup> The facility can support the largest aircraft in U.S. military service (the C-5 Galaxy) and commercial

145. Raf Sanchez, “Iran-backed Shia Militia says it will fight US Marines deployed to Iraq,” *The Telegraph* (UK), March 21, 2016. (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/12200172/Iran-backed-Shia-militia-says-it-will-fight-US-Marines-deployed-to-Iraq.html>)

146. “U.S. warplanes to fly from Iraqi base: Pentagon,” *Agence France-Presse*, September 11, 2014. (<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/09/11/U-S-warplanes-to-fly-from-Iraqi-base-Pentagon.html>)

147. Joe Parkinson and Adam Entous, “How Kurds Came to Play Key Role in U.S. Plans to Combat Islamic State,” *The Wall Street Journal*, September 8, 2014. (<http://online.wsj.com/articles/in-iraq-kurds-are-key-part-of-u-s-strategy-against-islamic-state-1410229982>)

148. “Welcome Message,” *Erbil International Airport*, accessed December 1, 2014. ([http://erbilairport.com/ABUT01/F/ABUT01\\_01\\_01.aspx](http://erbilairport.com/ABUT01/F/ABUT01_01_01.aspx))

149. “Old & New,” *Erbil International Airport*, accessed December 1, 2014. ([http://erbilairport.com/ABUT01/F/ABUT01\\_02\\_05.aspx](http://erbilairport.com/ABUT01/F/ABUT01_02_05.aspx)).

service (the AN-225).<sup>150</sup> The Erbil airport reportedly also serves as a CIA station, which has expanded in recent years, and hosts a U.S. CSAR unit since February 2015.<sup>151</sup>

However, with passenger and cargo traffic on the rise, there is potential for competition over limited resources.<sup>152</sup> Moreover, the airport's close proximity to Erbil, a major population center, raises operational security concerns that non-military personnel could observe sensitive American military activity and relay that intelligence to hostile forces.

## Bashur Airfield, Iraqi Kurdistan

The small Bashur airfield, situated roughly 25 miles northeast of Erbil, offers another alternative. On March 26, 2003, when the U.S. opened the northern front against Saddam's regime, around 1,000 special operators and members of the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade Combat Team landed at Bashur and set up a base to begin flying in heavy equipment.<sup>153</sup> Elements of the

86<sup>th</sup> Contingency Response Group quickly prepared the airfield for operations.<sup>154</sup> Within a week, 84 aircraft, including C-130 and C-17 transport aircraft, delivered M1 Abrams tanks, as well as 6 million pounds of cargo and 3,000 troops.<sup>155</sup> After 25 days, 350 flights landed and 21 million pounds of material were delivered. However, within a month, runway conditions deteriorated and operations moved to Kirkuk.<sup>156</sup>

The Pentagon considered making Bashur a permanent base to replace Incirlik in 2003 when Turkey refused to provide the U.S. access.<sup>157</sup> This never occurred, however, and the reasons were not made public. Reports suggest that as of February 2015, preparations were being made to reestablish Bashur as a base for U.S. air operations against IS. There are no indications that the U.S. is presently using the airfield.<sup>158</sup>

The political challenges of establishing U.S. airfields in Kurdistan are substantial. Chief among them will be the Iraqi government's concerns about Kurdish independence. Establishing a U.S. base inside Iraqi Kurdistan without agreement from Baghdad could be seen as U.S. support for Kurdish independence. No less

150. "AN-225 Mriya Basic Performance," *Antonov Company*, 2014. (<http://www.antonov.com/aircraft/transport-aircraft/an-225-mriya/an-225-performance>); Australia Defense Forces, 1<sup>st</sup> Joint Public Affairs Unit, *Facebook*, September 17, 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/1stJointPublicAffairsUnit/photos/a.714169595338605.1073742116.349246661830902/714170705338494/?type=1&theater>

151. Mitchell Prothero, "Expansion of 'secret' facility in suggests closer U.S.-Kurd ties," *McClatchy*, July 11, 2014. (<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/article24770413.html>); Jack Moore, "U.S. Stations Black Hawks in Kurdish Capital to Ire of Baghdad," *Newsweek*, February 6, 2015. (<http://www.newsweek.com/washington-stations-black-hawks-kurdish-capital-ire-baghdad-304916>)

152. "Airport Statistics," *Erbil International Airport*, accessed December 1, 2014. ([http://erbilairport.com/ABUT01/F-ABUT01\\_02\\_06.aspx](http://erbilairport.com/ABUT01/F-ABUT01_02_06.aspx))

153. Jane Arraf, "Another Round of Nighttime Bombing in Baghdad; Coalition Forces Fight Their Way Across the Desert," *CNN*, March 27, 2003. (<http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/030327/se.25.html>)

154. Kevin Dougherty, "Bare-bones Bashur airfield supports 173<sup>rd</sup>," *Stars and Stripes*, April 9, 2003. (<http://www.stripes.com/news/bare-bones-bashur-airfield-supports-173rd-1.4146>)

155. Scott Schonauer, "Iraq war: Unstoppable force from the air helped pave the way to quick victory," *Stars and Stripes*, May 27, 2003. (<http://www.stripes.com/news/iraq-war-unstoppable-force-from-the-air-helped-pave-way-to-quick-victory-1.6040>)

156. Scott Schonauer, "Iraq war: Unstoppable force from the air helped pave the way to quick victory," *Stars and Stripes*, May 27, 2003. (<http://www.stripes.com/news/iraq-war-unstoppable-force-from-the-air-helped-pave-way-to-quick-victory-1.6040>)

157. Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, "Pentagon Expects Long-Term Access to Four Key Bases in Iraq," *The New York Times*, April 20, 2003. (<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/20/international/worldspecial/20BASE.html>)

158. "US to establish military base in Erbil," *Anadolu Agency* (Turkey), February 9, 2015. (<http://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/463058--us-to-establish-military-base-in-erbil>)

of an issue would be the protests from Turkey, which has been loath to acknowledge Kurdish independence, even though its ties with the KRG are quite strong. Investing in Iraq also puts U.S. forces and assets closer to Iran, which continues to gain influence over the government in Iraq and within Kurdish politics.

## Conclusion

Even in the wake of the failed coup, the Pentagon continues to insist that its partnership with Turkey is “very strong.”<sup>159</sup> However, it cannot be denied that the relationship is being tested. Washington is increasingly alarmed over the massive, anti-democratic purge taking place in Turkey, reflecting an overall decline in rule of law.<sup>160</sup> And the acrimony is difficult to dismiss. Amidst charges that Washington was behind the coup, it is not unthinkable that Erdogan and the AKP could again limit U.S. operations in Turkey or even call for a complete withdrawal of American forces. Should the political situation in Turkey deteriorate further, security concerns may also force the U.S. to reposition resources.

Discussions regarding the future of U.S. and NATO assets in Turkey should be viewed as contingency planning. The goal should not be to degrade Turkey’s place in the alliance or to supplant it. If anything, these discussions should be viewed as an important moment to reinforce why moving American assets is not the preferred course of action. It must be stressed that

the U.S.-Turkey partnership is in the interest of both countries and should therefore be brought more in sync. Indeed, any pressure applied should be done delicately and in coordination with NATO members. But signaling to Erdogan that the U.S. is not solely dependent on Turkey could help to put the relationship back on equal footing. In 2003, the Turkish parliament failed to authorize U.S. forces to invade Iraq through Turkey in part because Ankara did not believe Washington had an alternative plan – namely, the invasion of Iraq through the south instead of the northern front.<sup>161</sup> The U.S. should avoid repeating that mistake and communicate its options more effectively.

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Furthermore, it is important to remember that while tensions are running high, Western ties with Turkey have weathered other storms. For example, Erdogan suggested he would take Turkey out of the U.S. and NATO fold before, including requests that Russia allow Turkey into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in response to the slow EU accession process.<sup>162</sup> The Turkish president ultimately elected to remain in the NATO fold. Similarly, Erdogan threatened to purchase a Chinese missile defense system in defiance of his NATO partners’ objections in order to gain concessions by competing U.S. and European offers, but the deal

159. Ashton Carter and Joseph Votel, “Joint Press Conference by Secretary Carter and Gen. Votel on the Counter-ISIL Coalition, Joint Base Andrews, Maryland,” *U.S. Department of Defense*, July 20, 2016. (<http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/851184/joint-press-conference-by-secretary-carter-and-gen-votel-on-the-counter-isil-co?source=GovDelivery>)

160. Carol Morello, “Kerry urges Turkey to maintain democratic principles after coup attempt,” *The Washington Post*, July 18, 2016. ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/kerry-warns-turkey-nato-membership-potentially-at-stake-in-crackdown/2016/07/18/f427ba8a-4850-11e6-8dac-0c6e4acc5b1\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/kerry-warns-turkey-nato-membership-potentially-at-stake-in-crackdown/2016/07/18/f427ba8a-4850-11e6-8dac-0c6e4acc5b1_story.html))

161. Emin Çölaşan, “Manzara! (View!),” *Hurriyet* (Turkey), March 22, 2003. (<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/manzara-135300>)

162. “Turkish PM Erdogan to Putin: Take us to Shanghai,” *Hurriyet* (Turkey), November 22, 2013. (<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-pm-erdogan-to-putin-take-us-to-shanghai.aspx?pageID=238&nID=58348&NewsCatID=359>)

was subsequently scrapped when more favorable offers did not come.<sup>163</sup> In other words, the Turkish president, despite his bluster, appears to understand that his country needs its Western alliances.<sup>164</sup>

It is also important to remember that discussions about American assets in Turkey need not be seen as an “all or nothing” equation. If necessary, Ankara and Washington might settle on a new arrangement stipulating that some assets stay and some assets go. But no matter what is agreed upon, the U.S. must first seek guarantees from Turkish authorities that American personnel, equipment, and facilities will be properly protected for as long as they are located there. With anti-American rhetoric on the rise, Ankara should demonstrate clearly that the Turkish government is taking steps to reduce risks to Americans within the country. With nuclear weapons reportedly stored at Incirlik, Turkish authorities should be reminded that the security of that facility is in Turkey’s interests as well. If Ankara cannot ensure security for the U.S. and its equipment, Washington should begin to pursue alternatives.

Whether in conjunction with exploring alternatives for Incirlik, or as a standalone issue, the reported stockpile of nuclear weapons at Incirlik requires careful consideration. Apart from their deterrent value as tangible evidence of U.S. commitment to Turkey’s defense, there is good reason to believe that U.S. nuclear weapons help dissuade Ankara from pursuing its own nuclear option. Facing threats from Russia and a potentially nuclear-armed Iran, Turkey may be provoked to acquire its own nuclear arms if it feels the U.S. is revoking its nuclear deterrent. Thus, so long as Turkey remains stable and a committed

member of NATO, and U.S. government assurances regarding the stockpile’s security are correct, keeping the weapons in Turkey may yet be the preferred outcome.

**“With anti-American rhetoric on the rise, Ankara should demonstrate clearly that the Turkish government is taking steps to reduce risks to Americans within the country.”**

If new basing arrangements were to become necessary, it is important to keep in mind a number of broader U.S. military equities that would be at stake in any move away from Turkey. Because of technical or strategic limitations, some aspects may be harder to relocate in the region. These include the early warning radar at Kurecik, CSAR at Diyarbakir, key support elements to SOF operating within Syria, and nuclear weapons. Any review of alternative basing options must include practical solutions for these issues. All would take time to implement.

In the short-term, the U.S. might consider deploying future rotations of American strike, ISR, and refueling aircraft intended for Incirlik to the RAF Akrotiri and Muwaffaq Salti air bases. Given Muwaffaq’s proximity to Syrian and Iraqi battlefields, it would be the most suitable short-term solution for tactical fighters and medium-range UAVs such as Reapers and Predators.

Meanwhile, because of RAF Akrotiri’s secure location and distance from operational theaters, it would be ideal for command and control and larger, more vulnerable support aircraft such as KC-135 tankers, C-17 and C-130 transports, and Navy P-3 and P-8 surveillance aircraft to be stationed there. Any long-term fighter deployments to address broader security needs in the eastern Mediterranean would be better placed in Cyprus as well.

Washington might also consider deploying more of its tactical assets (UAVs, transport, and rotary-wing aircraft) to Irbil International Airport for counter-IS operations. However, because of political restraints with Baghdad

163. Mustafa Kibaroglu and Selim C. Sazak, “Why Turkey Chose, and Then Rejected, a Chinese Air Defense Missile,” *Defense One*, February 3, 2016. (<http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2016/02/turkey-china-air-defense-missile/125648/>)

164. Asli Aydintasbas, “Friends again: Erdogan meets Putin,” *European Council on Foreign Relations*, August 9, 2016. ([http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_friends\\_again\\_erdoan\\_meets\\_putin7095](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_friends_again_erdoan_meets_putin7095))

and surrounding countries, Iraqi Kurdistan does not currently represent a long-term solution. Above all, access to Jordanian, British, and Kurdish installations, even if short-term or conditional, will be necessary if any assets are to be diverted from Incirlik.

Finally, the coalition train and equip program for Syrian groups should be concentrated within Jordan. The Hashemite Kingdom already supports a robust training program and has easy access to IS battlefields.

The discussion about moving sensitive assets from Turkey will not be an easy one. For this reason, we strongly recommend that the Pentagon, National Security Council, House Armed Service Committee, Government Accountability Office, and/or the Congressional Budget Office begin to explore the strategic and budgetary costs of repositioning American forces in the region. Assessments and hearings would help identify American concerns and allow U.S. decision makers to gain a better understanding of the current challenges and opportunities.

In the end, beyond prudent contingency planning, the discussion would send an important message to Ankara that while we are not eager to redeploy, we will consider it as long as Turkey's policies – both domestic and foreign – are incongruent with ours. At the very least, we will examine our alternatives while making every effort behind the scenes to preserve a crucial and mutually beneficial alliance that we would like to see continue throughout the twenty-first century and beyond.

But Ankara would not be the only intended audience. This exercise should send a message to other regional powers that the United States seeks strong partnerships with allies that share common values, interests, and vision. More importantly, it will send a message that the United States is committed to ensuring that it has the flexibility and leverage it needs to secure its vital interests in a volatile, fast-changing region.

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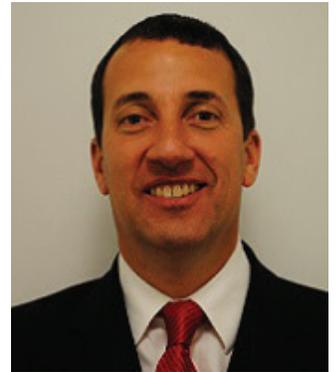
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## About The Authors

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**Patrick Megahan** is FDD's research associate for military affairs, where his research focuses on the evolving military balance of power in a rapidly-changing Middle East. He manages MilitaryEdge.org, an interactive and cutting-edge online tool that monitors and compares the qualitative and quantitative strengths of state and non-state actors. Patrick also contributes to FDD's *Long War Journal*, where he assisted in a two-year project to track Afghan and Coalition operations targeting al-Qaeda and affiliated groups in Afghanistan. He has published in media outlets including *The Hill*, *The National Interest*, *Al Arabiya*, *RealClearDefense*, and the *Center for International Maritime Security*, and his work has been featured by *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *NBC News*, *CBS News*, and *Foreign Policy*.



**John Hannah** is senior counselor at FDD, where he brings two decades of experience at the highest levels of U.S. foreign policy. During the first term of President George W. Bush, he was Vice President Dick Cheney's deputy national security advisor for the Middle East, where he was intimately involved in U.S. policy toward Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, the peace process, and the global war on terrorism. In President Bush's second term, John was elevated to the role of the vice president's national security advisor. In his previous government service, John worked as a senior advisor to Secretary of State Warren Christopher during the Bill Clinton administration, and as a senior member of Secretary of State James Baker's Policy Planning Staff during the presidency of George H. W. Bush.



**Jonathan Schanzer** is the Vice President for Research at FDD. Jonathan is part of the leadership team of FDD's Center on Sanctions and Illicit Finance, which provides policy and subject matter expertise on the use of financial and economic power to the global policy community. Previously, Jonathan worked as a terrorism finance analyst at the U.S. Department of the Treasury, where he played an integral role in the designation of numerous terrorist financiers. A former research fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Jonathan has studied Middle East history in four countries. He has testified before Congress and publishes widely in the American and international media.



## About the Foundation for Defense of Democracies

The Foundation for Defense of Democracies is a non-profit, non-partisan policy institute dedicated exclusively to promoting pluralism, defending democratic values, and fighting the ideologies that drive terrorism. Founded shortly after the attacks of 9/11, FDD combines policy research, democracy and counterterrorism education, strategic communications, and investigative journalism in support of its mission.

FDD focuses its efforts where opinions are formed and decisions are made, providing cutting-edge research, investigative journalism and public education - transforming ideas into action and policy.

FDD holds events throughout the year, including the Leading Thinkers series, briefings on Capitol Hill, expert roundtables for public officials, diplomats and military officers, book releases, and panel discussions and debates within the policy community.

## About FDD's Military Affairs Program

FDD's military affairs program, through its cutting-edge website [Militaryedge.org](http://Militaryedge.org), tracks the complex and evolving military balance in the Middle East and North Africa. Spurred by the instability of the Arab Spring and fears stemming from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, many Arab states have been importing record amounts of military equipment. FDD's program endeavors to determine how this will impact the region, and what this means for the United States, its allies, and global partners.

[MilitaryEdge.org](http://MilitaryEdge.org) is an interactive tool that compiles available open-source information on more than 1,000 different weapon systems currently in use in the region, along with the military activities of 26 state and non-state actors. Not only does the site provide an up-to-date resource on each actor's quantitative strengths, it includes qualitative assessments of their various capabilities, too.

One goal of the project is to provide the tools necessary to help preserve Israel's Qualitative Military Edge (QME) given the myriad threats in the region. With Israel's limited manpower and resources, it is a key American interest for Israel to maintain its advantage over its potential foes. The project helps to inform policymakers and the public on the new technologies and weapon systems that could threaten Israel's QME and ways the U.S. can balance its regional security partnerships while ensuring Israel's edge.

FDD's military affairs program also produces original analysis, like this report, on a wide range of issues that is published on [MilitaryEdge.org](http://MilitaryEdge.org).



For more information, please visit [www.defenddemocracy.org](http://www.defenddemocracy.org).







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