



Why isn't the West Sanctioning Turkey for its Special Operation in Iraq?

Description

The recent Russophobic frenzy by Washington and its Western allies over Russia's special operation to denazify and demilitarize Ukraine with more and more anti-Russian sanctions imposed each passing day, makes one involuntarily wonder: why then doesn't the West react in the same way to another special operation – the one Turkey is conducting on Iraqi territory? And how, in fact, are the two special operations different in their international treatment?

As you know, Turkey launched another (sic!) military special operation in Northern Iraq on April 18, striking the hideouts, bunkers, caves and warehouses of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). "We're determined to save our noble nation from the scourge of terrorism," said the country's Minister of Defense Khulusi Akar, adding "Our struggle will continue until the last terrorist is neutralized."

The Kurdistan Workers' Party is one of the major political forces of the Kurds, a people who live in several Middle Eastern countries: south-eastern Turkey, north-western Iran, northern Iraq and northern Syria. The PKK calls for creating a Kurdish autonomy in Turkey, for which the Turkish authorities have declared the organization "terrorist," but this is only Ankara's position. The Turkish-Kurdish struggle has been on-again, off-again, with another flare-up in 2015, when Turkish troops occupied northern Syria "in a special operation" under the banner of fighting Kurdish militias, which Ankara called terrorists. According to Turkish President Recep Erdoğan, more than 6,000 PKK members inside Turkey and 6,900 outside Turkey were killed at the time.

Another round of confrontation took place in 2020, when Turkey carried out a new special operation against the Kurds in Iraqi territory. However, Ankara has not declared war on Iraq (as it did on Syria previously), stating that it is only targeting Kurdish militias. The Turkish Armed Forces periodically target sites in Iraq where the organization has camps, hideouts, command posts and arms dumps. The military is sanctioned for such cross-border operations by the Turkish parliament, which has been renewing the mandate for a year in recent years.

Turkey's actions were then condemned by the League of Arab States (LAS). They said the campaign violated Iraq's sovereignty and reflected Ankara's expansionist ambitions. Baghdad also condemned Ankara's actions. However, given Washington's "silence," there was no realistic way for the Iraqi

authorities to prevent Turkey's strikes. Washington did not impose any sanctions regime on Turkey for the special operation.

After the start of another special operation on April 18 this year, the first footage of it emerged from the press office of the Turkish Ministry of Defense. The aircraft bombed Kurdistan Workers' Party sites and targets in northern Iraq in the areas of Metina, Ava?in-Basyan and Zap. Earlier, special forces units of the Turkish ground troops had landed there. According to the website of the Ministry of Defense, Turkey launched Operation Claw-Lock to prevent terrorist attacks in northern Iraq and ensure its security. On April 19, the Turkish Ministry of Defense commented on the first days of the military special operation in Iraq, indicating that the Turkish army had eliminated some 30 PKK fighters in less than a day: "The targets identified in the first phase have been captured. Our operation is continuing successfully as planned. Areas are combed for terrorists. All hideouts and so-called "headquarters" of the militants, as well as the caves where they have been hiding, will be destroyed... The terrorists must realize that they have nowhere to run and must surrender. We are determined to remove the threat of terrorism from Turkey's agenda." Four Turkish soldiers have been wounded during the operation.

The only official reaction to the Turkish special operation in Iraq so far has been that the Iraqi Foreign Ministry summoned Ali Riza Güney, Turkish Ambassador to Baghdad on April 19 in connection with the actions of Turkish troops in the Arab republic and was handed a note of protest calling for "an immediate end to provocative actions against Iraq."

Besides, the Kiev regime has shown its grave concern about the declining interest of the Western public in the conflict in Ukraine because of Turkey's special operation in Iraq. "Without the fueling of interest in the Ukrainian crisis, we will lose relevance, and in many countries the domestic agenda and the global economic crisis, plus food and resource shortages, will win out," the Kiev-based online resource First concluded. And a poll conducted by Morning Consult, the largest US think tank, on reactions to Western economic pressure on Russia in a number of EU countries and Turkey over Moscow's special operation in Ukraine, confirms this. It turns out that those "in favor of anti-Russian sanctions, even if they lead to higher prices" are fewer everywhere than those who think first and foremost of themselves. In this regard, the media and psychological operations centers of the Ukrainian Armed Forces began to work more closely on new "information messages" to "keep Europe and America in an anti-Russian tone of mind."

It should be recalled that the history of Iraqi Kurdistan's autonomy dates back to 1970, and since the 1990s it has been taken under the "wing" by the US, which then needed a land bridgehead for the "Gulf War." In 2003, Iraqi peshmerga units helped Anglo-American forces overthrow the Ba'athist regime. However, even despite the "US protection" of the Kurds, Washington did not officially protest Ankara during Turkey's previous special operations against the Kurds living in Iraq, nor after the new special operation started on April 18. Nor were there any sanctions, either by the US or the "united West." Which is remarkable given that, by and large, Erdoğan's reason for attacking Iraqi Kurdistan is somewhat similar to that of Russia's special operation in Ukraine. At any rate, Ankara claims it wants to demilitarize Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants who have "crossed the red line." Isn't Moscow's officially stated aim of the special operation in Ukraine to similarly demilitarize and denazify the Kiev regime, which has established blatant terror against the Russian-speaking population of the country and its eastern regions, posing a direct threat to Russia, among others?

Turkey regularly "demilitarizes" Kurds not only in Syria but also in northern Iraq, where the PKK has

military bases and training camps. The area in question is Sinjar and the mountainous border with Turkey, where Ankara has already conducted its Claw-Eagle and Claw-Tiger special operations. However, no international sanctions regime has been imposed on Turkey by the West. Not in past years, not now.

Moreover, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, at a morning briefing on April 19, in his usual Russophobic manner, refuted journalists' assumptions that the missile and bombing attacks by the Turkish air force on members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party located in Iraq were military aggression. According to Blinken, Turkey acts in strict compliance with the rules-based world order, so at the moment, the US sees no reason to impose sanctions against the Turkish government, nor to isolate Turkey in any way on the international stage. The Secretary of State noted that the Turkish Air Force only strikes military targets, avoiding the bombing of civilian cities. However, Blinken said that the US had no knowledge of whether the strikes had actually taken place or the information about it was a Russian propaganda stunt. If this version is confirmed, Russia could face tougher sanctions and complete isolation. How about that?

Thus, once again, the US officially confirmed its blatantly Russophobic policy by abandoning its Kurdish "allies" to their fate (for the umpteenth time, by the way!). And by demonstrating blatant double standards in assessing international events, they have actually tried once again to defend their "international rules," according to which any aggression by NATO, or any NATO country (as, in particular, is happening today with Turkey's special operation in Iraq), is a good thing and will continue to be so.

It would therefore not be surprising if, instead of sanctions against Turkey, Washington were to actively support the proposal by Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) to nominate Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for the Nobel Peace Prize, which has already been announced by Turkey's [Hürriyet](#). Indeed, is Erdoğan less deserving of this Peace Prize than American President Obama, who has the blood of civilians in many Muslim countries on his hands and who has already "received" such a prize?

Alas, the world has long since changed. As has the world's attitude towards the US, which, together with its Easter-bunny-fearing president, has become an outright laughing stock and has lost all prestige.

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