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Turkey Announces Readiness for Iraq

If the US does nothing to fight Turkish Kurdish guerillas there

Turkish officials announced today that their country is now fully prepared to go into Iraq, if American, as well as Iraqi, forces do not combat Turkish Kurdish guerilla troops in the area. However, many analysts have stated that such a political and military move would force Turkey to be at odds with the United States. This decision comes amid growing pressure placed on Turkey to act according to the critical situation currently unfolding, after 15 soldiers, police officers and guards, had been killed in armed clashes with Kurdish guerilla troops in the southeastern part of Turkey in the past week. "The government is really in a bind. On the one hand, they don't want things to break down with the United States. On the other hand, the public is crying for action", Seyfi Tashan, director of the Foreign Policy Institute at Bilkent University in Ankara stated. Experts calmed the increasingly aggressive statements released by Turkish diplomats, in order to appease the anger of the public opinion and apply pressure on the US and Iraq to do something against the Turkish guerillas. Turkish diplomats had stated that they would take the matter into their own hands should US and Iraq do nothing about it. On the other hand, according to an American diplomat, who liked to keep his anonymity, US officials in Turkey and in Washington discussed the matter with Turkish representatives and military commanders in order to urge them to cooperate with the Washington administration in order to combat guerillas and not act alone. He added that the Turkish military department has had plans for fighting guerillas in the northern part of Iraq for a long time now and these include airstrikes on military bases, attacks carried by commando units and a larger-scale ground offensive. However, US diplomats, including Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, are against any military operations in northern Iraq, one of the stable areas in the country, without further prior joint discussions and consultations with US officials on the matter.