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## **US TRIES TO EASE IRAQ-TURKEY TENSIONS WHILE ABADI AND ERDOGAN SOUND OFF**

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ERBIL, Kurdistan Region □ US officials are urging the governments in Ankara and Baghdad to ease the current tensions between them over the deployment of Turkish troops in northern Iraq and focus instead on confronting the threat posed by Islamic State (ISIS) militants. But the US faces an uphill battle as the leaders of the two countries engaged in a war of words on Tuesday.

"We call on both governments to focus on their common enemy: ISIL," Matthew Allen, a Pentagon spokesperson, told CNN on Tuesday, using an alternative acronym for ISIS.

"It is imperative for all parties over the coming days and weeks to closely coordinate next steps to ensure unity of effort in our counter-ISIL fight," he added.

Baghdad and Ankara have been at loggerheads since December 2015 when Turkey sent additional troops to its training camp in Bashiqa to secure it from ISIS attacks. The issue recently resurfaced when Turkey began to make noise about participating in the military offensive to retake Mosul, leading the Iraqi parliament to seek to brand the Turkish presence as an occupation.

A spokesperson for Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said that Turkey's lack of respect for Iraq is creating a security threat in the region.

The recent escalation by Turkish officials is not justifiable, and has raised question marks over Turkey's intention in standing with Iraq in the war on terror, Saad Hadithi told Rudaw on Tuesday. Turkey does not respect the mutual interests of both neighbouring nations. This could lead to a security threat in the Kurdistan Region, Iraq and the wider region in general.

We have come to the belief that Turkey is not keen on resolving these issues or withdrawing its troops from Iraqi territory. We are now contacting powerful countries in the UN Security Council to

put pressure on Turkey to prevent them interfering in our internal affairs.

Hadithi said that every foreign nation providing military aid to Iraq are doing so with the full consent of the Iraqi government, but Turkish troops are in the country without request, consent or coordination with the Iraqi government, and this is what has caused the tensions between the two nations.

He accused Ankara of using rhetoric to cover the fact that it has no legal justification for its intervention in Iraqi affairs and stressed that Turkey cannot have any role in the Mosul liberation — neither military, on the ground, or operational.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, when addressing the 9th Eurasian Islamic Council in Istanbul on Tuesday, reiterated Turkey's claim that its forces were in Iraq at the request of Baghdad and said his country could not stand by and watch developments in its neighbouring countries. If Iraq and Syria are in trouble, it is Turkey's utmost responsibility to put all kinds of efforts into solving the problem and take measures.

He advised Abadi to know his limits, according to Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency.

Abadi responded on Twitter Tuesday evening, referring to Erdogan's address to the Turkish nation via video call in the midst of an attempted coup on July 15.

An unnamed Iraqi told CNN that Turkey recently stepped up its training efforts of the Sunni Hashd al-Watani militia and believes this may have generated renewed protest from Baghdad.

The troops are reportedly there as part of an "understanding" between Ankara and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), something US officials fear could further strain ties between Baghdad and Erbil at a time when their coordination is needed for the Mosul operation, which is widely anticipated to begin before the end of this month.

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Kaynak/Source: