
TURKEY'S FOREIGN MINISTER DUE IN IRAQ ON SUNDAY

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Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu will pay a comprehensive visit to Iraq over the weekend with multiple stops in Baghdad, Basra and Arbil where he will discuss all the aspects of bilateral relations and regional developments, private broadcaster CNN Türk reported on April 25.

Çavuşoğlu's visit comes as Turkey pressures Iraq to intensify its fight against the PKK on its territories and to cooperate with the Turkish military to this end in northern Iraq, where the illegal group has their main headquarters and training camps.

The Turkish minister will hold talks with Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali al-Hakim along with other high-level Iraqi officials in Baghdad. Turkey had pledged a \$5 billion credit for the reconstruction of Iraq.

His itinerary includes the southern town of Basra where Turkey's consulate-general is expected to be re-opened very soon.

Çavuşoğlu will also hold talks with the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Arbil where relations between Ankara and Arbil will be reviewed in detail after Turkey had strongly opposed a unilateral referendum for the independence of the KRG in September 2017.

The visit by the minister to the oil-rich country comes after the United States announced that it is ending an exception from unilateral sanctions for a number of countries importing oil from Iran, including Turkey. Reports suggest an increase in the volume of crude oil Turkey imports from Iraq in order to compensate for the Iranian product.

Turkey hits PKK positions in N Iraq

Turkish airstrikes on Thursday hit PKK targets in northern Iraq, according to the Defense Ministry.

The Turkish jets destroyed weapon positions, shelters and ammunition depots used by PKK militants in the Gara region, the ministry said on Twitter.

It has not given any information about the number of neutralized militants in the operation.

Turkish authorities often use the word neutralized in their statements to imply that the militants in question either surrendered or were killed or captured.

The PKK is listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the U.S. and the EU.

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