

INSTITUT
KURDE
DE PARIS

Information and liaison bulletin

N°273

DECEMBER 2007

*The publication of this Bulletin enjoys a subsidy
from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGCID)
and the Fonds d'action et de soutien pour l'intégration et la lutte contre les discriminations
(The Fund for action and support of integration and the struggle against discrimination)*

This bulletin is issued in French and English

**Price per issue : France: 6 € — Abroad : 7,5 €
Annual subscription (12 issues) France : 60 € — Elsewhere : 75 €**

**Monthly review
Directeur de la publication : Mohamad HASSAN**

**Numéro de la Commission Paritaire : 659 15 A.S.
ISBN 0761 1285**

INSTITUT KURDE, 106, rue La Fayette - 75010 PARIS

Tel. : 01-48 24 64 64 - Fax : 01-48 24 64 66


www.fikp.org

E-mail: bulletin@fikp.org

Contents :

- **THE PRESIDENT OF KURDISTAN, MASSUD BARZANI, REFUSES TO MEET CONDOLEEZA RICE IN IRAQ AS A PROTEST AGAINST THE TURKISH ARMY'S OPERATIONS IN IRAQI KURDISTAN**
- **KIRKUK: THE KURDISTAN PARLIAMENT ACCEPTS UNO'S PROPOSAL TO POSTPONE THE REFERENDUM ON THE CITY'S STATUS FOR SIX MONTHS**
- **BERLIN: THE GERMAN AUTHORITIES FREE, AHEAD OF TIME, THE ASSASSINS OF SADEGH SHARAFKANDI AND THREE OF HIS COMPANIONS OF THE KURDISTAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF IRAN**
- **ANKARA: THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT REJECTS THE PROVISIONAL MEASURES TO SUSPEND ALL PUBLIC ACTIVITY DEMANDED BY THE PROSECUTION AGAINST THE PRO-KURDISH DTP WHICH IS THREATENED WITH BANNING**
- **THE LOWEST DEATH ROLL IN IRAQ SINCE FEBRUARY 2006: 568 IRAQIS KILLED IN DECEMBER**
- **DAMASCUS: THE SYRIAN LEAGUE FOR THE DEFENCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS CONDEMNS THE TRIALS AND SENTENCES OF KURDS BY THE HIGH COURT OF STATE SECURITY, A SPECIAL EMERGENCY COURT**
- **TURKEY-E.U.: PARIS SUCCEEDS IN HAVING THE WORD "ACCESSION" REMOVED FROM A EUROPEAN COMMUNIQUÉ ON THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH TURKEY**
- **THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR CRISIS: RUSSIA STARTS DELIVERING FUEL WHILE THE US INTELLIGENCE REVEALS, FOR THE FIRST TIME, THAT IRAN HAD SECRET PLANS EVEN BEFORE 2003**
- **AS WELL AS ...**

**THE PRESIDENT OF KURDISTAN, MASSUD BARZANI,
REFUSES TO MEET CONDOLEEZA RICE IN IRAQ AS A
PROTEST AGAINST THE TURKISH ARMY'S OPERATIONS
IN IRAQI KURDISTAN**

 N 26 December, the Turkish Armed Forces confirmed that they had carried out a new air raid against PKK positions in Iraqi Kurdistan. In a communiqué published on its Internet site, the Turkish General

Staff declared that it had "*struck objectives relating to that group during a targeted operation carried out efficiently in the morning of 26 December*", without giving any details about possible victims. The Turkish Army also

launched a new operation in Turkish Kurdistan. Ground units, Cobra helicopter gunships and Sikorsky helicopter transports were involved in this operation, carried out in the mountainous ranges of Kupeli and Gabar, in Sirnak Province. On 25 December the Turkish General Staff announced that its troops had killed 11 Kurdish PKK fighters and captured two others

in 48 hours in the Sirnak mountains. This is the third air strike against the PKK that the Turkish Army has confirmed since 16 December, in addition to a "small scale" land operation. According to the Turkish press, the air operation was followed, on 18 December by a land incursion of limited scale — 500 to 700 commandos. On 25 December the Turkish Army announced that 150 to 175 Kurdish fighters had been killed during the 16 December strikes, which mainly targeted the Qandil massif, a mountainous region of Iraqi Kurdistan where several hundreds of PKK fighters are located. According to the Turkish General Staff, some 200 targets were destroyed in the course of this raid, including 16 command, training and logistic bases, 82 caches, ten anti-aircraft batteries as well as 14 PKK munition dumps. In a previous communiqué, on 16 December, the Turkish Army had indicated that some air raids lasting three hours and, followed by artillery fire, had targeted Qandil PKK bases.

Various sources from the Kurdish authorities indicated that bridges, houses and even a school had been destroyed in about a dozen villages of Iraqi Kurdistan. Some fami-

lies had fled their homes to seek refuge in nearby villages or caves, according to these officials. For its part, the PKK reported seven deaths — two civilians and five fighters. According to the private Turkish TV channel *NTV*, about fifty planes had taken part in these raids, while *CNN-Turk*, on 16 December, spoke of about twenty planes. On 1 December last, the Turkish Army had carried out similar operations South-East of the border locality of Cukurca. These raids and shellings had not, however, been immediately confirmed by the Iraqi, Kurdish and American authorities. The 5 November last, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan had met US President George W. Bush at the White House. The two leaders had committed themselves to exchanging more information on the PKK, following the adoption by the Turkish Parliament of a resolution in favour of cross-border interventions. At the end of a five-hour meeting on 28 December, the National Security Council (MGK), which includes the country's highest civilian and military officials, welcomed the results of the 16 December operations against the PKK in Kurdish territory in Iraq and stressed that "the areas of civilian habita-

tion had not experienced any damage". "It has been shown that, in addition to heavy losses inflicted on the terrorist organization, its supply and communications systems had, to a large extent, been destroyed", stated this body in a communiqué published on its Internet site. In his monthly television message to the nation, the Turkish Prime Minister declared, on 30 December, that Ankara would continue to "use with determination the political, military, social and economic means" to fight the PKK.

Following the Turkish Army's operations, the White House expressed its anxiety at the danger of an escalation. Scott Stanzel, a White House spokesman, indicated that the US authorities have "clearly indicated to the Turkish government that anything that could lead to an escalation or to civilian losses was worrying". However, the US, that controls Iraqi air space, supplied Turkey with help for these air raids into Iraqi Kurdistan. The head of the Turkish Armed Forces General Staff, General Yasar Buyukanit, declared on the *Kanal D* TV channel that the US forces had supplied certain information but "what is important is that, last night, the United States opened the air space of

Northern Iraq (Kurdistan). (...) *In doing this, the United States approved the operation*". On 19 December, the Pentagon's spokesman, Geoff Morrell, pointed out that Turkey had warned the US that it was going to launch an air raid on PKK positions in Iraqi Kurdistan 16 December, describing this "coordination" as "adequate". "We received notification before the bombardment", he declared during a press conference, confirming, for the first time, that the Pentagon had been informed of the Turkish plans. "This was communicated to us via the Ankara coordination centre, which was opened a few months ago, and in which Turkish and American military personnel work together to share information", specified, refusing to say whether the United States had supplied information in the targets aimed at by Ankara. On 2 December, the Turkish journalist, Rusen Cakir, an expert on the PKK, had considered on the NTV channel that "the Americans and the Iraqis understand that Turkey is going to act in one way or another. So they have done what is needed to limit the damage".

The incursion into Iraqi Kurdistan, the only province spared the violence current in Iraq, was announced at the moment of Mrs. Condoleezza

Rice's visit to Iraq. She went first of all to Kirkuk, then to Baghdad, where she met the Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki. The US Secretary of State who was making a one-day visit to Iraq on 19 December, refused any direct comment on the Turkish incursion during a press conference with her Iraqi opposite number, Hoshyar Zebari, organised after a meeting with President Jalal Talabani in Baghdad. However, she stressed that the United States, Turkey and Iraq had "a common interest in stopping the activities of the PKK, who threaten the stability of the North". "This is a Turkish decision. We have clearly expressed our government's anxieties to the Turkish government regarding an action that could lead to civilian victims or destabilise the North", declared Mrs. Rice. Mr. Zebari judged the Turkish operations "unacceptable". To mark his disapproval of American support of Turkey, the Kurdish President, Massud Barzani, cancelled a planned meeting with Mrs. Rice in Baghdad.

The Iraqi government and Parliament condemned the strikes as an attack on the country's sovereignty and were moved by the civilian victims thus caused. On 16 December, Iraq summoned the Turkish Ambassador in

Baghdad to demand the ending of these Turkish Army operations in Iraqi Kurdistan, stating that these operations could affect the "friendly relations" between the two countries. On 17 December, the Iraqi Parliament indicated, in a declaration that "Turkish planes have bombed Iraqi villages in Kurdistan, near the Turkish border, causing many innocent civilian victims (...) We firmly condemn this violation of Iraq's sovereignty and of the principle of neighbourly relations". The Iraqi Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki, for his part, ordered that a committee be created to come to the help of the Kurdish families that had been obliged to flee their villages after the recent Turkish strikes. "Mr. Maliki has ordered the creation of a committee that is due to visit the displaced families (in Kurdistan). They will each receive 1 million dinars", this is about 830 dollars, stated a communiqué on 30 December from the Prime Minister's press service. The UN High Commission for Refugees (HCR) stated on 18 December that over 300 families (about 1,800 persons) had fled their homes after some intensive Turkish shelling of Iraqi Kurdistan. Some villages had to flee, sometimes barefooted in the snow, from their homes in the Qandil Mountains. "We were

sleeping when the Turkish planes bombed our village (...) We had to leave the house as we were suffocated by the dust I...) Before it was Saddam who destroyed our homes, now it's the Turks (...) We have to leave without knowing what we had done wrong", declared a 75-year-old farmer from Qalatu-ga village. Another villager said he did not understand why the Turkish air force targeted his school, "razed to the ground" by the strikes. The building of this school, begun in 2004, was nearly finished and was due to be officially opened shortly.

In a report published 19 December, the British think tank, Chatham House, estimated that any military operation aimed at dislodging the PKK was "probably in vain" and Ankara would "probably never" defeat the PKK. The PKK is "a very motivated force that enjoys a local support and the protection offered it by the inaccessible terrain of the border regions", pointed out this London based centre. Chatham House also imputes the Iraqi government's "reluctance" to fight the PKK to the "military risks this would involve". "Even if it succeeded in chasing them out of the mountains, this could leave the door open to radical Islamists to transform the region into a stronghold in the style of


Tora Bora", the former Taliban hideout in Afghanistan, adds the report. "The Kurds are enjoying a political renaissance", Chatham House further stressed.

Conscious that armed struggle will not be enough, the Turkish government has announced that it is working on already existing amnesty law for "repentant rebels" to widen its scope. Projects for raising the standard of living of the Kurdish population, mainly by encouragements to invest and by subsidies, are also being studied. The Head of the General Staff, General Yasar Buyukanit, had stressed last May the fighting the Kurdish fighters was not just limited to his forces. "The struggle against terrorism does not only cover military measures but economic, cultural and social measures", he had declared in an attempt to mobilise the government, accused of "lethargy" on the military and political fronts. In his column

in *Today's Zaman*, Dogu Ergil, a subtle connoisseur of Turkish politics pointed out: "Mr. Erdogan seems to have understood that unless the Kurdish conflict is resolved, neither the political stability of the country nor the future of his party can be ensured".

Turkish Kurdistan is the poorest zone in Turkey, a country that is applying to join the European Union. Millions of Kurds have been driven from their villages or have had to flee the fighting to emigrate towards the big cities. Ten years ago, Diyarbakir, the politico-cultural capital, had 350,000 inhabitants. Today it has almost one and a half million, amongst which a very large number of families live below the poverty line. Turkey, which has the second largest Army in NATO after that of the United States (515,000 men) has been massing 100,000 men on the 380 Km-long-border since April 2007.

KIRKUK: THE KURDISTAN PARLIAMENT ACCEPTS UNO'S PROPOSAL TO POSTPONE THE REFERENDUM ON THE CITY'S STATUS FOR SIX MONTHS

 ON 26 December, the Parliament of Iraqi Kurdistan accepted the UN proposal to postpone for six months a referendum on the Kirkuk issue, initially

planned for the end of the year. "The Parliament of Kurdistan has accepted by a majority, the proposal of the UN representative in Iraq, Staffan de Mistura, to postpone the referendum

on Kirkuk for six months", announced the Speaker of the Kurdish Parliament, Adnan Mufti. The six months delay should be used to set up, in Kirkuk and elsewhere in the country, machinery for resettling populations displaced in the context of manipulating provincial borders by the former regime. Saddam Hussein's policy of forced Arabisation forced tens of thousands of Kurds into exile and settled in their place populations brought from other regions of Iraq. Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution stipulates that a referendum must take place before 31 December 2007 to decide whether Kirkuk is to pass under the authority of the Kurdistan regional government. The Kurds have made the holding of this referendum a clear condition of their support for the Shiite-dominated Baghdad government, in office since the passing of the Constitution in 2005.

The Kurdistan regional government had agreed to the UN proposal on one of the thorniest issues in Iraq. On 17 December, the Prime Minister of Kurdistan, Nechirvan Barzani, announced that his government had accepted the postponement proposed by the United Nations. *"The application of Article 140 has*

been delayed for technical reasons(...) The problem is not to postpone this application but to extend the period for applying this article (...) The region's government is in favour of this extension", he had affirmed following a meeting at Najaf with the most influential religious leader of the Iraqi Shiites, Ayatollah Ali Sistani. The Parliament of Kurdistan had, on the same day, heard Staffan de Mistura defend his plan. *"Your reaction should be dictated by reason and not by passion (...)* Otherwise everyone will suffer the consequences", Mr. de Mistura had maintained. A communiqué published on 17 December by the UN aid mission for Iraq (UNAMI) pointed out the necessity of a "technical delay" and welcomed *"the general agreement"* received from the Iraqi and Kurdish authorities. The UN communiqué points out that it has been *"indicated at UNO that the most appropriate next stage is to start in January 2008, and for six months, a process of easing the application of Article 140"*. To support the UN envoy in Iraq, the US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, visited Kirkuk on 18 December where the American Foreign Minister met representatives of the Kurdish, Sunni and Shiite Arab, Christian and Turcoman communities.

Moreover, the Kurdish and Arab parties of the Kirkuk region reached an agreement on 3 December on a power sharing formula. The President of the Kirkuk regional Council, Rizgar Ali, of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) welcomed this agreement before the press *"as a positive stage towards the development of Kirkuk and towards cooperation in decision-making and partnership"*. According to an Arab member of the provincial council, Rakan Said al-Juburi, the agreement announced gives his community a better representation in the bodies that will be set up following fresh local elections. *"For the first time, the duties of assistant governor and of Chief assistant of the judiciary will be attributed to us"*, he welcomed. *"Responsibilities will be distributed equally with up to 32% each to the Kurds, Arabs and Turcomen. The remaining 4% will be attributed to the minorities, like the Assyrians, Chaldeans and Armenians"*, he added. The 41-member regional council is dominated by the two Kurdish parties (Massud Barzani's KDP and Jalal Talabani's PUK) with 26 seats. The Arab parties have six seats and the Turcomen nine. The Arab organisations have been boycotting the regional organisation for several months.

BERLIN: THE GERMAN AUTHORITIES FREE, AHEAD OF TIME, THE ASSASSINS OF SADEGH SHARAFKANDI AND THREE OF HIS COMPANIONS OF THE KURDISTAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF IRAN

KAZEN Darabi, sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of several Iranian Kurdish leaders in Berlin in 1992, and considered by the Germans as an Iranian secret agent, was freed ahead of time on 10 December and expelled to Iran from Frankfurt Airport. He has spent fifteen years in prison. The *Mykonos* trial, from the name of the Berlin restaurant where the killings took place, had damaged German-Iranian relations for a long time — and, more widely, the E.U.'s relations with Teheran.

Kazam Darabi, today 48 years of age, and his Lebanese accomplice, Abbas Rhayel, 39 years, had been sentenced for life in April 1997 for the murders, in a Berlin restaurant on 17 September 1992, of the chief of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), Sadegh Sharafkandi and three of his companions. They had come to Berlin specially to take part in a meeting of the Socialist International. Kazam Darabi was the head of the commando and Abbas Rhayel the one who

fired the fatal shots. Two other Lebanese who had also been found guilty, Mohammed Atris, who served a five years and three months in jail and Yussef Amin, who was expelled to the Lebanon in 1999 after serving more than half his 11-year sentences. In the verdict, Iran was directly implicated “at the highest level of the State”, that is openly accused of terrorism, a world first. The sentence, following on three years of hearings, highlighted by evidence by the former Iranian President in exile, Abdolhasan Banisadr, who had accused Iran of being a terrorist state. There followed a diplomatic crisis of a year. Iran recalled its ambassadors to Europe, the E.U. recalled theirs from Teheran.

In October, the German authorities had announced, unexpectedly, their intention of shortening the sentences of these two men and expelling them, while Iran had been trying for several years past, to secure Kazem Darabi's release. At the time Germany had denied any political bargaining, arguing the classical

process, in Germany, that allows the release, after at least 15 years detention, of prisoners sentenced for life. However, a little earlier in the year the legal authorities had excluded the likelihood of Kazem Darabi being rapidly freed. They had argued the “*particularly heavy*” load of the crime committed. The prisoner was considered by Israel a precious bargaining counter for gaining information about the fate the Israeli pilot Ron Arad, whose plane had been shot down over South Lebanon in 1986. That State had, indeed, tried to put pressure on Chancellor Angela Merkel this autumn, to prevent the announced release of the two prisoners. The name of Darabi was also raised as a bargaining counter when Germany was seeking to secure the release of a German tourist, Donald Klein, imprisoned in Iran and sentenced for illegal entry into Iranian territorial waters. The German was finally released in March, after 15 months detention.

Thus Germany has closed a painful chapter in Irano-German relations. A spokesman for the Berlin regional Ministry of the Interior announced his expulsion when Kazem Darabi had

already left German airspace early in the evening. His Lebanese accomplice, Abbas Rhayad, Lebanese Hezbollah activist, was expelled as far back as 6 December to an unspecified destination. The German Federal Prosecutor's Office, the competent authority for terrorist cases, repeated "there is no connection (between the expulsion of

Kazem Darabi and Abbas Rhayad) *an other cases*". The former lawyer of the private parties associated with the prosecution judged these early releases "*incomprehensible*". Considering them more the consequence of "*political pressures*" and will be "*interpreted by Iran not as a sign of generosity but as a sign of the West's weakness*".

Constitutional Court in November by the Prosecutor of the Court of Appeals. The prosecutor recommended banning the DTP on the grounds that it could be "*a source of activities prejudicial to the independence of the State and its indivisible unity*". The proceedings started against the DTP come at a time when Turkey has been waging military operations, since 16 December, against Kurdish fighters entrenched in Iraqi Kurdistan.

ANKARA: THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT REJECTS THE PROVISIONAL MEASURES TO SUSPEND ALL PUBLIC ACTIVITY DEMANDED BY THE PROSECUTION AGAINST THE PRO-KURDISH DTP WHICH IS THREATENED WITH BANNING

ON 27 December, the Constitutional Court rejected demands by the Public Prosecutor for restricting the activity of the Party for a Democratic Society (DTP – pro-Kurdish), which is being prosecuted and threatened with banning because of alleged links with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The Court considered that the conditions required for taking such measures against the DTP for the duration of its trial did not exist. The DTP welcomed this decision but stressed by the Court, but stressed that it was still being threatened with being closed down, "*This is a positive decision even if it does not constitute any sign about the*

root of the case", stated the DTP Member of parliament Selahattin Demirtas. "*The demands of the Public Prosecutor were illegal and the Court applied the law*".

The Public Prosecutor had called for the banning of the DTP, that holds 20 of the 550 seats in the Parliament, from putting forward candidates at elections, of taking part in polls on the lists of other parties or as independent candidates. He had also demanded the freezing of any financial aids the party might enjoys well as on the recruiting of new members. These demands for these measures of restraint were included in the charge sheet sent to the

Furthermore, on 17 December, in Ankara, the Turkish police took in for questioning the President of the DTP, accusing him of having "*used false documents to avoid military service*". Nurettin Demirtas, elected in November to the Presidency of the DTP, was arrested at about 7.30 p.m. (5.30 p.m. GMT) at Ankara's Esenboga Airport, on his return from a visit to Germany. He was led to a forensic medicine Institute, a procedure prior to being placed in detention. According the CNN-Turk television channel, Mr. Demirtas, 35 years of age, is being sued with 183 other people for having avoided military service by making "*use of false report of unfitness*" and faces two to five years' jail.

THE LOWEST DEATH ROLL IN IRAQ SINCE FEBRUARY 2006: 568 IRAQIS KILLED IN DECEMBER

AT least 568 Iraqis were killed in December in attacks and assassinations — the lowest figure since February 2006, according to figures by the Ministries of Defence, the Interior and Health. According to this assessment, 480 civilians, 24 soldiers and 64 police were killed in December, making a total of 568 people. In all, 937 people were injured in December, according to the figures of the Iraqi Ministries: 730 civilians, 51 troops and 156 police. On the other hand, 251 “terrorists” were killed and 1,146 were arrested according to the same assessment. The Sunni Arab militia mobilised by the US Army against al-Qaida, some dozens of whom have been killed in attacks in the last few weeks, are counted amongst the civilians. At least 637 people were killed in February 2006, a month marked by the bomb attack on the Shiite Mausoleum of Samarra (125 Km North of Baghdad), which had unleashed a wave of sectarian violence in Iraq, essentially between the Shiite and Sunni communities. The peak of this violence was reached in January 2007, with 1,992 deaths

recorded by the three Ministries. In November 2007, 606 Iraqis were killed, compared with 887 in October and 840 in September. Alongside this drop, the number of US troops killed in Iraq has also been diminishing regularly since last May.

Iraq has been experiencing a relative improvement in security since the end of the summer. This is particularly notable in Baghdad, where the bomb attacks, kidnappings, executions and clashes between armed groups have sharply diminished. According to a recent report by the US Administration, attacks have dropped by 62% throughout the country since June. The US and Iraqi authorities see here proof of the success of a vast offensive launched in February 2007 in the capital and the rest of the country. This improvement is also the result of the mobilisation of Sunni Arab militia against al-Qaida, and the truce decreed by Moqtada Sadr’s powerful Shiite militia, the Mahdi’s Army.

Anxious to curb the violence, the US General Staff has provided its active support for

the creation of “concerned local citizens” (CLC). On 3 December, the Iraqi government ordered the Ministry of the Interior to undertake the command of 12,000 “concerned local citizens” in the Baghdad region and to begin paying them. The US Army has revealed the fact that it was forming, arming and paying some 60,000 “concerned” Iraqi citizens throughout the country, mainly Sunni Arabs, to control the violence at local level. Credited with having contributed to reducing the level of violence, the some 200 CLC groups already formed are derived from tribal militia that appeared last year in the Western region of Anbar. To struggle against al-Qaida’s blind massacres, the Sunni tribal Sheikhs of the province had undertaken to set up groups of young militia, made responsible for policing the areas of their tribal influence.

Since mid-November, three large-scale bomb attacks have taken place in the capital, causing at least 36 deaths. The rest of the country has not been spared. On 8 December a suicide bomber blew up his car bomb against a police building in Baiji (Northern Iraq), killing at least six policemen and wounding sixteen others.

The day before, at Moq-dadiyah (North) a woman had set off the explosive belt she was wearing in the building used by a militia fighting against al-Qaida in Iraq, causing 16 deaths and 27 injured. On 12 December, three car bomb attacks committed a few minutes apart caused 40 deaths and dozens of injured in Amara, which is mainly Shiite in population. This triple attack is the bloodiest in Iraq for several months and occurred in a region where struggles for influence between factions have intensified since the gradual withdrawal of British forces. The bombs exploded in one of the main thoroughfares of Amara, the capital of Maissan Province, located some 365 Km South of Baghdad, mainly inhabited by Marshland Arabs. Most of the victims were killed or injured by the second and third bombs that exploded as a crowd of onlookers had gathered in front of a parking area, where the explosion had taken place.

According to figures published on 5 December by the Iraqi Red Crescent, almost 110,000 displaced persons were able to return to their homes in Iraq in October. In all, the number of people displaced inside Iraqi territory has dropped from 2.3 to 2.19

million. The Red Crescent also estimate that slightly over 25,000 Iraqis refugees have returned from Syria since 15 September. According to reports coming from the principal countries offering them asylum, namely Syria and Lebanon, the situation there is becoming daily more and more precarious for the refugees. According to the Human Rights Defence group, Human Rights Watch (HRW), the Lebanese authorities have begun to put pressure on the 50,000 Iraqi refugees living there. According to Bill Frelick, of HRW, those refugees who do not have valid visas are too often just thrown into jail until they agree to leave the Lebanon. Syria is becoming less and less hospitable and the conditions for sur-

vival are constantly deteriorating.

On the other hand, on 10 December, Iraq asked the UN Security Council to extend for a further year, the mandate of the US-led coalition, specifying that this was the last extension and that it could, indeed be shortened. US troops will remain on Iraqi soil after 2008, but Baghdad wants to amend the terms of their mission. Since the beginning of the year attacks have dropped by 55%, following the deployment of 30,000 additional troops since mid-June. The increasing recourse to "*concerned local citizens*" backed by US troops, mostly organised by Sunni tribal Chiefs, is said to have born fruit, despite initial criticisms.

DAMASCUS: THE SYRIAN LEAGUE FOR THE DEFENCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS CONDEMNS THE TRIALS AND SENTENCES OF KURDS BY THE HIGH COURT OF STATE SECURITY, A SPECIAL EMERGENCY COURT

IN 16 December, the Syrian police dispersed a demonstration of several dozens of Kurds before the High Court of State Security, a special emergency court. The demonstrators, coming out in response to a call from three Kurdish parties (banned in Syria) wished "*to protest against the decision*

of the authorities to put five Kurds on trial before this court", pointed out the Syrian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LSDDH). Some demonstrators were knocked about and beaten with sticks by the police then forced into trucks that took them out of Damascus, where they were released.

Furthermore, the same court sentenced four Kurdish detainees to imprisonment. Abed Salhab, Mohammad Anas Saleh, and Radwan Sheikh Mohammad, all three accused of “being members of an organisation aiming at altering the economic and social status of the State”, were respectively sentenced to ten, five and four years imprisonment, the LSDDH indicated. Rami Sayed was sentenced to four years detention for “having spread false information aimed at weakening the nation”.

The LSDDH expressed its “profound anxiety” at the sentences passed and denounced the special courts, that “violate the essential freedoms guaran-

teed by the Syrian Constitution and Human Rights treaties”. It called for “the immediate freeing of all political detainees”.

On 15 December, US President George W. Bush called for the immediate freeing of dozens of the regime’s opponents arrested in recent days. “The Syrian regime continues to detain hundreds of prisoners of opinion and has arrested over thirty members of the National Council in recent days”, declared Mr. Bush, referring to the Council recently set up around the “Damascus declaration”, a call for democratic change in Syria. “All these detainees must be freed immediately”, Mr. Bush stressed in his communiqué.

he says, cannot imagine the future of Europe in the next 20 years without also thinking about the place it would leave for Turkey. However, the group’s mandate makes no direct reference to the reply needed regarding Turkey’s candidacy, nor to Europe’s borders — but the “wise men” will have to begin by assuring the stability of “the European region in a broad sense”.

For his part, on 12 December the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, considered that France could not block Turkey’s candidacy to the European Union, even if Paris succeeded in having the word “accession” removed from the European communiqué on the Turkey-E.U. negotiations, On France’s insistence, the E.U. Foreign Ministers avoided using the words membership or accession in their communiqué about Turkey of 10 December. Thus the document evokes the holding, before the end of the month, of “inter-governmental conferences” and not of “conferences on membership” to open two chapters of negotiations. “If France believes it can prevent Turkey’s accession with the support of some countries, it is mistaken”, declared Mr. Erdogan during a reception

TURKEY-E.U.: PARIS SUCCEEDS IN HAVING THE WORD “ACCESSION” REMOVED FROM A EUROPEAN COMMUNIQUÉ ON THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH TURKEY

ON 14 December, the former Spanish Prime Minister, Felipe Gonzalez, a former opponent of Turkey’s joining the European Union was chosen to preside the “think tank” desired by Nicolas Sarkozy to consider the future of Europe. The mandate of the group, which is due to make its report in 2010, is to imagine the face of Europe in the perspective of 2020-2030, and

does not specifically mention Turkey. Nicolas Sarkozy had announced during the election campaign that he would stop the negotiations with Turkey if elected. He has since moderated his stand by accepting to open talks on those chapters that do not directly lead to membership. He has, however, conditioned the pursuit of these negotiations to the setting up of a group of “wise men” who, so

by an Ankara businessman in Ankara, attended by Ambassadors of European Union countries. *“Because Turkey remains and will continue to remain decided to advance on the road to the E.U.”*, added the Prime Minister. In these uncharacteristically sharp terms, Mr Erdogan accuses Mr. Sarkozy of sending messages in different tones depending on whether he addresses them to Turkey or elsewhere. In his view, the E.U. cannot change the rules of the game at half time, — an allusion to efforts by Sarkozy to persuade Turkey to opt for a *“privileged partnership”* with the E.U. and to renounce real membership.

The French President has accepted that discussions continue, but not on chapters of the negotiations that automatically imply membership, such as entry into the euro zone, a position that is, indeed, close to that displayed by Angela Merkel’s entourage. Paris will, therefore, approve the opening of two new chapters at the end of December — on consumer protection and trans-European networks — which will be added to the five already opened. The French government is ready to amend the French Constitution to suppress the obligation of a refer-

endum before the admission of any new countries, such as Macedonia or Serbia — a risky procedure introduced by Mr. Chirac to defuse the Turkish issue.

Furthermore Turkey has been under strong pressure from the E.U. to amend or suppress Article 301 of its Penal Code, which allows judges to try people for *“insulting Turkish identity”* and, in particular, to punish statements about the Armenian genocide of 1915. Some Turkish officials, quoted off the record by Reuters on 7 December, state that Turkey will amend this controversial article of its Penal Code for freedom of expression — when the E.U. unblocks negotiations for membership with Turkey. Article 301 allows the trial of

people having *“insulted Turkish identity”* and, in particular, punishes any statements about the Armenian genocide of 1915. *“There is a political will to changer article 301, which has been decided, but the methods and time table depend on certain on certain measures by the E.U.”*, declared a high-ranking official, off the record. The E.U. is also calling for the rights of religious minorities in Turkey, such as making more flexible the restrictions on the property of non-Moslems, like the Greek Orthodox community. The European summit of December 2006 froze eight of the 35 chapters of negotiation (the most important ones) so long as Turkey refused to open its ports and airports to ships and planes coming from Cyprus.

THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR CRISIS: RUSSIA STARTS DELIVERING FUEL WHILE THE US INTELLIGENCE REVEALS, FOR THE FIRST TIME, THAT IRAN HAD SECRET PLANS EVEN BEFORE 2003

IN 30 December the Iranian Foreign Minister announced that the first Iranian nuclear power station would start producing electricity in the summer of 2008. Manushehr Mottaki declared that the Russians, who had helped built the Bushehr (South) light water reactor, would have finished

delivering nuclear fuel by the summer, which would allow starting the power station. *“The Bushehr power station will start up at 50% capacity next summer”*, declared Mottaki, according to the IRNA press agency. *The total capacity of the site is 1,000 MW”*.

After several months delay,

Russia began its deliveries of fuel mid-December and a second delivery arrived on 28 December. In all, 82 tonnes are due to be delivered according to the Iranian authorities. Moscow had officially explained the delay on the procedure by delays in payment but many observers have suggested that Russia was annoyed that the Iranians were not assuring the international community in a clearer manner that their nuclear programme was, indeed, purely civilian. The use of fuel is due to be sent back to Russia, which helped reassure the international community that it would not be retreated to extract plutonium for military use. The spokesperson of the Russian company Atomstroieksport, Irina Essipova, had pointed out on 20 December that the *Bushehr* power station "would not be started up before the end of 2008". Russia, which took over the building of the plant from the German Siemens company, made two deliveries of fuel to Bushehr in the last two weeks. These deliveries are due to end next February. "Six after the end of fuel delivery we will begin testing with this fuel. When the tests have been successfully completed we will be able to start up the plant", the Russian builder's spokesper-

son had explained, adding: "I cannot say how long the testing of the fuel will last". Mr. Mottaki, however, indicated "delivery will be complete with the sending of eight shipments".

After the first delivery of fuel, Moscow called on Iran to "stop its uranium enrichment work" pointing out that the supply of fuel to Bushehr "was ensured for the rest of its working life". Iran replied by stating that it was continuing its uranium enrichment, against the wishes of the international community, so as to supply its future power station at Darkhoyan (South). The Iranian Minister of Fuel and Power, Parviz Fattah, stated on 30 December that Iran had begun building the Darkhoyan power station in Darkhoyan, in the province of Khuzistan (South-West Iran).

In a report published on 3 December, the US Intelligence service stated that Iran had, in fact, stopped its nuclear arms plans in 2003 and admitted that it did not know its current plans, at the risk of against discrediting George W. Bush's discourse on the threat of weapons of mass destruction. "We judge, with a high degree of confidence, that Teheran stopped its nuclear arms programme in the autumn of 2003", according to the Intelligence services, who think that Iran does not have

any nuclear weapons at present. On the other hand, 16 other intelligence services indicated that Iran apparently intends to maintain the nuclear arms option and might be able to produce enough highly enriched uranium to make an atom bomb between 2010 and 2015. This agency reveals for the first time that Iran did indeed have secret plans before 2003 and also stresses that Iran continues to have activities in other possible nuclear activities such as enrichment. The Democrat opposition to Bush has based itself on this report to demand a "new policy towards Iran", in the terms of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, while the head of the Democratic majority in the Senate, Harry Reid, called for a "diplomatic surge of energy". Some weeks after President Bush had brandished the spectre of a "nuclear holocaust" or a Third World War if Iran had the bomb, the Bush Administration is being pushed onto the defensive by unfavourable comparisons with the Iraqi precedent, when he had invoked the danger of Saddam Hussein's weapons mass destruction.

Uranium enrichment, that Iran refuses to suspend despite two series of international sanctions and the dan-

ger of a third, is intended to produce fuel for its future civilian power stations, the Islamic regime insists. However, enriched to over 10%, uranium can provide material for a bomb. The note has appeared at a time when the six powers taking part in the negotiations over Iranian

nuclear plans (France, Germany, Russia China the United Kingdom and the United States) are discussing a third resolution strengthening sanctions against Iran to get it to suspend its suspected nuclear activities — especially the enrichment of uranium.

gas were killed and five were wounded when terrorists attacked their control post" in a shoot out that lasted over two hours, and that three "terrorists" were killed. Some peshmerga units have been sent to the Karatappa region, where some communities of Shiite Kurds are settled, while Diyala Province is the scene of an American offensive against the Iraqi emulators of al-Qaida.

AS WELL AS ...

• **THE KURDISH DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER HOPES FOR A STRATEGIC ALLIANCE BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND KURDISTAN.** On 11 December, the Deputy Prime Minister, Omar Fatah, indicated that the government of Kurdistan hoped to sign a separate agreement with the United States organising a long-term American military presence on its territory. "A strategic agreement between Kurdistan and the United States would satisfy us", he insisted in a statement to the press at Irbil.

Returning from a visit to the United States, he was commenting on the signing of an agreement between Washington and the Baghdad central government to maintain US

troops in Iraq on the expiry of the UN mandate at the end of 2008. "We are satisfied with this agreement between Washington and Baghdad (...) the Kurdish leadership has tried to have the same thing several times" the Deputy Prime Minister continued. "We are not in favour of a rapid withdrawal of American troops. We want these troops to remain until the establishment of a democratic and federal Iraq", Mr. Fatah insisted.

Eight members of the Kurdish security forces, the peshmergas, were killed on 16 December in an attack on a control post near the town of Karatappa, in the neighbouring province of Diyala. Jabar Yawar, Commander of the Peshmergas who ensure security in Iraqi Kurdistan made the point that "eight peshmer-

• **IRAN: TWO KURDISH FEMINISTS, HAVING LAUNCHED A CAMPAIGN AGAINST DISCRIMINATORY LAWS AGAINST WOMEN, ARE ARRESTED BY THE IRANIAN AUTHORITIES.** An Iranian judge has accused two feminist activists of having conducted "terrorist activities" in Sanandaj, provincial capital of Kurdistan Province, according to a report dated 16 December by the official news agency IRNA. Ronak Safarzadeh and Hana Abdi "have been arrested for action contrary to national security by taking part in recent bomb attacks in Sanandaj and for being members of the PEJAK Group", declared the judge responsible for the case. According to him "the counter-revolutionary groups use civic organisations to carry out their terrorist actions". The two young women were

among the feminist groups that, several months ago, launched a campaign to collect a million signatures to alter laws that discriminated against women. The legal official added *"people have been arrested in Teheran for having carried out actions in favour of Pejak under cover of the campaign for a million women's signatures"*. Some international organisations for the defence of human rights have protested against the arrest of these feminist activists, particularly Ronak Safarzadeh and Hana Abdi.

PEJAK, an acronym for the Party for a free life in Kurdistan, is linked to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). It wages an armed struggle against the Iranian regime. The Province of Kurdistan and the neighbouring province of Western Azerbaijan are the scene of sporadic clashes attributed by the authorities to *"Kurdish separatist groups"*. The forces of the Foreign Ministry of Information announced, on 25 November, that it had arrested 11 members of Pejak, accused, amongst other things of having *"attacked and set on fire a police station in Sanandaj and set off several bombs"*.

• BAGHDAD WANTS TO RENEGOTIATE THE 1975

TREATY OF ALGIERS THAT DEFINES THE IRAQ-IRAN BORDER. On 29 December, the Iraqi Deputy Foreign Minister, Labid Abbawi, announced that an Iraqi delegation would be going to Iran in the coming days to negotiate slight modifications to the agreement, which has defined the border between the two countries since 1975. This initiative, seems to confirm a diplomatic solution to a disagreement linked to the Treaty of Algiers, signed nearly 33 years ago, and which Iraqi President described on 25 December as *"null and void"*. The Iraqi President later indicated that the treaty was still valid but that Iraq wished to negotiate certain changes. The Iranian Foreign Minister, Manushehr Mottaki, quoted by the IRNA press agency on 29 December, as saying *"We approve Tala-bani's latest declaration that the 1975 Treaty between Iran and Iraq was valid"*. *"This point of view can constitute a solid base for relations between Iran and Iraq"*, he added.

Labid Abbawi indicated that the Iranians had accepted to discuss changes to the Treaty, without, however, giving any date for the discussions. *"Part of the discussions will concern the Algiers treaty, we will discuss the border and try to define*

clearly its line. There are oil fields on the border and we hope that the benefits be shared", he declared. *"This does not present a problem for Iraq. They have agreed to negotiations and there is no problem"*, he added. The treaty of Algiers has been controversial since it was signed by Saddam Hussein, at that time Iraqi Vice-President and the Shah of Iran, In the 1980s, disagreements over the border plunged Iran and Iraq into a war that lasted eight years and caused over a million deaths. At the heart of the claims is the Shatt al-Arab estuary, which allows access to the Arabo-Persian Gulf and contains oilfields. According to Labid Abbawi, portions of Iraqi territory are now flooded because of erosion and geographic changes in the region. Iraq also hopes to negotiate with Iran the neutralisation of thousands of mines that still strew the Shatt el-Arab

• **FORMER IRANIAN PRESIDENT, MOHAMMAD KHATAMI, WILL LEAD A COALITION OF 21 PARTIES IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS.** The former President of Iran, Mohammad Khatami, is returning to the forefront in preparation for the Parliamentary elections due 14 March next. He will

lead a coalition of reformers and moderate conservatives whose objective is to regain control of the Majlis (the Iranian parliament), at present dominated by President Mahmud Ahmedijad's Abadgaran Party. The coalition led by Mr. Khatami brings together 21 parties, including allies and others loyal to Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, another former Iranian president and a very influential figure in the political caste. The reforming alliance aims to campaign by criticising the country's economic situation, including a galloping inflation and the extremism of the positions adopted by President Ahmedijad, particularly on the nuclear issue. For some weeks now criticisms directed at President Ahmedijad have been increasingly frequent and have even been expressed in media considered close to the Supreme Guide, Ayatollah Khamenei. Mohammad Khatami, who was President of the Islamic Republic from 1997 to 2007, embodies the hopes of a whole of Iranian society, particularly the students, that hopes for a certain modernisation of society. These hopes have been disappointed, partly because of the political system, the principal levers of which remain concentrated in

the hands of the Supreme Guide of the Revolution — a factor which paved the way for the return to power of the ultra-conservatives in 2004. Meanwhile, the Iranian President, Mahmud Ahmedijad, will be going on the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, in Saudi Arabia — a first ever for a Head of State of the Islamic Republic. *"On the official invitation of (the Saudi) King Abdullah, President Ahmedijad will take part this year in the pilgrimage to Mecca"*, declared Mojtaba Samareh Hashemi, principal adviser to the Head of State on 13 December, as quoted by the *Mehr* press agency. *"This is the first time, in the history of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia, that the Saudi King has invited a President of the Islamic Republic to come to Mecca on pilgrimage"*, declared for his part Ali Akbar Javanfekr, the President's media adviser. On 11 December, the Iranian President had stated that king Abdullah had invited him verbally, during the recent summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council, to go on the pilgrimage to Mecca. This will be 'r. Ahmedijad's third visit to Saudi Arabia since his taking office in 2005. Iran, which is mainly Shiite and the mainly Sunni Saudi Arabia have been trying, over the last few years, to

strengthen relations hitherto marked by mutual distrust. These relations have long been marked by a tragedy in Mecca in 1987, when 402 pilgrims, including 275 Iranians, were killed, according to the official assessment, by the Saudi police. The latter were repressing a traditional demonstration by Iranian in Mecca against the United States and Israel. Iran, at the time, was in the middle of its war with Iraq, which was supported by the Gulf monarchies, including Saudi Arabia.

• GREAT BRITAIN HANDS OVER RESPONSIBILITY FOR BASRA TO THE IRAQI FORCES. On 16 December, Great Britain officially handed over responsibility for the security of Basra Province to the Iraqi forces, at the end of nearly five years of British control of Southern Iraq. During an official ceremony to mark the event in the last British military base in the region, the province's Governor, Mohammed Mosbah al-Waeli, linked to the Fadila party, declared: *"This is a historic moment, a special day, one of the greatest days in the history of modern Basra"*. Thousands of Iraqi soldiers and police took part in the march past along the riverbanks of the capital of the Great South,

with a cloud of helicopters flying above them. Motorboats also crossed the Shatt el-Arab, the river at the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates, which leads down to the Gulf. The Commander of the British forces, General Graham Binns, who led the troops who captured the city in 2003, paid homage to the Iraqi security forces, insisting that they were equal to the task that was being confided to them.

This province, of 2.6 million predominately Shiite inhabitants, is clearly the most densely inhabited and richest of the 18 Iraqi provinces whose control has been handed over to the Iraqis. It is the principal centre for the exporting of Iraqi oil, and Basra is the country's second largest city. The Iraqi forces insist that the 30,000 soldiers and police present in the region are in a position to keep the peace. The province has, to a large extent, been spared the sectarian conflicts that have caused tens of thousands of deaths in the centre of Iraq. But the city of Basra has been the scene of bloody clashes between rival Shiite factions, criminals and traf-

fickers of various sorts. The factions have agreed to a truce, for this month, and violence has diminished, but an outbreak of violence remains possible in the regions evacuated by the British forces. It is for this reason that a reduced British contingent will remain in Southern Iraq, confined to its base round Basra Airport and that a few army instructors as well as a rapid reaction force will remain ready in case of need. Great Britain now has some 4,500 men in Iraq, less than a tenth of the force sent to overthrow Saddam Hussein. There have been 174 British troops killed in Iraq since the beginning of the war in March 2003. The United States have openly supported the decision of their British allies to gradually disengage from Iraq. After the fall of Saddam Hussein, Great Britain controlled four provinces in the South, backed by contingents of Italian, Australian, Japanese and others — most of whom have long been gone. Of the four provinces of which Britain had charge, three have already been handed over to the Iraqi authorities: Muthanna, Zi Qar, and Missan. The British forces began

to hand over control of the province to the Iraqis last year. On 3 September they had given control of the city of Basra's security to the Iraqi authorities.

The Province of Basra, through whose port transits 80% of Iraqi oil, exports 1.5 million barrels of oil per day, which supplies virtually the totality of the Iraqi government's resources. The wealth in oil of this province produces, together with the neighbouring province of Missan, some 70% of Iraq's crude. Part of this oil is also sold abroad outside official channels, a source of illicit revenue for smugglers and other traffickers, many of which are suspected of having links with local militia. Political rivalries have divided the city between three main factions. The supporters of imam Moqtada al-Sadr, fiercely anti-American, have considerable street influence. His rival, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) enjoys considerable influence with the security forces while the Fadila party, the smallest, is influential in the civil administration.

LE FIGARO 4 décembre 2007

L'Irak, le Kurdistan et le débat turc

Les États-Unis tiennent à ce que les cent mille soldats turcs massés à la frontière des trois provinces autonomes du Kurdistan irakien n'interviennent pas. Point n'est besoin d'un front supplémentaire dans une situation déjà complexe où le général David Petraeus tente, avec un certain succès, de reprendre l'initiative.

Le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a cherché, par ses opérations militaires, à refaire surface afin de conforter un prestige déclinant. Cette stratégie aberrante a redonné l'occasion à l'armée turque de marquer des points dans la confrontation politique qui se joue entre le gouvernement élu avec une belle majorité et l'institution militaire qui a longtemps été la colonne vertébrale de l'État.

Durant les années récentes où le PKK avait décrété une trêve, les militaires se sont opposés à toute solution politique que semblait souhaiter le gouvernement. Il faudra bien pourtant reconnaître un jour qu'il n'est pas possible de refuser indéfiniment d'accorder de larges droits culturels à une minorité constituant quelque 20 % de la population !

Trop longtemps, la Turquie a nié l'identité kurde en n'offrant pour perspective que l'assimila-

Par
Gérard Chaliand *



« La partie qui se joue à la frontière turco-irakienne est aussi une affaire turco-turque »

tion forcée. Le PKK ne constitue plus une menace militaire comme durant les années 1990. Une partie de ses militants se trouve en Turquie et parvient toujours à échapper aux ratissages des forces armées, une petite partie – vraisemblablement de 2 000 à 3 000 – se tient le long de la frontière irako-iranienne. Une incursion terrestre – il y en a déjà eu dans le passé – n'aurait que peu de sens sur le plan militaire. En quoi régle-

rait-elle le problème kurde en Turquie ? Ce serait, en revanche, sur le plan politique, une catastrophe régionale. Les Kurdes d'Irak, en obligeant le PKK à rendre les huit soldats turcs prisonniers, ont montré leur volonté de ne pas envenimer les relations avec la Turquie, tout en déclarant qu'en cas d'incursion ils se défendraient.

La menace d'intervention n'est pas levée et le référendum, qui devait avoir lieu en décembre – avec l'accord du gouvernement de Bagdad – et qui pourrait être reporté à 2008, sur la dévolution de la ville de Kirkouk, constitue peut-être la raison essentielle de la pression turque. Cette ville, majoritairement kurde, a été à l'origine de la discorde entre Saddam Hussein et le mouvement kurde pendant plus de trente-cinq ans. Pour les Kurdes d'Irak qui la considèrent comme leur capitale régionale, son appartenance au Kurdistan d'Irak serait à la fois synonyme de réparation

historique et de surcroît de puissance économique. Cette perspective serait inacceptable pour certains des hauts responsables militaires turcs confortés par une opinion publique de plus en plus antikurde, ce qui est inquiétant pour l'avenir de la Turquie elle-même.

Si l'intervention devait avoir lieu, elle viserait à frapper le Kurdistan d'Irak, non le PKK. C'était déjà le sens de la crise de 2003, entre la Turquie et les États-Unis, concernant le refus que le territoire turc soit utilisé par les

forces américaines pour ouvrir un front nord contre Saddam Hussein. La condition posée par la Turquie pour accéder à cette requête était que ses propres troupes participeraient à l'intervention en Irak du Nord, où les Kurdes disposaient déjà d'une région autonome.

L'intérêt du gouvernement turc est de conserver des relations cordiales avec le grand allié américain dans le cadre de l'Otan et de continuer à chercher à faire partie de l'Union européenne, ce qui, outre les avantages économiques et financiers que cela peut lui procurer, équivaut à marginaliser l'armée. La partie qui se joue à la frontière turco-irakienne est aussi une affaire turco-turque. En tant que dirigeant politique ayant des objectifs à long terme, le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, sait qu'il faut éviter l'aventure d'une telle intervention, mais les passions sont difficiles à contrôler et les provocations toujours possibles. Il faut aussi retenir l'hypothèse selon laquelle la dévolution de Kirkouk aux Kurdes peut paraître inacceptable à l'État turc.

* *Géostratège, spécialiste des conflits, auteur de L'Amérique en guerre, Irak-Afghanistan, aux Éditions du Rocher, 2007.*

TURQUIE-IRAK OPÉRATION COMMANDO

Le Monde
4 décembre 2007

Incursion de l'armée turque en territoire irakien contre le PKK

ISTANBUL
CORRESPONDANCE

Une centaine de bérets violets, les commandos turcs, auraient mené une brève opération en territoire irakien, samedi 1^{er} décembre, contre les rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Un communiqué publié par l'état-major de l'armée turque assure qu'un camp de « cinquante à soixante terroristes », dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak, a été détruit et que la « puissante attaque » a causé de lourdes pertes chez l'ennemi. Plusieurs hélicoptères de combat sont également intervenus à l'intérieur des frontières irakiennes, depuis la base turque de Cukurca.

Une incursion éclair qui devrait en appeler d'autres, comme l'a laissé enten-

dre le porte-parole du gouvernement, Cemil Çiçek. L'objectif de cette attaque est surtout médiatique. C'est la première opération depuis que le Parlement turc a donné son accord à une intervention transfrontalière, en octobre. Et le 28 novembre, le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, avait autorisé les forces du général Yasar Büyükanit à entrer en action. Un pas supplémentaire dans la dissuasion. Mais ce ne sont pas encore les « opérations d'envergure » qu'Ankara menace de lancer depuis le mois d'avril.

Les responsables du PKK ont admis, dimanche, avoir été bombardés, mais démentent avoir subi des pertes humaines dans l'assaut. Les autorités irakiennes

et la Maison Blanche se sont montrées prudentes. Washington a refusé de commenter ce nouvel épisode, disant tout faire avec l'Irak et la Turquie pour contrer la « menace terroriste du PKK ». Mais l'opération intervient deux jours après la visite du vice-secrétaire d'Etat américain, John Negroponte, au Kurdistan autonome.

Sous la pression diplomatique, des mesures avaient été prises, depuis quelques semaines, par les autorités irakiennes pour limiter la liberté de circulation des rebelles du PKK – 2 000 combattants qui seraient toujours réfugiés en Irak, selon les renseignements turcs. D'autres ont déjà migré vers l'Iran. Ou vers le sud-est de la Turquie, à majorité kurde, où l'armée turque dirige également des attaques. Quatre rebelles ont été tués, samedi, dans les provinces de Sirnak et de Siirt. ■

GUILLAUME PERRIER



Turquie/Irak

Incursion militaire contre le PKK

02 décembre 2007

Vendredi, le gouvernement turc avait donné son feu vert pour une opération armée contre des bases des kurdes séparatistes dans le nord de l'Irak. Une centaine de membres des forces spéciales ont ainsi franchi la frontière pour attaquer un camp tenu par les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, le PKK. L'attaque faisant une vingtaine de morts parmi les soixantaine de rebelles présents. Selon le communiqué de l'état-major turc, ce genre d'opération coup de poing va se reproduire. Il y a quelques semaines, la Turquie avait menacé de lancer une grande offensive contre les bases des séparatistes kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak après une attaque kurde contre des soldats turcs.

Avec notre correspondant à Istanbul, Jérôme Bastion

L'état-major turc a confirmé dans la soirée avoir mené « la première de ses opérations visant à mettre hors d'état de nuire le PKK en Irak du nord ». Le communiqué précise que ces opérations ne visent pas les populations locales tant qu'elles n'ont pas une attitude hostile vis-à-vis des militaires turcs.

Une opération ponctuelle, hélicoptère, contre un campement provisoire du PKK situé à une vingtaine de kilomètres à l'intérieur du territoire irakien.

Cette incursion n'est pas confirmée par la rébellion elle-même, ni non plus par

les Kurdes irakiens, ni même par les forces armées américaines en Irak.

Une vingtaine de tués

Ce sont une centaine de commandos, les « bérets violets » comme on les appelle ici, qui ont été déposés sur ce camp de la rébellion, d'abord bombardé depuis les airs, avant d'être pris d'assaut. L'attaque a fait une vingtaine de tués parmi la soixantaine de rebelles présents.

Une intervention prévisible, réclamée depuis des mois et en quelque sorte annoncée vendredi par le Premier minis-



Il y aurait en Irak près d'un millier de camps du PKK comme celui-ci, toujours intégrés dans le paysage. Seul le visage du leader du parti Abdullah Öcalan peint à même la montagne trahit leur présence. (Photo : Paulina Zidi)

tre qui disait en avoir laissé la responsabilité, mercredi, à l'armée.

Si l'on en croit le communiqué de l'état-major, ce genre d'opération coup de poing va se reproduire.

AFP

Incursion turque au Kurdistan: "pas de victime" selon le PKK

ERBIL (Irak), 2 déc 2007 (AFP) -

Un haut responsable du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan a reconnu dimanche que des hélicoptères turcs avaient bombardé des combattants du PKK la veille au Kurdistan irakien, mais nié que le raid ait fait des victimes comme l'affirme Ankara.

Le groupe, qui avait dans un premier temps démenti l'incursion turque dans le nord de l'Irak, a réitéré une précédente offre de cessez-le-feu faite à Ankara.

"Il y a eu une frappe aérienne menée par des hélicoptères le long de la frontière", a déclaré au correspondant de l'AFP à Erbil, capitale du Kurdistan irakien, un responsable du PKK qui a requis l'anonymat.

"Aucun de nos combattants n'a été tué", a-t-il affirmé, interrogé au téléphone depuis un lieu qu'il n'a pas précisé.

La veille, le même responsable avait démenti toute incursion, terrestre ou aérienne, de l'armée turque au Kurdistan irakien.

L'armée turque a annoncé être intervenue samedi dans le nord de l'Irak contre un groupe d'une cinquantaine de rebelles du PKK, leur infligeant selon elle de "lourdes pertes".

Selon Ankara, l'artillerie et des éléments aériens ont attaqué "à l'intérieur des frontières de l'Irak" un groupe de 50 à 60 combattants du PKK.

C'est la première fois que l'armée turque passait aux actes depuis le feu vert des députés, en octobre, à des opérations militaires en territoire irakien. Ces raids ont pour but de répondre à des attaques menées par le PKK en Turquie depuis ses bases arrière en Irak.

Le PKK "veut résoudre la crise avec Ankara", a assuré le même responsable kurde, renvoyant à un communiqué officiel de l'organisation séparatiste transmis dimanche à l'AFP.

Le mouvement rebelle y dit qu'il "déposera les armes si les autorités turques répondent positivement à un certain nombre de conditions".

Le PKK exige que la Turquie "admette les droits du peuple kurde dans sa Constitution", "reconnaisse la langue kurde comme la seconde langue officielle du pays" et libère les membres du PKK, dont ses leaders, actuellement détenus en Turquie.

L'organisation séparatiste exige également le "retrait de l'armée turque du sud-est de la Turquie", la création d'un comité conjoint entre la Turquie et le PKK pour préparer son intégration au sein du processus politique, et l'annonce par le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan d'une amnistie générale de tous les combattants du PKK.

Le communiqué ne fait aucune mention du bombardement mené samedi par l'armée turque.

Fin octobre, le PKK avait affirmé être disposé à respecter un cessez-le-feu si l'armée turque renonçait à ses projets d'incursion et si l'Etat turc respectait les droits politiques et culturels de la minorité kurde en Turquie.

Ce cessez-le-feu conditionnel avait été rejeté dès le lendemain par Ankara.

"Il n'y a pas eu d'incursion. Juste un bombardement le long de la frontière", a affirmé Fouad Hussein, le chef de la présidence kurde et principal collaborateur du président du Kurdistan autonome Massoud Barzani.

Le gouvernement central de Bagdad n'a jusqu'à présent fait aucun commentaire officiel sur le bombardement turc.

En visite en Irak, le secrétaire d'Etat adjoint américain, John Negroponte, a déclaré à Bagdad: "nous sommes tous d'accord pour dire que le PKK est une organisation très négative, un groupe terroriste qui ne doit pas être autorisé à opérer depuis le territoire irakien contre la Turquie".

"Nous avons l'objectif commun de mettre fin à leurs activités", a-t-il déclaré



2 décembre 2007

Guerre des mots entre Ankara et les rebelles du PKK

Cette dernière a mené une action ciblée avec des hélicoptères et des tirs d'artillerie contre un groupe d'une cinquantaine de rebelles. L'état-major turc affirme avoir infligé de lourdes pertes au PKK, ce que dément le groupe armé

Abdullah Gül a rappelé que les députés turcs avaient donné leur feu vert en octobre à ce type d'opérations. Le président turc a également réaffirmé qu'elles se poursuivront si nécessaire.

Il semble être soutenu par une large partie de son opinion publique à l'image de ce stambouliote : "Je pense que ces opérations doivent continuer. Nous en avons assez et cette zone doit être sécurisée car nous avons perdu beaucoup de vies et nous sommes toujours en deuil".

Cette opération turque est démentie par le gouvernement nord-irakien et dénoncée par ce kurde : "Nous condamnons fermement cette incursion turque au Kurdistan irakien. Nous peuple kurde, nous n'acceptons pas cette ingérence et nous allons demander au Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies de condamner la Turquie pour cet acte". Ankara affirme avoir utilisé des renseignements fournis en temps réel par Washington.



3 décembre 2007

La guerre en Irak et l'intervention militaire turque Une équation rendue complexe

Enfin, l'armée turque n'a tenu compte d'aucune mise en garde, et les différentes milices kurdes, qui entendaient l'en dissuader, ne se sont pas opposées samedi à son attaque visant des combattants du PKK (parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) qui, selon Ankara, disposent de bases dans le nord irakien.

Y a-t-il là un quelconque élément nouveau à une situation déjà complexe, avec une internationalisation de fait, et surtout une perte de responsabilité de l'autorité centrale irakienne sur des régions entières, pour ne pas dire le pays entier ? Assurément non, puisque depuis des années, rappellent nombre d'analystes, l'armée intervenait en profondeur en territoire irakien, sauf que cette fois, il y a eu implication de toute la classe politique turque et que dans le même temps, l'opinion internationale était prise à témoin. Il reste que l'intervention de samedi a suscité des réactions pour le moins bizarres. Et c'est seulement hier qu'un responsable du PKK a reconnu que des hélicoptères turcs avaient procédé à des bombardements la veille au Kurdistan irakien, dans le nord de l'Irak, affirmant cependant que le raid n'avait fait « aucune victime ». La veille, ce même responsable avait démenti toute incursion, terrestre ou aérienne, de l'armée turque au Kurdistan irakien. « Il y a eu une frappe aérienne menée par des hélicoptères le long de la frontière », a déclaré à Erbil, capitale du Kurdistan irakien, le

responsable qui a requis l'anonymat. « Aucun de nos combattants n'a été tué », a-t-il affirmé.

L'armée américaine à Bagdad a indiqué de son côté ne disposer « d'absolument aucune information » sur une incursion. L'armée turque a annoncé être intervenue contre un groupe d'une cinquantaine de rebelles kurdes du PKK, leur infligeant selon elle de « lourdes pertes ». Selon Ankara, l'artillerie et des éléments aériens ont attaqué « à l'intérieur des frontières de l'Irak » un groupe de 50 à 60 combattants du PKK. Après donc des semaines de tractations diplomatiques, la Turquie a recouru à l'option militaire. L'opération s'est produite au sud-est de la localité turque de Cukurca, dans la province de Hakkari, juste à la frontière, a indiqué l'état-major sur son site internet. « Si nécessaire, a-t-il ajouté, d'autres éléments de l'armée interviendront dans la région », en l'occurrence des unités terrestres. Accusant les Kurdes d'Irak alliés des Américains, de soutenir le PKK, la Turquie a menacé de lancer une opération militaire dans le nord de l'Irak pour en déloger les rebelles qui se servent de cette région

comme d'une base arrière pour leurs actions dans le sud-est de la Turquie.

La Turquie, qui dispose de la deuxième plus grande armée de l'Otan en effectifs (515 000 hommes) après les Etats-Unis, a massé 100 000 hommes à la frontière irakienne, longue de 380 km. Le 21 octobre, des rebelles venant du Kurdistan irakien avaient tué 12 soldats lors d'une attaque près de la frontière irakienne, accroissant les menaces d'une intervention militaire turque contre le PKK en Irak.

Le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan avait autorisé mercredi l'armée à réaliser une opération transfrontalière contre les rebelles kurdes en Irak. « Il s'agit d'une opération contre une cible bien précise et ce n'est pas une surprise, car la Turquie a dit et répété qu'elle allait sévir contre les terroristes dans le nord de l'Irak », a commenté l'analyste militaire Armagan Kuloglu sur la chaîne d'information NTV. Ce général à la retraite a estimé qu'une vaste offensive de l'armée n'est pas d'actualité mais que d'autres opérations similaires pourraient être me-

nées dans les jours prochains avec, si nécessaire, une implication d'unités d'élite malgré les difficiles conditions hivernales dans cette zone montagneuse.

Entre-temps en Turquie, dans les zones escarpées situées à proximité de la frontière irakienne, dans la province de Sirkak, les troupes turques ont intensifié leurs opérations contre les rebelles kurdes. Des hélicoptères de combat ont pilonné certains secteurs afin d'empêcher le retour des rebelles dans leurs caches irakiennes. Au-delà de l'ampleur de cet engagement, c'est sa médiatisation qui est relevée cette fois, puisque les combats sur cette bande frontalière n'ont pas cessé depuis fort longtemps.

Ainsi que les accusations ou à tout le moins un fort sentiment de suspicion qui marque les relations entre voisins et bien au-delà. C'est le cas depuis au moins 2002 quand les Turcs suspectaient un complot depuis cette frontière, les amenant à avoir l'œil sur tout ce qui se passait dans cette région.

T. Hocine



3 décembre 2007

IRAK : Les Turcs bombardent

L'armée passe aux actes pour répondre à des attaques menées par le PKK depuis ses bases arrière en Irak. Le PKK réitère son offre de cessez-le-feu.

Un haut responsable du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a reconnu dimanche que des hélicoptères turcs avaient bombardé des combattants la veille au Kurdistan irakien. "Il y a eu une frappe aérienne menée par des hélicoptères le long de la frontière", a déclaré un responsable du PKK qui a requis l'anonymat. "Aucun de nos combattants n'a été tué", a-t-il affirmé.

L'armée turque, elle, a annoncé être intervenue contre un groupe d'une cinquantaine de rebelles du PKK, leur infligeant selon elle de "lourdes pertes". C'est la première fois que l'armée turque passait aux

actes depuis le feu vert des députés, en octobre, à des opérations militaires en territoire irakien. Ces raids ont pour but de répondre à des attaques menées par le PKK en Turquie depuis ses bases arrière en Irak.

Le PKK "veut résoudre la crise avec Ankara", a assuré le même responsable kurde, renvoyant à un communiqué officiel de l'organisation séparatiste. Le mouvement rebelle y dit qu'il "déposera les armes si les autorités turques répondent positivement à un certain nombre de conditions". Le PKK exige que la Turquie "admette les droits du peuple kurde dans sa

Constitution", "reconnaisse la langue kurde comme la seconde langue officielle du pays" et libère les membres du PKK, dont ses leaders, actuellement détenus en Turquie.

Tout cela avait été rejeté par Ankara. En visite en Irak, le secrétaire d'Etat adjoint américain, John Negroponte, a déclaré que le PKK était "une organisation très négative, un groupe terroriste qui ne doit pas être autorisé à opérer depuis le territoire irakien contre la Turquie". "Nous avons l'objectif commun de mettre fin à leurs activités."

AFP

Kurdes et Arabes prêts à s'entendre sur Kirkouk, les Turcomans réticents

KIRKOUK (Irak), 3 déc 2007 (AFP) –

Les partis kurdes et arabes de la région de Kirkouk (nord) sont tombés d'accord sur une formule de division du pouvoir dans cette zone riche en pétrole qui pourrait ouvrir la voie à un référendum sur le rattachement de la province au Kurdistan irakien.

La troisième composante ethnique de cette région, les Turcomans, ont annoncé ne pas avoir approuvé cet accord.

Le président du conseil régional de Kirkouk, Razgar Ali, responsable de l'Union patriotique kurde (UPK) du président irakien Jalal Talabani a salué dimanche devant la presse cet accord "comme une étape positive vers le développement de Kirkouk et vers une coopération dans la prise de décision et le partenariat".

La province de Kirkouk, et sa capitale du même nom, qui compte un million d'habitants, sont peuplées par des Kurdes, des Arabes, des Turcomans et des chrétiens.

La constitution irakienne y prévoit un recensement et la tenue d'un référendum avant la fin de l'année pour déterminer le statut de cette zone, revendiquée par les autorités de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien.

Le recensement, qui doit également établir la répartition ethnique de la population comme base de répartition du pouvoir, n'a pas commencé.

Il est rendu très difficile par des mouvements de populations susceptibles de changer la composition de l'électorat.

Des Arabes installés à Kirkouk à l'époque du régime de Saddam Hussein ont notamment été incités au départ par des offres d'argent ou par des menaces.

Des Kurdes chassés à la même époque sont, en revanche, revenus, grâce à des aides publiques, réclamer les terrains et les maisons qu'ils considéraient comme les leurs.

Les populations non-kurdes craignent qu'une forte domination des Kurdes, qui assurent représenter la majorité, ne conduise à leur marginalisation.

De leur côté, les Kurdes accusent les autres groupes ethniques d'user de méthodes dilatoires pour retarder le référendum.

Selon un membre arabe du conseil provincial, Rakan Said al-Joubouri, l'accord annoncé ce lundi donne à sa communauté une meilleure représentation dans les instances qui devraient être mises en place après de nouvelles élections locales.

"Pour la première fois, la charge de gouverneur-adjoint et celle de chef adjoint du conseil judiciaire nous seront attribuées", s'est-il félicité.

"Les fonctions seront distribuées également à hauteur de 32% entre les Kurdes, les Arabes et les Turcomans. Les autres 4% restants seront attribués aux minorités, comme les Chaldéens et les Arméniens.

"Nous espérons que les Turcomans participeront", a ajouté M. Al-Joubouri

Pour le moment, le conseil régional qui compte 41 membres est dominé avec 26 sièges par les deux partis kurdes: l'UPK et le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) de Massoud Barzani, président de la région du Kurdistan.

Les partis arabes ont six sièges et les Turcomans neuf.

L'accord prévoit également la fin des détentions illégales, "une exigence importante pour les Arabes qui ont été victimes des pires abus", selon M. Joubouri.

Les formations arabes ont boycotté depuis des mois les instances régionales, et les programmes de départ volontaire des populations arabes financés par la région ont eu peu de succès.

"Le problème de Kirkouk ne peut pas être résolu par le retour d'une seule partie, alors qu'une autre est ignorée", a réagi pour sa part Ali Mahdy, le secrétaire-adjoint du parti turcoman Eli.

"Nous demandons la fin des arrestations, et la fin de notre marginalisation. Et nous soulignons la nécessité d'adopter la langue turcomane comme langue officielle à Kirkouk", a-t-il ajouté.

La question est d'autant plus sensible que le grand voisin du nord, la Turquie, craint que le rattachement au Kurdistan de la région de Kirkouk, d'où sont extraits presque 30% du pétrole irakien, ne vienne renforcer le statut de mini-Etat indépendant de la province autonome.

lalibre.be

4 décembre 2007

IRAN : Le renseignement américain minimise la menace

Un des leaders du Parlement iranien a jugé mardi que le rapport du renseignement américain sur le programme nucléaire iranien confirmait son caractère "pacifique" défendu par Téhéran.

Le renseignement américain a affirmé lundi que l'Iran aurait arrêté ses plans d'armes nucléaires en 2003 et a avoué ne pas connaître ses intentions actuelles, au risque de discréditer à nouveau le discours de George W. Bush sur la menace des armes de destruction massive. En contre-partie, le rapport présenté par les 16 agences du renseignement dit que l'Iran entend apparemment se réserver l'option de l'arme nucléaire, et pourrait être capable entre 2010 et 2015 de produire assez d'uranium hautement enrichi pour la bombe atomique.

Le gouvernement américain a argué avec force d'une telle possibilité pour affirmer le péril et la nécessité d'augmenter la pression internationale sur l'Iran. Mais l'opposition démocrate au président Bush s'est appuyée sur ce rapport pour réclamer une "nouvelle politique envers l'Iran", selon les termes de la présidente de la Chambre des représentants Nancy Pelosi, tandis que le chef de la majorité démocrate du Sénat Harry Reid, en appelait à un "sursaut diplomatique".

Quelques semaines après que le président Bush eut brandi le spectre d'un "holocauste nucléaire" ou d'une "Troisième Guerre mondiale si l'Iran avait la bombe, l'administration était poussée à la défensive par les comparaisons défavorables avec le précédent irakien, quand elle avait invoqué à tort le danger des armes de destruction massive de Saddam Hussein.

Et elle était contrainte d'admettre que le rapport risquait de desservir les Etats-Unis au moment où ils cherchent à obtenir de nouvelles sanctions interna-



tionales contre l'Iran. Le conseiller de M. Bush pour la sécurité nationale, Steve Hadley, a dit "espérer" que la Chine ou la Russie ne seraient pas confortées dans leurs réticences à de nouvelles sanctions. Les Etats-Unis croient "que ce serait une erreur", a-t-il dit. "Nous jugeons avec un haut degré de confiance qu'à l'automne 2003, Téhéran a arrêté son programme d'armes nucléaires", dit le renseignement, qui pense que l'Iran n'a pas actuellement d'arme nucléaire.

La décision prise en 2003 suggère que l'Iran "est moins déterminé" à avoir l'arme nucléaire que ne le croyait le renseignement depuis 2005, estimant alors "avec un haut degré de confiance" que l'Iran était résolu à cela. "Nous ne savons pas si (l'Iran) a actuellement l'intention de développer des armes nucléaires", dit-il aujourd'hui. Mais il juge probable

que l'Iran, "au minimum, garde ouverte (cette) option". C'est précisément cette "option" que les Occidentaux veulent retirer à l'Iran.

L'enrichissement d'uranium, que l'Iran refuse de suspendre malgré deux trains de sanctions internationales et le danger d'un troisième, doit produire le combustible pour ses futures centrales civiles, assure le régime islamique. Mais enrichi à plus 90%, l'uranium peut servir de matériau pour la bombe. Le renseignement juge "avec un degré de confiance modéré" que l'Iran devrait être en mesure techniquement entre 2010 et 2015 de produire suffisamment d'uranium hautement enrichi pour une arme nucléaire.

Mais il note que si l'Iran a coupé court à son programme nucléaire militaire en 2003, c'est d'abord à cause de la pression internationale, à laquelle l'Iran serait donc peut-être plus sensible que le gouvernement américain ne le pensait. Confronté aux questions sur la possibilité que le président américain ait exagéré la menace iranienne, le conseiller de M. Bush pour la sécurité nationale a affirmé la réalité du péril iranien.

Le renseignement révèle pour la première fois que l'Iran avait bel et bien des plans secrets avant 2003, et dit aussi que l'Iran continue à avoir des activités aux possibles applications nucléaires, comme l'enrichissement, a-t-il fait valoir. Aussi la communauté internationale doit-elle "augmenter la pression", en isolant diplomatiquement et en sanctionnant l'Iran, tout en offrant la perspective d'un dialogue, a-t-il dit.

4 DÉCEMBRE 2007

Irak La Turquie a lancé samedi une opération militaire contre les hommes et les femmes du PKK

Les amazones du Kurdistan irakien



Dans les montagnes de Qandil, quelque 3 000 femmes de 16 à 40 ans vivent parmi les rebelles kurdes du PKK. Elles y mènent des réflexions politiques teintées de féminisme et combattent, armées de kalachnikovs, à égalité avec les hommes. Toute relation amoureuse avec l'un d'eux leur est néanmoins défendue.



**Au nord de l'Irak, dans les montagnes de Qandil, elles se-
raient 3 000 à porter les armes.**

Kurdes, de Turquie, de Syrie, d'Irak, d'Irak, mais aussi revenues d'Europe, ces femmes âgées de 16 à 40 ans sont des amazones modernes. Leur organisation - PAJK, le mouvement des femmes du Kurdistan - est affiliée au KGK, le congrès du peuple kurde, autrement dit le PKK. Ce parti créé à la fin des années 1970 et aujourd'hui inscrit sur la liste des organisations terroristes par Ankara, Washington et l'Union européenne est à l'origine de la guerre civile qui a embrasé l'Anatolie (est de la Turquie) au milieu des années 1980. Leur combat : la reconnaissance de l'identité culturelle des 25 millions de Kurdes de Turquie. En 1995, fait unique dans le monde des guérillas, naît le PAJK, la branche féminine du PKK.

A la frontière de l'Irak et de l'Irak, à deux pas de bottes de la frontière turque, les femmes du PAJK ont installé leur centre de réflexion



politique. La rééducation des hommes, le rôle de la femme dans la lutte armée, l'organisation de la société civile, tous ces thèmes sont discutés par les femmes et communiqués ensuite au

reste du mouvement. En revanche, au sein de l'HPG, l'armée du peuple, les femmes s'entraînent et se battent à armes égales avec les hommes. Mais elles ont leur propre commandement,

YJA star. Et pas question de tomber amoureuses. Dans ce mouvement à la discipline éprouvée, toute relation est prohibée et seule est tolérée la passion pour le leader Abdullah Öcalan, détenu en Turquie sur l'île-prison d'Imrali depuis 2000.

Comme leurs « havales » (camarades) hommes, les amazones kurdes luttent aujourd'hui autant contre l'armée turque omniprésente au sud-est de la Turquie, la théocratie chiite iranienne et l'autocratie arabe syrienne que pour libérer leur genre du joug masculin propre à la société rurale et montagnarde de ce peuple sans état. Egarées dans leurs montagnes, kalachnikov en bandoulière, une fleur dans les cheveux, elles rêvent de l'âge d'or décrit par leur chef Abdullah Öcalan dans son livre programme, au retour de la société matriarcale de l'ère mésopotamienne. Pour elles, la femme est le passé de l'homme. Elle sera forcément son avenir.

**Au Kurdistan irakien,
Olivier Touron (textes et photos)**

The Boston Globe

December 2, 2007

Turkey reaffirms army's right to act in Iraq

By Selcuk Gokuluk

ANKARA (Reuters) - Turkish President Abdullah Gul reaffirmed on Sunday Turkey's readiness and right to intervene in northern Iraq one day after the Turkish army said it carried out an operation there against Kurdish rebels.

Kurdish officials in Iraq insisted on Sunday that there had been no Turkish military incursion, describing as baseless Ankara's claims that significant losses had been inflicted on Kurdish rebels.

"(The army) was granted a mandate. This mandate is being used when (the army) deems it necessary," Gul told reporters before flying to Pakistan for an official visit.

Turkey said it carried out an "intense intervention" against Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) rebels in northern Iraq on Saturday, sending in special forces after the cabinet authorised the army to carry out cross-border operations.

The army said on Sunday that two PKK rebels had been killed in separate clashes in southeastern Turkey on Saturday.

Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Cicek made clear that operations in northern Iraq would continue as the army saw fit.

"The Chief of General Staff decides and will decide the necessity and timing of (the operations). If the

goal is met with one operation, then one operation will be done. If 10 operations are needed, then 10 operations will be done," he said in an interview with broadcaster Kanal 24.

A Turkish military official said about 100 special forces troops had crossed into Iraq on Saturday and that long-range artillery and up to six helicopters had bombed a PKK camp after spotting a group of 50-60 rebels 20 km inside the border.

KURDISH DENIAL

But Jabbar Yawar, a spokesman for Kurdistan's Peshmerga security forces in Iraq, said there had been no incursion or shelling by Turkish forces into northern Iraq. He also said there were no casualties in the area.

A PKK official, who asked not to be named, told Reuters in Sulaimaniya in northern Iraq that the Turkish military's claims were "lies and false allegations".

Ankara has massed up to 100,000 troops near the mountainous border with northern Iraq, backed by tanks, artillery and warplanes ahead of a long-awaited strike against Kurdish rebels who use bases in northern Iraq to launch attacks in Turkey.

On Friday, Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan said the cabinet had authorised the armed



forces to conduct a cross-border operation.

Ankara has made many threats of military action but, under heavy U.S. pressure, has so far shown restraint.

A senior military official based in southeastern Turkey told Reuters that weather conditions in the border were not suitable for a large land offensive.

"Winter conditions do not allow for a broad land offensive. Future operations will probably be limited to air-strikes and artillery bombardment," the official said.

Chicago Tribune

December 2, 2007

Kurdish region rethinking independence

Turks' recent threat to invade tells many they need Iraq

By Bay Fang

IRBIL, Iraq In the barren brown hills outside the Kurdish capital of Irbil, across the highway from what used to be the American outpost in northern Iraq, a little piece of the U.S. is being built.

Skeletons of villas dot the hillside, neat two-story structures with garages that look out of place among the spare cypress trees. A sign on the side of the highway is emblazoned with the same sun that is on the Kurdish flag, behind the words: American Village. "It's a little Columbia, Md., here in Iraq," said Jim Covert, the Kurdistan country director for Virginia-based Sigma International Construction, developer of the \$80 million project. "They love anything American here, so we're building this as a typical American subdivision.

"The project, which will include 400 villas and a mall, originally was intended for Baghdad. When that city descended into chaos, the company decided to transplant the concept 200 miles north, far from the car bombs and sectarian violence that plagued the rest of Iraq. American Village is one of a gaggle of complexes popping up around town with such names as English Village and Italian Village to house thousands of international businesspeople and middle-class Iraqis pouring into the area.

The regional government passed its own investment and oil laws last year and recently announced more than 20 oil and gas agreements with foreign companies. These are all signs of the Kurdistan region's speedy path to what some might call de facto independence.

Despite their long-held aspirations toward independence, many Kurds may now be at a crossroads in their thinking. The recent threat of an incursion by Turkey in pursuit of Kurdish guerrillas has caused many here to recognize how much they need Iraq. Concerns about that threat rose again Saturday when the Turkish military announced it had attacked 50 to 60 Kurdish rebels inside Iraqi territory, inflicting "significant losses," although the threat of a large-scale invasion has diminished.

While some of the region's leaders have pushed for a more active role for the Kurdish regional government in negotiating a solution to the crisis, they also were forced to confront the reality that they could not go it alone. "Many of us have come to recognize that nationalism is both limiting and limited," said Barham Saleh, a Kurd and deputy Iraqi prime minister. "While I as a Kurd always dream of a Kurdish state, and consider it a fundamental right of the Kurdish people, I have come to see that being part of the larger market of Iraq, with the protections

afforded us by a democratic Iraq, offers the Kurdish people tangible advantages.

"Since the Kurdish enclave became semiautonomous after the 1991 gulf war, under the protection of a UN-established no-fly zone, it has been surrounded by neighbors with sizable Kurdish ethnic populations and therefore wary of the Kurdish experiment in self-rule. At various times, Syria, Turkey and Iran have all launched attacks inside the territory. In the most recent crisis, many watchers of the Kurdistan region believe that if it had not been part of a sovereign Iraq, the Turkish military would not have hesitated to launch a much more significant attack across the border. While concerns about that possibility have diminished, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Friday that his Cabinet had authorized the army to mount "a cross-border operation.

"The Washington factor The Kurdistan region's relationship with the U.S., commonly seen as its protector, also depends largely on its role in the greater Iraq. Washington considers Kurdish participation in the Baghdad government as a key to protecting American interests in Iraq.

"The Kurds' role in Baghdad is fundamental to checking the rise of [Shiite] fundamentalism," said one senior administration official, who

spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue. "If the Kurds weren't part of the central government in Baghdad, it would simply be a [Shiite] majority dominating a Sunni minority, and the chances of a secure, stable and prosperous Iraq would be severely diminished." But some Kurds feel conflicted, believing the region does more for the central government than it gets in return. Under the constitution's revenue-sharing formula, the northern Kurdish enclave receives 17 percent of all Iraqi oil revenue. But many Kurds think their economy deserves more.

Falah Mustafa Bakir, the Kurdish government's head of foreign relations, argues that the Kurdistan region should not be held back by the central government's ineptitude. "It should not just be us doing things. Iraq has a big budget, but it can't implement it," he said. But he articulates the dilemma faced by the region. "Today we live in Iraq. We want to help our people, and we want to help build Iraq. But at the same time, we want to move ahead, and provide a better quality of life. The question is, can we do it alone?"

"For many in Iraqi Kurdistan, the answer was always 'of course.' In an informal referendum conducted alongside Iraq's 2005 election, 95 percent of voters said they would prefer an independent Kurdistan. Back at the American Village

office, Awat al-Barzanji pores over the plans for his 9,000-square-foot villa, known as the "Palace" model. Al-Barzanji, who was the spokesman for the United Nations in Irbil from 1997 to 1999, returned in 2004 to work for his family's construction company.

'Always that if' "This place could turn into a miniature [United Arab Emirates] in five years' time," he said. "But there's always that if -- if their

cards are played right, if policies have that as an aim, if they draw a line between Kurdistan and the rest of Iraq, and keep all the problems down there.

"Thousands of refugees from other parts of Iraq have arrived over the past few years, but tough registration laws limit the number who stay. A security trench around Irbil is 3 yards wide and 3 yards deep, and there are only seven points of entry

around the city. Kurdish militiamen who staff the checkpoints quiz those entering the city and are especially tough on Arab newcomers. Despite popular distrust, the Kurdistan government is trying to reach out both to neighboring countries and to other Iraqis.

The government also has reached out diplomatically to Iran, which opened a new consulate in November. Although several countries

have what are called embassy offices or commercial sections in the Kurdish north, Iran and Russia are the only ones with full consulates. "They are acting like a state as much as they can," said Luigi Orsini, whose card reads Consular Correspondent of the Embassy of Italy in Baghdad but who is referred to as the Italian ambassador. "They have their own channels to receive diplomats."



December 3, 2007
RFE/RL Newsline

TENSIONS INCREASE IN IRAQ OVER KIRKUK REFERENDUM DELAY

By **Sumedha Senanayake**

November 15 was supposed to be an important date in Iraqi history. It was the initial date planned for a referendum to decide whether the oil-rich region of Kirkuk will be incorporated into the semi-autonomous Kurdish region.

Although that date was scrapped and replaced with the directive that the referendum be held before the end of 2007, the passing of that date without any sign of a vote was indicative of how this process, outlined in Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution, is proceeding.

Article 140 calls for a three-step process of "normalization," which seeks to reverse the Arabization policies of the former regime, when thousands of Kurds and non-Arabs were forcibly evicted from Kirkuk and replaced with Arabs from central and southern Iraq. This is to be followed by a census and then a referendum.

The original deadline for the census was to be the end of July, but Kurdish officials acknowledged that due to "technical problems," the normalization process was still far from complete, thereby pushing back the census, and it seems the referendum as well.

While the Kurds have steadfastly held to the belief that the referendum will go forward, as constitutionally mandated, by the end of 2007, it is extremely unlikely that this will happen. In fact, Qadir Aziz, the spokesman for Kurdistan regional President Mas'ud Barzani, told the Kurdish newspaper "Awena" on November 13 that the deadline for conducting the referendum needed to be extended because the normalization and census were not carried out in time.

However, some Kurdish officials have accused the government in Baghdad of deliberately trying to delay the referendum.

On November 17, the leader of the Kirkuk city council accused the Baghdad government of intentionally stalling the implementation of Article 140, AFP reported. There have also been complaints from Kurdish officials that foot-dragging by Baghdad has been mostly responsible for delaying the normalization process.

Indeed, Babakir Sdiq, the director of the Kirkuk office for the High Committee for Implementing Article 140, told pukmedia.com on November 20 that he was informed by the Iraqi Interior Ministry that the delivery of important internal

migration forms would be delayed by up to 15 days.

These forms are needed for Arabs who want to voluntarily leave Kirkuk and return to their original districts in exchange for a compensation package of approximately \$15,000 and a plot of land. The delay has created a backlog in the normalization process, complicating any attempt to carry out a census, and by extension a referendum.

In response to the accusations, the Baghdad government immediately ordered an investigation into why the referendum has been delayed. The swift response was clearly meant to placate simmering Kurdish anger and frustration on an issue many Kurds describe as "the red line."

This frustration was summed up by Kurdish lawmaker Mahmud Uthman: "Four years have passed, and the referendum should have been held by now, but successive governments have done nothing. Yet, we do understand that there were obstacles, such as security challenges and bureaucracy."

There has also been near-universal opposition among Iraq's non-Kurdish leaders to holding the referendum, with many warning of widespread violence if it is held. The governorate has sizable Arab and Turkoman populations, and both groups have voiced concern that if the Kurds end up controlling Kirkuk, they may be forced out.

The Turkomans have said that they prefer being under the authority of the Baghdad government, but warned that they would seek regional autonomy if Kirkuk were incorporated into the Kurdistan region. Abas al-Bayati, an Islamic Turkoman Union leader, told "Al-Hayat" on November 18 that Kirkuk should be declared an independent region, run jointly by Arabs, Kurds and Turkomans -- a proposal that the Kurds have rejected.

Muhammad al-Dayini, a deputy for the Sunni-led Iraqi Front for National Dialogue, told the "Al-Ahram Weekly" on November 22 that his group wants to see Kirkuk run by a strong central government. "The issue of Kirkuk is very major. We cannot allow one political group to integrate Kirkuk into its region," al-Dayini said. He also accused the Kurds of actively changing the demographics of the governorate

by moving an estimated 600,000 Kurds into the region since 2003.

Iraq's neighbors have also entered the fray, with Turkey repeatedly voicing its opposition to the referendum, expressing the fear that if Iraqi Kurds control Kirkuk and its oil resources, this could fuel Kurdish separatism in Iraq and then in Turkey. Iranian Foreign Minister Manuchehr Mottaki voiced similar concerns in a statement on November 3 calling for a two-year postponement of the referendum.

What Iraqi Kurds fear is that the delay in holding the referendum may become an open-ended postponement without any concrete resolution. That potential scenario could lead the Kurds to take a more aggressive route to acquire Kirkuk.

In a veiled threat after the November 17 parliamentary session, Kurdish lawmaker Fu'ad Massum warned that the Kurds may resort to other measures if Article 140 is not fully implemented. "If the concerned parties [non-Kurdish parties in government] act irresponsibly, the Kurdish parties will then have their own way."

Going even further, the Kurdish daily "Rozhnama" reported on November 21 that the Kirkuk Governorate Council approved a proposal stating that if Article 140 is not implemented on time, then it will advocate unilaterally merging Kirkuk with the Kurdistan region.

Such a move would undoubtedly result in violence among the disparate factions within the governorate and quite possibly lead Turkey to intervene on behalf of the ethnic-Turkish Turkomans. Hadi al-Amiri, a member of the Shi'ite Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, told AFP on November 17 that any attempt by the Kurds to incorporate Kirkuk by force would "open the gates of hell" and quite possibly lead to civil war.

However, leaving the fate of Kirkuk unresolved also creates a dangerous predicament for the governorate and the rest of Iraq. There has been a marked increase in violence in the region, though it is unclear whether the tensions over Kirkuk were the cause. Regardless, without a comprehensive political solution, the situation in Kirkuk could quickly spiral into the kind of violence that has gripped the rest of Iraq.



04 December 2007

Voice of America

US General: Non-Military Efforts Important in Fighting Kurds

By Al Pessin — Washington

The commander of U.S. forces in Europe says Turkey needs to deal with Kurdish violence using counterinsurgency principles that go beyond military force and focus on eliminating the reasons for the popular discontent that fuels insurgencies. General Bantz Craddock spoke to reporters in Washington, as VOA's Al Pessin reports.

General Craddock declined to provide details of meetings he has had with Turkish officials, but he described the Kurdistan Workers Party or PKK as a terrorist organization that is acting like an insurgency. He said "obviously" counterinsurgency theories are important in fighting it.

"There are counterinsurgency indications, and obviously counterinsurgency measures that can be taken. And we are talking to them about our experiences and our doctrine," he said.

The new U.S. military counterinsurgency doctrine calls for a multi-faceted approach, including military forces, but focusing on winning the hearts and minds of the people involved by providing government services and economic development. U.S. forces began implementing the doctrine in Iraq and Afghanistan earlier this year, and have had some success. General Craddock says Turkey is also doing some non-military counterinsurgency work in Kurdish areas near the Iraqi border.

"In an insurgency, there are very few military solutions," he added. "It's a comprehensive approach. It's counterinsurgency doctrine, separating leadership from followers, providing followers [with] alternatives. I think if one looks at what's happening, particularly in south-east Turkey, you'd see some counterinsurgency operations conducted by the Turkish government, beyond the military, which is helpful and I think in the right

direction."

The general did not say what could be done to apply counterinsurgency principles to PKK guerrillas who operate in the mountains of northern Iraq, and strike at Turkish targets across the border. He called the impact of the PKK attacks "significant."

In October, after a particularly deadly cross-border strike, Turkey's defense minister called on its NATO ally the United States to take "tangible action" to help end the attacks. Since then, Turkey has stepped up military operations against the PKK, and the United States has reportedly provided some help through intelligence, political pressure on the Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq and other forms of cooperation. But U.S. military forces in Iraq have not become involved in the fighting

MIDDLE EAST ONLINE

December 5, 2007

Iraq Shiites turn on Kurdish allies over oil spat

Shiite parties join oil minister in declaring Kurdish government's oil contracts with foreign firms void.

By Mohammed Ameer — BAGHDAD

Iraq's Shiites have turned on their Kurdish allies over the stormy issue of oil contracts with foreign companies, joining a furious Oil Minister Hussein Shahrastani in declaring them invalid.

"These contracts will be suspended until the oil and gas law is passed," said Abbas al-Bayati, member of parliament for the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (SIIC), one of Iraq's most powerful Shiite factions. "When companies or countries sign these contracts, they have to behave according to the law of the country," Bayati added.

The autonomous Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq has signed 15 exploration and export contracts with 20 international companies since it passed its own oil law in August, infuriating the Baghdad government.

Shahrastani has angrily denounced the Kurdish authorities for signing the contracts before the national parliament approves a new oil and gas law, declaring them "illegal" and "null and void."

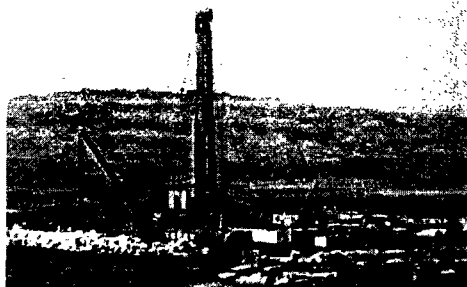
The Kurdish authorities have hit back sharply, telling the minister he is exceeding his authority and that he should mind his own business. "His statements will not affect our contracts with foreign companies," regional prime minister Nechirvan Barzani said last week. "The (regional) government will continue with the contracts and they will be implemented."

The heated row comes despite Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's wooing of Kurdish parties in an attempt to salvage his embattled government, which has been hit by walkouts by Sunnis and radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's political bloc.

In August, Maliki brokered a new political alliance between his Dawa party and Vice President Adel Abdel Mahdi's SIIC, President Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and Kurdish regional president Massud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party in a bid to shore up his government. Despite generally good relations within the new coalition, SIIC politicians this week were quick to round on the Kurdish authorities.

"These contracts are illegal, and must pass through the central government to be approved in accordance with the Iraqi constitution," said Zuhair al-Hakim, a SIIC official in the Shiite holy city of Najaf.

"The origin of this dispute is that the Kurdistan Regional Government approved its own oil and gas law before the national law has been passed." The Sadr movement too came out against the Kurdish deals.



"We believe the central government should be in charge of such agreements," said Liwa Sumaysim, head of the political bureau of the Sadr movement, also based in Najaf.

"We reject the autocratic way in which these contracts were signed and we ask the government to continue to stand against it too," Sumaysim added. Another Shiite party, Al-Fadhila, was less strident.

"It would be better if the riches were in the hands of the central government as the only party that can guarantee national unity," said Nadim al-Jabiri, Al-Fadhila's political advisor.

Kurdish MP Mahmoud Othman said the dispute is complex and should be put to the country's constitutional court.

"It's a complex issue. The Kurdistan Regional Government says that the contracts they signed are valid, while the central government says they are not," said Othman.

"I think it is best that these contracts are submitted to the constitutional tribunal which will decide if they are valid or not," he said.

Iraq's oil and gas bill is stalled in the national parliament amid bitter differences between rival factions.

When approved, the new law will open up Iraq's long state-dominated oil and gas sector to foreign investment and will stipulate that receipts be shared equally between Iraq's 18 provinces.

Power-Sharing Ends Northern Iraq

AP Associated Press

December 5, 2007 By LAUREN FRAYER

KIRKUK, Iraq (AP) — Sunni Arabs ended a yearlong political boycott Tuesday in Kirkuk — the hub of Iraq's northern oil fields — under a cooperation pact that marked a bold attempt at unity before a planned referendum on control of the strategic region.

The Sunni-Kurdish deal — urged by U.S. diplomats — could also move ahead other reconciliation bids demanded by Washington but stalled by disputes that include sharing oil wealth and compromising with Sunnis who backed Saddam Hussein's Baath party.

Sunnis have struggled to find political footing since Saddam's fall, as majority Shiites cemented control of the government and security forces and Kurds enjoyed an economic boom in their semiautonomous enclave.

A planned referendum on Kirkuk, possible next year, could give the Kurds another windfall. It will ask whether the province — and its important oil fields — should fall under the Kurdish borders or continue to be governed by Baghdad.

Apart from the petrodollars at stake, Kurds have a strong cultural and emotional attachment to Kirkuk, which they call "the Kurdish Jerusalem." But Kirkuk's Arabs — who include many Shiites resettled by Saddam — largely favor continued rule by Iraq's central government.

Turkey and other countries in the region with Kurdish minorities have long feared that Kurdish rule of Kirkuk would encourage Kurds to break away from Iraq.

Tensions spiked when Sunni Arab lawmakers walked out of the provincial council in November 2006, claiming discrimination by the Kurds. The boycott ended Tuesday after Kurdish lawmakers agreed to allot one-third of government jobs, such as police and other officials, to Arabs and appoint an Arab as deputy governor.

Adding a deputy governor is a roundabout way for Sunni Arabs to gain more power, despite currently holding only six of the provincial council's 41 seats. The Kurdish bloc dominates with 26 seats, largely because Sunni Arabs across Iraq sat out the last provincial elections, in 2005.

Turkomen — the smallest of the area's main ethnic groups — hold nine seats. They also prefer rule by Baghdad, but have lobbied for their own sovereignty if Kirkuk is swallowed by the

Dispute

Kurdish region.

Kurds are generally thought to have a slight majority in the province, with Sunni Arabs close behind. But a census has not been conducted in 50 years.

Returning Sunni lawmakers said they hoped an Arab deputy governor would prevent their bloc from being steamrolled by the Kurds.

"Last year, we felt that decisions were forced on us. That wasn't power-sharing — we had no key representation even though we were sitting there," said Ramla Hamid, one of the Sunni Arab lawmakers who retook her council seat Tuesday.

The Arabs' return to politics culminates a year of behind-the-scenes prodding by other Iraqi leaders and American diplomats.

"It's important, but it's really just the first small step in a long reconciliation," said Howard Keegan, head of the State Department team aiding reconstruction in the Kirkuk province.

The Kurdish majority "doesn't need the Arabs to govern, but that they want a unity government anyway is significant," Keegan said, adding that cooperation from all parties is needed to "make it to the referendum and avoid violence."

Tuesday's move also represents the Arab lawmakers' tacit approval of the Iraqi constitution, Keegan said, including Article 140 — which calls for a census and referendum on Kirkuk's status by the end of this year.

Officials have said they will not make the 2007 deadline, but hope the vote will happen sometime next year. It is also unclear when new elections for the Kirkuk provincial posts could be held.

During Saddam's rule, tens of thousands of Shiite Arabs were moved to Kirkuk under an "Arabization" program.

At the same time, many Kurds fled the area after Saddam accused them of siding with Iran during the 1980-88 war. Since Saddam's ouster, thousands of Kurds have returned to Kirkuk — only to find, in some cases, Arabs living in their homes.

Article 140 calls for a period of "normalization" in Kirkuk — providing housing for Kurdish returnees and compensation to Arabs who volunteer to return to their ancestral homes in Baghdad or southern Iraq. But the process is slow, and there are cries of fraud from both sides.

MIDDLE EAST TIMES

December 05, 2007

Will Turkey invade northern Iraq?

Will Turkey invade northern Iraq? Not according to the results of a role playing game undertaken by my students at George Mason University on Nov. 5. That's the good news. There is, however, some bad news: it took extraordinary concessions from several parties to prevent this - concessions that are unlikely to be made in real life.

Role playing games, as I have written about before, do not necessarily yield accurate predictions about what will happen in a given situation, but can help elucidate the opportunities and dangers that different actors may see in a crisis.

In the role playing game I ran, different teams of students played Turkey, the PKK (the group claiming to represent Turkish Kurds which has bases in northern Iraq), the U.S.-backed Kurdish Regional Authority, the Iraqi government, and other Iraqi Arab parties, Iran, Russia, various EU governments, and of course, the United States. One-person teams played actors such as Israel, Syria, and Armenia.

The game began with the present situation: Turkey threatening to intervene in northern Iraq unless something is done to halt the PKK from attacking Turkey from there. The PKK team actually welcomed this threat since it anticipated that Turkish intervention in northern Iraq would seriously damage, or even destroy, Turkey's relations with the United States and other Western states. Russia, Iran, Armenia, and Syria also welcomed this.

By contrast, the EU governments immediately recognized that Turkish intervention in Iraq would have extremely negative consequences. And so to prevent Turkey from doing this, the European



governments (including - after some cajoling - Greece) offered to admit Tur-

key into the EU right away if it would agree not to intervene.

The Turkish team was very happy to accept the offer of EU membership, but still insisted that Turkey might intervene - especially since the PKK team kept launching attacks into Turkey.

Also not wanting Turkish intervention, the Kurdish Regional Authority team attempted to reign in the PKK. The PKK team, though, refused to be reigned in. Despite some misgivings, the Kurdish Regional Authority team then offered to shut down the PKK in northern Iraq if Turkey would agree not to intervene. (Some of the Iraqi Arab actors also offered to do this, but the Kurdish Regional Authority team made it clear that their presence in northern Iraq was unacceptable.)

The Turkish team, though, turned down this offer. It did not think the Kurdish Regional Authority was truly willing or

able to shut down the PKK.

Finally, the U.S. team - after much internal debate and despite active lobbying from the Armenian team - offered to send its own forces in to shut down PKK operations in northern Iraq in return for a Turkish pledge not to intervene there. It was this offer that the Turkish team finally accepted - along with EU membership and the EU conceding to Turkey on northern Cyprus. The game then ended with war (or, more accurately, expanded war) happily averted.

What the game suggested is that it will take major concessions by other parties to prevent Turkey from intervening in northern Iraq. But while my "peace-loving" students who played the EU, the Kurdish Regional Authority, and the United States were willing to make such concessions, it is extremely doubtful that the real actors would do so. The threat of Turkish intervention in northern Iraq has

strengthened - not weakened - European opposition to admitting Turkey into the EU. It is doubtful that the Kurdish Regional Authority would be willing or able to expel the PKK from its strongholds along the Turkish border. Finally, Washington would be extremely reluctant to move against the PKK since the PKK is one Iraqi group not currently attacking the United States. For the United States to do so could also complicate its good relations with the Kurdish Regional Authority.

If, as seems likely, the EU, Kurdish Regional Authority, and the United States do not make the kinds of concessions to Turkey that my students playing them were willing to make, will Turkey refrain from intervening in northern Iraq? I fear that there might not be a happy ending to this story.



Dec. 05, 2007

Turkish soldiers kill 8 Kurdish rebels

By SUZAN FRASER *The Associated Press*

Turkish soldiers killed eight Kurdish rebels, increasing the rebel death toll to 14 in a two-day clash near the border with Iraq, the military said Wednesday.

The clash began Tuesday on Mount Gabar, in Sirnak province, the military said in a statement posted on its Web site. Six rebels were killed on Tuesday and the military said eight others were killed later. One Turkish officer was killed Tuesday.

The military said the rebels were among a group of guerrillas that killed 13 soldiers in an Oct. 7 ambush in Sirnak. At the time, the military retaliated by shelling areas near the border to prevent rebels from reaching bases in northern Iraq.

That attack, and another similar ambush a few weeks later that killed 12 sol-

diers, sparked anger in Turkey and widespread calls for the military to cross the border to hit bases of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, in northern Iraq.

Turkey has massed thousands of troops along its border with Iraq. On Saturday, the military said it fired on a group of about 50-60 PKK guerrillas inside Iraqi territory, inflicting "significant losses." It did not say whether Turkish troops had crossed into Iraq for the operation.

Turkish Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul, in Paris to address a meeting of European lawmakers, said the military operation on Saturday against PKK rebels involved only airstrikes - not land forces.

The United States and Iraq have urged Turkey to avoid a large-scale attack on rebel bases inside Iraq, fearing such an operation would destabilize what has been the calmest region in the country.



December 5, 2007

Sunni-Kurdish deal a try for Iraq unity

By Lauren Frayer *The Associated Press*

KIRKUK, Iraq — Sunni Arabs ended a yearlong political boycott Tuesday in Kirkuk — the hub of Iraq's northern oil fields — under a cooperation pact that marked a bold attempt at unity before a planned referendum on control of the strategic region.

The Sunni-Kurdish deal — urged by U.S. diplomats — could also move ahead other reconciliation bids demanded by Washington but stalled by disputes that include sharing oil wealth and compromising with Sunnis who backed Saddam Hussein's Baath party.

Sunnis have struggled to find political footing since Saddam's fall, as majority Shiites cemented control of the government and security forces and Kurds enjoyed an economic boom in their semiautonomous enclave.

A planned referendum on Kirkuk, possible next year, could give the Kurds another windfall. It will ask whether the province — and its important oil fields — should fall under the Kurdish borders or continue to be governed by Baghdad.

Apart from the petrodollars at stake, Kurds have a strong cultural and emotional attachment to Kirkuk,

which they call "the Kurdish Jerusalem." But Kirkuk's Arabs — who include many Shiites resettled by Saddam — largely favor continued rule by Iraq's central government.

Turkey and other countries in the region with Kurdish minorities have long feared that Kurdish rule of Kirkuk would encourage Kurds to break away from Iraq.

Tensions spiked when Sunni Arab lawmakers walked out of the provincial council in November 2006, claiming discrimination by the Kurds. The boycott ended Tuesday after Kurdish lawmakers agreed to allot one-third of government jobs, such as police and other officials, to Arabs and appoint an Arab as deputy governor.

Adding a deputy governor is a roundabout way for Sunni Arabs to gain more power, despite holding only six of the provincial council's 41 seats. The Kurdish bloc dominates with 26 seats, largely because Sunni Arabs across Iraq sat out the last provincial elections, in 2005.

Turkomen — the smallest of the area's main ethnic groups — hold nine seats. They also prefer rule by Baghdad, but have lobbied for their own sovereignty

if Kirkuk is swallowed by the Kurdish region.

Kurds are generally thought to have a slight majority in the province, with Sunni Arabs close behind.

The Arabs' return to politics culminates a year of behind-the-scenes prodding by other Iraqi leaders and American diplomats.

Tuesday's move also represents the Arab lawmakers' tacit approval of the Iraqi constitution, said Howard Keegan, head of the State Department team aiding reconstruction in the Kirkuk province, including Article 140 — which calls for a census and referendum on Kirkuk's status by the end of this year.

Officials have said they will not make the 2007 deadline, but hope the vote will happen sometime next year.

Article 140 calls for a period of "normalization" in Kirkuk — providing housing for Kurdish returnees and compensation to Arabs who volunteer to return to their ancestral homes in Baghdad or southern Iraq. But the process is slow, and there are cries of fraud from both sides.

The New York Times

December 6, 2007

Pushed Out of Baghdad, Insurgents Move North

By MICHAEL R. GORDON

MOSUL, Iraq, Dec. 5 — Sunni insurgents pushed out of Baghdad and Anbar Provinces have migrated to this northern Iraqi city and have been trying to turn it into a major hub for their operations, according to American commanders.

A growing number of insurgents have relocated here and other places in northern Iraq as the additional forces sent by President Bush have mounted operations in the Iraqi capital and American commanders have made common cause with Sunni tribes in the western part of the country.

The insurgents who have ventured north include Abu Ayyub-al Masri, the leader of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, a predominantly Iraqi group that American intelligence says has foreign leadership. American officials say the insurgent leader has twice slipped in and out of Mosul in Nineveh Province to try to rally fellow militants and put end to infighting.

"We have seen some migration of Al Qaeda," said Col. Stephen Twitty, the commander of the Fourth Brigade Combat Team, First Cavalry Division, which is returning to the United States after 13 months here. "What has driven that are the operations down south."

The Americans and Iraqis have responded to the influx of militants with operations to cut off the insurgents' financing and by pursuing insurgent leaders, including Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia's emir for the eastern side of the city who was killed in a raid late last month.

American and Iraqi units have been able to hold off the insurgents and disrupt their planning. But they have not been able to decrease the rate of attacks in Mosul, which has held stubbornly steady over the past year even as attacks have fallen in Baghdad and Anbar Province, according to an analysis by American officers.

That has prompted American and Iraqi commanders to propose the return of two Iraqi battalions that were sent from western Mosul earlier this year to bolster Iraqi forces in Baghdad. Such a move would increase the Iraqi troop strength here by 1,400 troops or more, according to estimates by American officers, and enable the Iraqis to establish more outposts in some of the more violent areas of the city.

"We are in the process of seeing what might come out of the situation in Baghdad as they consolidate down there," said Col. Tony Thomas, the deputy commander of the First Armored Division, which has responsibility for northern Iraq. "Our biggest push, to be honest, as we looked at Mosul security is to ask for an emphasis on getting those Iraqi battalions back here."

There are no plans to send additional American units to Nineveh Province, though the replacement of Colonel Twitty's unit by the somewhat larger Third Armored Cavalry Regiment has led to a small troop increase. But Colonel Thomas noted that other regions north of Baghdad, like Samarra and Baiji in Salahuddin Province, and Muqdadiyah in Diyala Province, had been under pressure from insurgents.

He added that his division's leadership had been "in dialogue" with Lt. Gen. Raymond T.

Odierno, the second-ranking American in Iraq, to see if reinforcements might be provided to "address our problem areas."

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, who visited Mosul on Wednesday before flying to Baghdad, said that American commanders had suggested to him that they could use more combat power in the north and would welcome the return of the Iraqi battalions, but that they had not asked him for additional American troops.

"They did indicate to me that they are having a continuing challenge up there," he said.

Mosul, a city of 1.7 million, has often been buffeted by the fighting in other parts of Iraq. When American forces prepared to reclaim Falluja in 2004, many insurgents streamed north. In late 2004, the local police in Mosul fled their posts in the face of an insurgent assault, leaving much of the city under the militants' control until Kurdish pesh merga fighters helped restore order. The province is 65 percent Sunni and also home to a diverse array of ethnic groups, including Kurds, who dominate the Nineveh provincial government.

Unlike Baghdad, Mosul was never scheduled to receive American reinforcements under Mr. Bush's plan. The mission of the American troops here has been to prevent the city from falling again into the insurgents' hands and to partner with Iraqi forces, while the main effort was focused on stabilizing Baghdad.

The result is that Mosul is secured by about 6,500 Iraqi soldiers and policemen and a much smaller American contingent of about 1,000, Colonel Twitty said. The relatively small concentration of American forces in Nineveh has attracted insurgents, who have long sought to exploit ethnic tensions in the region by portraying themselves as the defenders of Sunni interests against Kurdish expansionism. Mosul is also close to Syria, which has often been a conduit for foreign fighters.

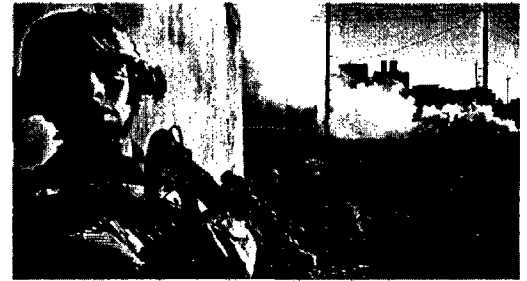
Insurgents from Baghdad, Diyala and Ramadi first appeared in the western part of Nineveh six months ago and later in Mosul, Colonel Twitty said.

To finance their activities here, the insurgents have been diverting oil shipments from the Baiji refinery in northern Iraq, and skimming funds from a host of other enterprises, including a local cement plant and car dealerships, according to Lt. Col. Eric Welsh, the commander of the Second Battalion, Seventh Cavalry Regiment, which recently completed its tour of duty here.

He said they had also, with the complicity of local government officials, been involved in the illegal sale of homes abandoned by Sunni Iraqi Army officers when the United States pushed for an aggressive policy of removing from power all members of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party soon after the 2003 invasion.

"Mosul continues to be a center of gravity for the insurgency," Colonel Welsh said. "It is a financial hub."

One of the insurgents' most complex attacks in Nineveh came on May 16, when they mounted a synchronized assault using eight car bombs.



The assaults destroyed a bridge, killed 10 Iraqi soldiers and policemen and wounded two American helicopter pilots, who were hit by small-arms fire. But the insurgents failed to blast open a major prison in the city, and unlike the situation in 2004, this time the Iraqi police stood their ground.

To counter the insurgents, American commanders had sought to establish tighter control over the oil shipments from the Baiji refinery and to detain officials and financiers in the illicit transactions. American and Iraqi forces have also conducted a series of raids against the insurgent leadership, killing or detaining six local emirs.

As a result of such efforts, the militants' have not been able to carry out large-scale coordinated attacks, American officials say. Instead, they have been going after easier targets, like Iraqi police checkpoints, that are less well armed and protected than the Iraqi Army or the Americans.

"In the past, the enemy was able to mass their forces on particular targets at a particular time," said Capt. Scott Linker, an intelligence officer. "We are not seeing those types of attacks anymore."

Still, the overall number of attacks, including the number of "effective" attacks that destroy property or cause casualties, has been generally steady in past months. An American company commander and his driver were killed on Oct. 7 when a bomb flipped over the Bradley fighting vehicle they were in.

Last week, American officers said, the number of attacks in Nineveh soared to 103, from the 80 or so per week that occurred in recent weeks. The officers said that one reason for the increase was the transfer of control to the Third Armored Cavalry Regiment, which temporarily resulted in an increase in the number of Americans on patrol.

Achieving a long-term reduction of violence in Nineveh, Colonel Twitty said, requires political measures, especially provincial elections, that would allow Sunnis to attain better representation in a government that is dominated by a Kurdish minority. But American and Iraqi commanders also say that more Iraqi forces are ultimately needed to deal with a resilient, if somewhat uncoordinated, insurgent threat.

"We can hold Mosul," Colonel Twitty said. "If you want it completely cleansed of insurgents then I say that you have to put more forces in to cleanse it."

Thom Shanker contributed reporting from Baghdad

U.S. says Iranians halted atom arms work in '03

By Mark Mazzetti

WASHINGTON: A new assessment by American intelligence agencies made public Monday concludes that Iran halted its nuclear weapons program in 2003 and that the program remains on hold, contradicting an assessment two years ago that Tehran was working inexorably toward building a bomb.

The report seems likely to weaken international support for tougher sanctions against Iran and raise new questions about the credibility of the beleaguered American intelligence agencies, while reshaping the final year of the Bush administration, which has made halting Iran's nuclear program a cornerstone of its foreign policy.

The assessment, a National Intelligence Estimate that represents the consensus view of all 16 American spy agencies, states that Tehran is most likely keeping its options open with respect to building a weapon, but that intelligence agencies "do not know whether it currently intends to develop nuclear weapons."

Iran is continuing to produce enriched uranium, the report says, a program that the Tehran government has said is designed for civilian purposes. The new estimate says that the enrichment program could still provide Iran with enough raw material to produce a nuclear weapon sometime by the middle of next decade, a timetable essentially unchanged from previous estimates.

But the new estimate declares with "high confidence" that a military-run Iranian program intended to transform that raw material into a nuclear weapon has been shut down since 2003, and also says with high confidence that the

The report contradicts a prior assessment and seems likely to weaken support for sanctions.

halt "was directed primarily in response to increasing international scrutiny and pressure."

The estimate does not say when American intelligence agencies learned that the weapons program had been halted, but a statement issued by Donald Kerr, the principal director of national intelligence, said the document was being made public "since our understanding of Iran's capabilities has changed."

Rather than painting Iran as a rogue, irrational nation determined to join the

club of nations with the bomb, the estimate states that Iran's "decisions are guided by a cost-benefit approach rather than a rush to a weapon irrespective of the political, economic and military costs."

The administration called new attention to the threat posed by Iran earlier this year when President George W. Bush suggested in October that a nuclear-armed Iran could lead to "World War III" and Vice President Dick Cheney promised "serious consequences" if the government in Tehran did not abandon its nuclear program.

Yet at the same time officials were airing these dire warnings, analysts at the Central Intelligence Agency were secretly concluding that Iran's nuclear weapons work halted years ago and that international pressure on the Islamic regime in Tehran was working.

The conclusions, arriving with stunning suddenness, are most likely to be a major factor in the tense international negotiations aimed at getting Iran to halt its nuclear energy program, and they come in the middle of a U.S. presidential campaign during which a possible military strike against Iran's nuclear program has been discussed.

Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, the majority leader, portrayed the assessment as "directly challenging some of this administration's alarming rhetoric about the threat posed by Iran."

He called for "a diplomatic surge necessary to effectively address the challenges posed by Iran."

Rand Beers, president of the liberal-leaning National Security Network and a former adviser to Senator John Kerry, said: "The new NIE throws cold water on the efforts of those urging military confrontation with Iran." He said the intelligence estimate showed that "the latest dust-up is unnecessarily alarmist."

The new report has come out just over five years after a deeply flawed intelligence estimate concluded that Iraq possessed chemical and biological weapons programs and was determined to restart its nuclear program. The report led to congressional authorization for a military invasion of Iraq, although most of that estimate's conclusions turned out to be wrong.

"Some combination of threats of intensified international scrutiny and pressures, along with opportunities for Iran to achieve its security, prestige, and goals for regional influence in other ways might if perceived by Iran's leaders as credible prompt Tehran to extend the current halt to its nuclear weapons program," the estimate states.

The U.S. national security adviser, Stephen Hadley, quickly issued a statement describing the intelligence esti-

mate as containing positive news rather than reflecting intelligence mistakes.

"It confirms that we were right to be worried about Iran seeking to develop

'The international community has to turn up the pressure on Iran.'

nuclear weapons," Hadley said. "It tells us that we have made progress in trying to ensure that this does not happen. But the intelligence also tells us that the risk of Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon remains a very serious problem."

"The estimate offers grounds for hope that the problem can be solved diplomatically without the use of force, as the administration has been trying to do," Hadley said.

The new report concludes that if Iran were to end the freeze on its weapons program, it would still be at least two years before Tehran would have enough highly enriched uranium to produce a nuclear bomb. But it says it is still "very unlikely" Iran could produce enough of the material by then.

Instead, the intelligence estimate concludes it is more likely Iran could have a bomb by the early part to the middle of the next decade. The report states that the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research judgement that Iran is unlikely to achieve this goal before 2013, "because of foreseeable technical and programmatic problems."

The new estimate upends a judgment made about Iran's nuclear capabilities in 2005. At the time, intelligence agencies assessed with "high confidence" that Iran was determined to have nuclear weapons and concluded that Iran had a secret nuclear weapons program.

Since then, officials said they had obtained new information leading them to conclude that international pressure, including tough economic sanctions, had been successful in bringing about a halt to Iran's secret program.

The report comes even as the United States has been pushing for tighter sanctions against Iran, which have been supported by Britain, France and Germany, the three countries leading negotiations with Iran. Critics said it would blunt the sense of urgency over Iranian nuclear progress and intentions.

But the administration emphasized that it also underscored the apparent effectiveness of sanctions. The intelligence report "suggests that the president has the right strategy: intensified international pressure along with a willingness to negotiate a solution that serves

Iranian interests while ensuring that the world will never have to face a nuclear-armed Iran," the Hadley statement said.

"For that strategy to succeed, the international community has to turn up the pressure on Iran with diplomatic isolation, United Nations sanctions, and with other financial pressure, and Iran

has to decide if it wants to negotiate a solution."

Mohamed ElBaradei, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, reported last month that Iran was now operating 3,000 uranium-enriching centrifuges, capable of producing fissile material for nuclear

weapons. But his report said that agency inspectors in Iran had been unable to determine whether the Iranian program sought only to generate electricity or also to build weapons.

Brian Knowlton contributed reporting.

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune December 6, 2007

Relative calm masks 'holding pattern' in Iraq

By Alissa J. Rubin

BAGHDAD: The reduced violence in Iraq in recent months stems from three significant developments, but the clock is running on all of them, Iraqi officials and analysts warn.

"It's more a cease-fire than a peace," said Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih, a Kurd, in words that were repeated by Qassim Daoud, a Shiite member of Parliament, who is an independent.

Officials attribute the relative calm to a huge increase in the number of Sunni Arab rebels who have turned their guns on Sunni jihadists instead of American troops; a six-month halt to military action by the militia of a top Shiite leader, Moktada al-Sadr; and the increased number of American troops on the streets here.

They stress that all of these changes can be reversed, and on relatively short notice. The Americans have already started to draw down troop levels, and Sadr, who has only three months to go on his pledge, has issued increasingly bellicose pronouncements recently.

The Sunni insurgents who turned against the jihadists are now expecting to be rewarded with permanent government jobs. Yet, so far, barely 5 percent of the 77,000 Sunni volunteers have been given jobs in the Iraqi security forces, and the bureaucratic wheels have moved excruciatingly slowly despite government pledges to bring more Sunnis in.

"We are in a holding pattern," said Joost Hiltermann, an Iraq analyst at the International Crisis Group, a Brussels-based research organization. "The military solution has gained enough peace to last through the U.S. election, but we have a situation that is extremely fragile. None of the violent actors have either been defeated or prevailed, and the political roots of the conflict have not been addressed, much less resolved."

U.S. military leaders have said similarly that their military gains can only go so far without a political solution.

The primary issues remain how to keep Sunnis from turning again to the insurgency, and how to stop a resurgence in violence from the Shiite militias.

Sadr was able to pull his militias back in large part because his community of poor Shiites was no longer under attack by Sunni militants. But if the broader Sunni population is not integrated into the new Shiite-dominated power structure, it is likely that the old divisions will rapidly resurface as the United States reduces its troop levels. If that happens, extremist Sunnis will renew their assaults on Shiites and Sadr's Mahdi militia will respond in kind.

The government has a limited amount of time to integrate these formerly renegade Sunnis, said Tariq al-Hashimi, a Sunni and one of Iraq's two vice presidents, who is in regular touch with the new Sunni forces. The men want jobs, respect and above all a guarantee that they will not be prosecuted for their past activities with the insurgency, he said, a concession that the Shiite majority government has given little indication it will make.

But Hashimi asserts that the Sunni groups' fight against Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, the mostly homegrown insurgent group that U.S. intelligence agencies believe is foreign-led, has brought a new level of stability that the government could never have achieved without them, and it is making a dangerous miscalculation to withhold credit.

"There was four years of fighting Al Qaeda with traditional troops, Iraqi and American, and they failed to control these hot areas," Hashimi said. "Now these areas are under control. But this unique experience, somebody is trying to abort," he said, referring to the government's reluctance to give the men jobs.

With the memory of the Sunni insurgents' ferocious assaults on the Shiites still fresh, the Shiite-led government has resisted bringing the Sunni volun-

teer groups into the security forces, where they would have access to more-powerful weapons and to vulnerable Shiite communities.

Already, a walk through neighborhoods where the volunteer groups are active is an unsettling experience. Small groups of young armed men stand guard at street corners, while others ride in open trucks. In many areas they wear camouflage uniforms that resemble those worn by members of the security forces.

Leaders of local Sunni groups, known as "awakening councils" or "concerned local citizens" or just "volunteers," are circumspect when asked what they will do if they are not given government jobs.

"These groups must have some support," said Abu Abed, the leader of the Awakening Council in Amiriya, a southwest Baghdad neighborhood that six months ago was so dangerous that U.S. military commanders were reluctant to conduct foot patrols there. Now they wander the streets as if they lived there.

"We need support from the government and not just financial support," he said. "We have made our applications to the police and to the army. It has been six months since the government said they would accept us. Maybe it will happen this month."

Most members of these groups are paid \$10 a day by the American military, with the expectation that the Iraqi government will eventually accept them into the security forces and other government jobs, taking over responsibility for their salaries. But that looks unlikely to happen anytime soon.

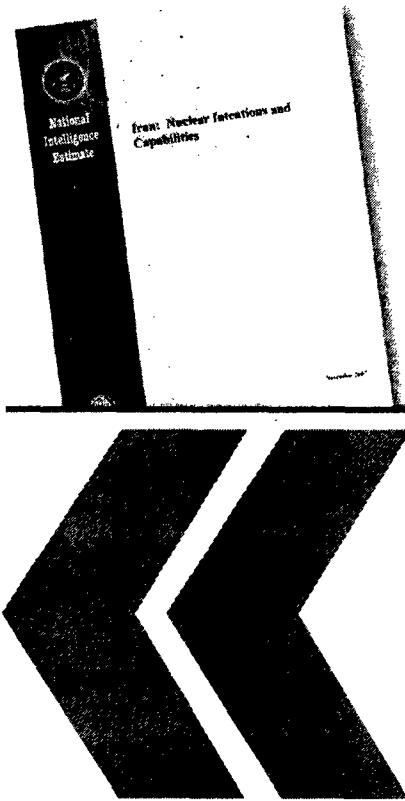
The situation with Sadr has a different dynamic. He has long had two roles on the Iraqi street. He has fought Sunnis who he believed were attacking his community, and in the process has fueled the cycle of sectarian brutality. But he and his militia have also fought the rival Shiite political force in Iraq, the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, many of whose members are in the government forces. The silence of Sadr's militia has quieted both struggles, but ended neither of them.

"The Sadrists have not been in an aggressive posture since early this year," said Hiltermann, the analyst. "They have taken the position, 'We will only fight if we are attacked.' But that doesn't mean they are gone."

'The political roots of the conflict have not been addressed, much less resolved.'

Nucléaire : intentions et possibilités de l'Iran

Nous publions les principaux extraits de la synthèse produite par les seize agences de renseignement américains sur l'état actuel et les perspectives à dix ans de l'activité nucléaire iranienne, rendue publique lundi 3 décembre



Exposé des motifs

La présente « Estimation du Renseignement national » (NIE, National Intelligence Estimate) fait le point sur l'état du programme nucléaire iranien et les perspectives de ce programme dans les dix prochaines années. Ce laps de temps est approprié pour évaluer des capacités, un peu moins pour évaluer des intentions et des réactions étrangères, lesquelles sont plus difficiles à projeter sur une décennie.

En présentant cette évaluation de la communauté du renseignement sur les intentions et capacités nucléaires iraniennes, le document examine de manière approfondie l'ensemble des renseignements disponibles sur ces questions, énumère les différents scénarios raisonnablement envisageables en fonction de ces renseignements et décrit les éléments essentiels dont nous estimons qu'ils sont susceptibles d'accélérer ou de mettre un terme aux progrès nucléaires de l'Iran. Ce document constitue un réexamen complet des questions abordées par l'estimation de mai 2005.

Cette estimation examine les questions essentielles suivantes :

- Quelles sont les intentions iraniennes

sur le plan du développement des armes nucléaires ?

- Quels facteurs intérieurs sont-ils susceptibles d'influer sur la décision iranienne de développer ou non des armes nucléaires ?

- Quels facteurs extérieurs sont-ils susceptibles d'influer sur la décision iranienne de développer ou non des armes nucléaires ?

- Quel est l'éventail des actions offertes à l'Iran concernant le développement d'armes nucléaires et quels sont les facteurs décisifs qui pourraient conduire l'Iran à choisir telle voie plutôt qu'une autre ?

- Quelle est la capacité actuelle et future de l'Iran de développer des armes nucléaires ? Quelles sont nos hypothèses essentielles, et quelles sont les principales faiblesses et vulnérabilités iraniennes ?

Cette estimation ne part pas du principe que l'Iran a l'intention d'acquérir des armes nucléaires. Elle s'attache à examiner les renseignements disponibles pour évaluer la capacité et l'intention (ou le manque d'intention) de l'Iran d'acquérir des armes nucléaires - en prenant en compte la dualité [civil ou militaire] du cycle de combustion nucléaire -, ainsi que ses activités nucléaires qui par nature sont au moins partiellement civiles.

Cette estimation part du principe que les objectifs stratégiques et la structure fondamentale de la direction et du gouvernement iraniens resteront les mêmes que ceux qui ont perduré depuis la mort de l'ayatollah Khomeiny en 1989. Nous sommes bien conscients qu'il est toujours possible que ceux-ci changent au cours du laps de temps auquel s'attache cette estimation, mais nous ne sommes pas en mesure de prédire avec certitude de tels changements, ni de prévoir leurs implications. Cette situation n'examine pas la façon dont les Iraniens pourraient conduire de futures négociations avec l'Occident sur la question nucléaire.

Cette estimation se fonde sur les renseignements disponibles à la date du 31 octobre 2007.

Principales conclusions

A. - Nous estimons avec un haut degré de certitude que Téhéran a interrompu son programme d'armement nucléaire à l'automne 2003 ; nous estimons également, avec un degré de certitude moyen à haut, que Téhéran continue à laisser au moins ouverte l'option visant à développer des armes nucléaires. Nous estimons avec un haut niveau

de certitude que l'annonce par Téhéran de sa décision de suspendre son programme déclaré d'enrichissement de l'uranium et de signer le protocole additionnel à l'accord sur les garanties du traité de non-prolifération auquel il a souscrit a été avant tout la conséquence de la surveillance et des pressions internationales croissantes découlant de la mise au jour des activités nucléaires que l'Iran n'avait jusque-là pas déclarées.

- Nous pensons avec certitude que jusqu'à l'automne 2003, des entités militaires iraniennes travaillaient sous contrôle gouvernemental au développement d'armes nucléaires.

- Nous estimons avec un haut niveau de certitude que l'interruption desdits travaux a duré au moins plusieurs années. (Suite à un manque de renseignements discuté par ailleurs dans ce document, le département de l'Energie et le Conseil national du renseignement [NIC, National Intelligence Council] ne jugent toutefois qu'avec un degré de certitude modérée que l'arrêt de ces activités traduit un arrêt total du programme d'armements nucléaires de l'Iran.)

- Nous estimons avec un niveau modéré de certitude qu'à la mi-2007, Téhéran n'avait pas relancé son programme d'armement nucléaire, mais nous ignorons s'il a actuellement l'intention de développer des armes nucléaires.

- Nous continuons à estimer avec un degré moyen à haut de certitude qu'à l'heure actuelle, l'Iran ne possède pas d'arme nucléaire.

- La décision de Téhéran de stopper son programme d'armement nucléaire indique qu'il est moins déterminé à développer des armes nucléaires que nous l'avons estimé depuis 2005. Notre estimation selon laquelle ledit programme a probablement été interrompu en premier lieu en raison de la pression internationale indique que l'Iran pourrait être plus facilement influencé sur cette question que nous ne l'avions jugé jusqu'ici.

B. - Nous continuons à estimer avec un bas degré de certitude que l'Iran a importé au minimum des matériaux fissiles utilisables à des fins militaires, mais estimons également avec un degré moyen à haut de certitude qu'il n'en a pas obtenu en quantité suffisante pour une arme nucléaire. Nous ne pouvons écarter la possibilité que l'Iran a acquis à l'étranger - ou acquerra dans l'avenir - une arme nucléaire ou une quantité de matériau fissile suffisante pour une arme nucléaire. Sans ces acquisitions, si Téhé-

ran veut se doter d'armes nucléaires, il serait contraint de produire par lui-même les matériaux fissiles nécessaires – ce que nous estimons avec un haut degré de certitude qu'il n'a pas encore fait.

C. – Nous estimons que si l'Iran décidait de produire suffisamment de matériau fissile pour une arme nucléaire, il le ferait probablement grâce à l'enrichissement par centrifugeuses. Malgré l'arrêt de son programme d'armes nucléaires, l'Iran a relancé ses activités déclarées d'enrichissement par centrifugeuses en janvier 2006. L'Iran a fait des progrès significatifs en 2007 en installant des centrifugeuses à Natanz, mais nous estimons avec un degré moyen de certitude qu'il rencontre encore des problèmes techniques significatifs pour les faire fonctionner.

– Nous estimons avec un degré moyen de certitude que la fin de l'année 2009 est la date la plus rapprochée à laquelle l'Iran serait techniquement capable de produire suffisamment d'uranium hautement enrichi pour pouvoir développer une arme nucléaire, mais que cette éventualité est très improbable.

– Nous estimons avec un degré moyen de certitude que l'Iran pourrait être techniquement capable de produire de l'uranium hautement enrichi en quantité suffisante pour une arme au cours de la période 2010-2015. (L'INR juge improbable que l'Iran parvienne à ce résultat avant 2013 en raison des problèmes techniques et programmatiques prévisibles.) L'ensemble des agences admet la possibilité que cette capacité puisse n'être atteinte qu'au-delà de 2015.

D. – Des entités iraniennes continuent de développer une série de capacités techniques qui, si la décision en était prise, pourraient être appliquées à la production d'armes nucléaires. Le programme civil iranien d'enrichissement de l'uranium, par exemple, se poursuit. Nous estimons également avec un haut degré de certitude que depuis l'automne 2003, l'Iran mène des projets de recherche et développement ayant des applications commerciales et militaires conventionnelles – dont certaines pourraient également être partiellement utilisées pour la mise au point d'armes nucléaires.

E. – Nous ne disposons pas de renseignements suffisants pour juger avec certitude si Téhéran est disposé à maintenir indéfiniment l'arrêt de son programme d'armes nucléaires tout en pesant ses options, ou s'il fixera ou a déjà fixé des dates limites ou certains critères spécifiques qui l'inciteront à redémarrer son programme.

– Notre estimation selon laquelle l'Iran a interrompu son programme en 2003 pour répondre avant tout à la pression internationale indique que les décisions de Téhéran sont régies par une approche coût-avantage plutôt que par une volonté d'obtenir le plus vite possible l'arme nucléaire

quels qu'en soient les coûts politique, économique et militaire. Ce qui, en retour, suggère qu'une combinaison de menaces d'une surveillance et de pressions internationales accrues, alliées à des opportunités offertes à l'Iran d'assurer sa sécurité et son prestige, et d'atteindre ses objectifs d'influence régionale par d'autres moyens, pourrait – à condition que les responsables iraniens la perçoivent comme crédible – inciter Téhéran à prolonger l'interruption actuelle de son programme d'armes nucléaires. Il est difficile de préciser ce que pourrait être une telle combinaison.

– Nous estimons avec un degré modéré de certitude qu'il sera difficile de convaincre les dirigeants iraniens à renoncer à un éventuel développement d'armes nucléaires étant donné le lien que beaucoup, au sein de la direction iranienne, voient probablement entre le développement d'armes nucléaires et les objectifs essentiels de l'Iran en matière de sécurité nationale et de politique étrangère, et vu les efforts considérables consentis par l'Iran pour développer de telles armes depuis au moins la fin des années 1980 jusqu'à 2003. Selon notre jugement, seule une décision politique iranienne de renoncer à la possession d'armes nucléaires pourrait de façon plausible empêcher l'Iran de pro-

duire à terme des armes nucléaires – et une telle décision serait, par nature, réversible.

F. – Nous estimons avec un degré modéré de certitude que l'Iran utiliserait probablement des installations secrètes – et non ses sites nucléaires déclarés – pour produire de l'uranium hautement enrichi à des fins militaires. Un nombre croissant de renseignements indique que l'Iran s'était effectivement engagé dans des activités secrètes de conversion et d'enrichissement de l'uranium, mais nous pensons que ces initiatives ont probablement été interrompues lors de l'arrêt du programme à l'automne 2003, et qu'à la mi-2007, elles n'avaient toujours pas été relancées.

G. – Nous estimons avec un haut degré de certitude que l'Iran ne sera pas techniquement en mesure de produire et de retraiter suffisamment de plutonium pour fabriquer une arme nucléaire avant 2015 environ.

H. – Nous estimons avec un haut degré de certitude que l'Iran possède la capacité scientifique, technique et industrielle pour produire à terme des armes nucléaires dans l'éventualité où il le déciderait. ■

Les différences essentielles entre 2005 et 2007

DANS CE RÉSUMÉ figurent : en gras, les estimations de la communauté du renseignement en 2005 ; en maigre, les estimations du Conseil national du renseignement en 2007. Les intertitres sont de la rédaction du *Monde*.

Les intentions de l'Iran

2005 : Il est estimé avec un haut degré de certitude que l'Iran est actuellement déterminé à développer des armes nucléaires malgré ses obligations internationales et la pression internationale, mais il n'est pas impossible que la position de l'Iran puisse évoluer.

2007 : Nous jugeons avec un haut degré de certitude qu'à l'automne 2003, Téhéran a stoppé son programme d'armes nucléaires. Nous jugeons avec un

haut degré de certitude que cette interruption a duré au moins plusieurs années. (Le département de l'énergie et le Conseil national du renseignement n'estiment toutefois qu'avec un degré de certitude modérée que l'arrêt de ces activités traduit un arrêt total du programme d'armements nucléaires de l'Iran.) Nous estimons avec un niveau modéré de certitude qu'à la mi-2007, Téhéran n'avait pas relancé son programme d'armement nucléaire, mais nous ignorons s'il a actuellement l'intention de développer des armes nucléaires. Nous estimons avec un haut degré de certitude que l'interruption du programme est due avant tout à la surveillance et à la pression internationales croissantes résultant de la mise au jour des activités nucléaires

iraniennes jusque-là non déclarées. Nous estimons avec un degré de certitude moyen à élevé que Téhéran laisse à tout le moins ouverte l'option de développer des armes nucléaires.

Les délais

2005 : Nous ne pouvons indiquer avec certitude la date à laquelle l'Iran sera capable de produire une arme nucléaire ; nous estimons peu probable qu'il y parvienne avant le début ou le milieu de la prochaine décennie.

2007 : Nous estimons avec un degré moyen de certitude que la fin de l'année 2009 est la date la plus rapprochée à laquelle l'Iran serait techniquement capable de produire suffisamment d'uranium hautement enrichi pour dévelop-

per une arme nucléaire, mais que cette éventualité est très improbable.

Les capacités techniques

2005 : L'Iran pourrait produire suffisamment de matériau fissile pour une arme nucléaire d'ici la fin de la décennie s'il faisait des progrès plus rapides et plus fructueux que ceux observés jusqu'à présent.

2007 : Nous estimons avec un degré moyen de certitude que l'Iran pourrait être techniquement capable de produire de l'uranium hautement enrichi en quantité suffisante pour une arme au cours de la période 2010-2015. (L'INR juge improbable que l'Iran parvienne à ce résultat avant 2013 en raison des problèmes techniques et programmatiques prévisibles.) ■

Etats-Unis Après le rapport du Renseignement national

sur le gel du programme nucléaire militaire iranien

Nucléaire : George Bush estime que l'Iran reste un danger

NEW YORK
CORRESPONDANT

George Bush, a défendu, mardi 4 décembre, sa politique vis-à-vis de l'Iran. « *L'Iran était dangereux, l'Iran est dangereux, et l'Iran restera dangereux s'il a le savoir-faire nécessaire pour produire une arme nucléaire* », a déclaré le président américain lors d'une conférence de presse. M. Bush réagissait à la publication, la veille, d'un rapport du Renseignement national, qui regroupe les seize principales agences d'espionnage des Etats-Unis, estimant que Téhéran a « *interrompu son programme d'armement nucléaire à l'automne 2003* ». Cette affirmation suscite d'innombrables questions.

Quelle est la fiabilité du rapport ?

« *Haut degré de certitude* », répondent ses auteurs, un terme fort dans le langage du monde du renseignement. Les Israéliens le récusent. Mardi, George Bush n'a pas remis en cause les faits énoncés. S'ils sont fiables, comment expliquer que la précédente « *estimation* » du Renseignement national, en 2005, ait conclu à la « *poursuite* » d'un programme iranien qui aurait été gelé deux ans auparavant ? Le Renseignement national s'était-il alors trompé ? Aurait-il subi des pressions pour abonder dans le sens voulu en haut lieu ?

Pourquoi la synthèse du rapport a-t-elle été révélée ?

Une âpre bataille a opposé le vice-président américain, Dick Cheney, au secrétaire à la défense, Robert Gates. Le chef de la majorité démocrate au Sénat, Harry Reid, aurait eu un poids considérable dans son issue. Si la Maison Blanche classe le rapport, il sera révélé d'une manière ou d'une autre, a-t-il menacé, et le coût politique pour la présidence sera immensément plus grave.

Par ailleurs, la communauté du renseignement, « *humiliée* » en 2002-2003 par l'utilisation faite de ses rapports sur l'existence ou non d'armes de destruction massive en Irak, dit un spécialiste, a lourdement insisté pour que ce document soit, cette fois, rendu public.



L'aggravation des sanctions contre Téhéran est-elle menacée ?

Le Renseignement national appelle à les renforcer. Mais la Maison Blanche a fait savoir, mardi, qu'elle craint des répercussions internationales « *négatives* ». Si l'Iran a réellement arrêté son projet nucléaire militaire, l'urgence de le sanctionner risque d'en pâtir, jugent des observateurs.

L'option militaire contre l'Iran est-elle abandonnée ?

Le rapport « *ne change rien* », a précisé, mardi, M. Bush. « *Une diplomatie efficace est une diplomatie où toutes les options sont ouvertes.* » Mais Barbara Bodine, diplomate et ex-coordinatrice américaine à Bagdad en 2003, estime que « *désormais, cette administration n'a plus de motif pour une offensive armée. Elle ne pourra l'engager sans un accord du Congrès, qui le lui refusera.* »

Assiste-t-on à un changement stratégique vis-à-vis de l'Iran ?

Beaucoup de commentateurs américains le pensent. Ils se basent sur deux phrases : une fois le régime iranien décrit comme « *guidé par une approche coût-bénéfice* » – donc accessible à la raison –, le rapport propose d'augmenter la pression sur lui tout en lui offrant de « *parvenir à accéder à ses objectifs de sécurité, de prestige et d'influence régionale* » sans recourir à la bombe atomique. Il ne s'agit plus de faire plier ce régime, mais d'allier les sanctions à des ouvertures pour qu'il cesse de craindre que Washington ne pense qu'à l'abattre. Pour M^{me} Bodine, « *plus les pressions marchent, et plus il faudra discuter avec Téhéran* ». Le sénateur républicain Chuck Hagel appelle à l'ouverture de pourparlers directs avec Téhéran.

Quand M. Bush a-t-il été informé d'un changement d'analyse du Renseignement national ?

La question est capitale pour la crédibilité du président. Que savait-il lorsqu'il évoquait, en septembre, la menace d'« *Holocauste nucléaire* », puis, le 17 octobre, celle d'une « *troisième guerre mondiale* » ? Selon le *Washington Post*, Mike McConnell, le directeur du Renseignement national, l'a informé « *en août* » des « *nouvelles informations* » (dont des écoutes de conversations entre hauts gradés iraniens) qui modifiaient le regard sur le nucléaire iranien. Réponse de M. Bush : « *Il ne m'a pas dit ce qu'elles étaient et [m'a dit] qu'il faudrait du temps pour les analyser.* »

Officiellement, MM. Bush et Cheney n'ont été informés du rapport final que le 28 novembre. Mais ses conclusions étaient connues d'eux « *ces dernières semaines* », selon des officiels s'exprimant sous couvert d'anonymat. Combien de semaines ? Plus ou moins de six (17 octobre – 28 novembre) ? C'est, pour M. Bush, une question cruciale. ■

SYLVAIN CYPEL

ISRAËL NUCLÉAIRE IRANIEN

Israël redoute un relâchement international vis-à-vis de Téhéran

JÉRUSALEM
CORRESPONDANT

Les autorités israéliennes ne veulent pas en démordre. En dépit de la publication du rapport, lundi 3 décembre, de seize agences de renseignement américaines, selon lequel l'Iran a stoppé son programme nucléaire militaire en 2003, les responsables de l'Etat juif restent persuadés du contraire. Le président Shimon Pérès s'est demandé, mercredi 5 décembre, pourquoi Téhéran « investit des milliards de dollars pour développer son programme d'armement atomique ainsi que des missiles balistiques à longue portée ».

En Israël, la presse évoque la « surprise » des autorités

Les conclusions des agences de renseignement américaines ont fait les gros titres du *Yediot Aharonot* et du *Haaretz*, en Israël, mardi 4 décembre. Les deux quotidiens ont évoqué la « surprise » des autorités israéliennes qui ont estimé désormais « très improbable » une opération militaire contre l'Iran en 2008. Alex Fishman, le chroniqueur militaire du *Yediot Aharonot*, considère que ce rapport est « un coup au-dessous de la ceinture » contre les autorités israéliennes qui s'efforcent d'alerter la communauté

Ehoud Barak, le ministre de la défense, pense la même chose et affirme : « On doit se souvenir que les mots n'arrêtent pas les missiles. » Ehoud Olmert, le premier ministre, assure qu'il est « nécessaire de poursuivre nos efforts avec nos amis américains pour empêcher l'Iran d'accéder à des armes non conventionnelles ». Tzipi Livni, la ministre des affaires étrangères, demande « des sanctions plus efficaces contre l'Iran » et fait remarquer que « toute forme d'hésitation sera perçue comme une faiblesse de la communauté internationale ». Et d'insister sur le fait que « le monde ne peut permettre à l'Iran de se doter de l'arme

internationale sur le danger que représentent, selon elles, les ambitions nucléaires iraniennes. Selon le *Yediot*, les services de renseignement israéliens ne partagent pas les analyses américaines et la « crédibilité » israélienne, sur ce point, risque donc d'être affaiblie. Le ministre de la défense, Ehoud Barak, a d'ailleurs estimé, mardi 4 décembre, à la radio militaire, que l'Iran avait « probablement » relancé son programme d'armes nucléaires depuis 2003.

M. Ahmadinejad crie victoire, M. Bush affirme que l'Iran reste un danger

LE PRÉSIDENT américain George Bush a tourné en dérision, mercredi 5 décembre, les proclamations de « victoire » faites par Téhéran, après la publication, lundi, du rapport du Renseignement américain estimant que l'Iran a suspendu son programme nucléaire militaire en 2003. « Vous pouvez écrire sur vos carnets que j'ai ri », a dit M. Bush lors d'un déplacement à Omaha (Nebraska).

Quelques heures plus tôt, le président iranien, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, estimant que ce rapport avait donné « le coup de grâce aux espoirs des ennemis de l'Iran » avait déclaré : « Il vise à sortir le gouvernement américain de l'impasse, mais il s'agit de la déclaration de la victoire du peuple iranien face aux grandes puissances. » Expliquant que le contentieux nucléaire était désormais « clos », M. Ahmadinejad a indiqué que l'Iran poursuivra ses activités et « ne bougera pas d'un iota sur son droit au nucléaire civil. » Avant d'ajouter : « Si nous voulons fournir du combustible nucléaire pen-

dant un an à une centrale nucléaire, nous devons avoir 50 000 centrifugeuses pour enrichir l'uranium. » Plusieurs dirigeants iraniens ont réclamé que les Etats-Unis présentent leurs excuses et dédommagent l'Iran.

George Bush estime cependant que ce rapport ne « change rien » à la politique américaine, que l'Iran reste un danger et que la communauté internationale doit maintenir ses pressions sur Téhéran.

A cet égard, le président américain s'est entretenu, mercredi soir, avec son homologue français Nicolas Sarkozy. Selon David Martinon, porte-parole de l'Elysée, M. Bush a exposé les conclusions de l'étude des services américains et « les éléments nouveaux qu'elle contient, notamment sur des activités à caractère nucléaire militaire que l'Iran aurait conduites ». M. Sarkozy aurait répondu que « si cela était confirmé, les préoccupations internationales depuis 2002 sur les finalités nucléaires en Iran seraient encore renforcées ». - (AFP.) ■

Le Monde
7 décembre 2007

nucléaire ».

Tous les dirigeants israéliens ont minimisé les conclusions du rapport du renseignement américain et fait valoir qu'il n'était pas question de baisser la garde. Une certaine déception mêlée de frustration se fait jour dans les commentaires. On retrouve le même sentiment de désapprobation qui s'est manifesté en décembre 2006 lors de la publication du rapport Baker-Hamilton sur l'Irak.

Et, surtout, il est regretté que la possibilité d'accroître la pression au moyen d'un troisième volet de sanctions semble s'éloigner, de même que l'option militaire, qui paraît désormais plus aléatoire, ce qui contrarie sérieusement la campagne de

sensibilisation internationale entreprise par Israël à travers le monde.

Cette campagne va se poursuivre, a indiqué Ehoud Olmert. Tzipi Livni doit se rendre, vendredi 7 décembre, à Bruxelles, pour continuer d'inciter les nations de l'Union européenne et les pays de l'OTAN à durcir les sanctions internationales contre Téhéran.

Les autorités israéliennes avaient déjà vivement protesté après la publication, à la mi-novembre, du rapport de Mohamed ElBaradei, le directeur de l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA), qui avait minimisé les risques d'acquisition à court terme de l'arme nucléaire par l'Iran. Il avait été accusé de « mettre en danger la paix du monde » et sa démission avait été réclamée par le vice-premier ministre, Shaul Mofaz. Celui-ci avait fustigé les conclusions du rapport selon lesquelles il n'y a aucune preuve permettant d'affirmer que l'Iran se dote d'un programme nucléaire militaire.

« Troisième plan »

Les journaux israéliens sont convaincus du contraire et avancent la théorie d'un « troisième plan », qui permettrait à Téhéran de développer, secrètement, une capacité nucléaire militaire. Aucun élément de preuve n'est fourni et les services de renseignement israéliens sont sommés de se mettre au travail pour le démontrer. Comme le dit Yossi Melman, journaliste au quotidien *Haaretz* : « Si Israël n'avait pas de preuve auparavant, pourquoi en trouverait-il maintenant ? »

En attendant, en raison des menaces répétées proférées par le président iranien Mahmoud Ahmadinejad contre l'Etat juif, le ministère de la défense israélien a décidé, début novembre, de se doter, avec l'aide des Américains, d'un nouveau système de défense antimissile baptisé « Fronde de David ». ■

MICHEL BÔLE-RICHARD

AFP

Turquie : huit rebelles du PKK tués dans des combats, 14 en deux jours

ANKARA, 5 déc 2007 (AFP) – Huit rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont été tués mercredi au cours de combats dans le sud-est de la Turquie, portant à 14 le nombre de rebelles abattus en deux jours dans cette région montagneuse, a annoncé l'état-major turc dans un communiqué.

Les heurts se sont produits dans la zone du mont Küpeli, dans la province de Sîrnak, où l'armée menait une opération contre les séparatistes, indique le document.

Un officier a été tué dans les accrochages mardi.

D'importantes réserves de vivres, des documents appartenant au PKK et des armes ont été retrouvés dans la zone des combats, poursuit le document.

Une bombe a par ailleurs explosé mercredi soir devant un commissariat de Diyarbakir, la principale ville du sud-est anatolien, sans faire de victime, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie.

L'engin explosif a été lancé vers 22H00 (20H00 GMT) contre la porte d'entrée du bâtiment par un individu non identifié, la déflagration causant des bris de verre dans le voisinage, indique l'agence.

Selon les autorités, les rebelles tués au cours des deux derniers jours font partie du groupe qui a attaqué le 7 octobre dernier un poste militaire, tuant 13 soldats.

L'attaque avait suscité l'indignation dans l'opinion publique turque et renforcé l'hypothèse d'une intervention armée dans le nord de l'Irak, dont le PKK se sert comme base arrière pour réaliser des opérations dans le sud-est anatolien dont la population est en majorité kurde.

Une première opération restreinte faisant intervenir l'artillerie et des hélicoptères de combat a été déclenchée samedi contre une position du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak, le vice-Premier ministre Cemil Cicek et le chef d'état-major, le général Yasar Büyükanit, indiquant que d'autres devraient suivre

Irak: Attentat contre la police irakienne à Mossoul après l'arrivée de Gates

AFP

MOSSOUL (Irak), 5 déc 2007 (AFP) - Une personne a été tuée et cinq autres ont été blessées dans un attentat contre une patrouille de police, mercredi à Mossoul, peu après l'arrivée dans cette ville du nord de l'Irak du secrétaire américain à la Défense Robert Gates.

Un engin piégé a explosé au passage d'une patrouille de la police irakienne dans le quartier d'al-Dawassa, dans le centre de Mossoul, a indiqué à l'AFP un responsable de la police locale, le général Abdoul Karim Khalaf al-Joubouri.

Une personne, un civil, a été tuée et cinq autres ont été blessées, dont un policier, a précisé le général Joubouri.

Cet attentat a eu lieu peu après l'arrivée sur la base militaire américaine de Mossoul du secrétaire américain à la Défense Robert Gates, venu pour une visite surprise de quelques heures en Irak.

La base est située hors de Mossoul, au sud de la ville, où se trouve également

l'aéroport.

De nombreux hélicoptères et avions de chasse survolaient la région mercredi matin, mais aucun renfort de la police ou de l'armée irakienne n'était visible dans les rues de la ville à l'occasion de la visite du responsable américain.

A Kirkouk (250 km au nord de Bagdad), un responsable de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK, l'une des deux grandes formations politiques kurde irakienne) a été la cible d'un attentat à la voiture piégée, selon le général de police Torhan Youssef.

Deux personnes ont été tuées et dix autres blessées, a indiqué le général Youssef, précisant que le responsable kurde, visé, dont il n'a pas voulu donner le nom, est sorti indemne de l'attaque.

Quatre de ses gardes figurent parmi les blessés, selon la même source.

Huit membres des forces de sécurité kurdes tués dans le nord de l'Irak

AFP

SOULEIMANIEYH (Irak), 6 déc 2007 (AFP) - - Huit membres des forces de sécurité kurdes, les peshmergas, ont été tués jeudi par des insurgés dans une attaque contre un poste de contrôle dans le nord de l'Irak, selon un responsable kurde.

Jabbar Yawar, commandant des peshmergas, qui assurent la sécurité dans la zone autonome du Kurdistan irakien, a précisé que l'incident s'est produit près de la ville de Karatappa, dans la province voisine de Diyala.

"Huit peshmergas ont été tués et cinq blessés lorsque les terroristes ont attaqué leur poste de contrôle", a indiqué à l'AFP Jabbar Yawar.

La fusillade a duré plus de deux heures, a-t-il précisé, et trois assaillants ont été tués.

Des unités de peshmergas ont été envoyés dans la région de Karatappa, où sont installés des communautés kurdes chiites, alors que la province de Diyala est le théâtre d'une offensive américaine contre les émules irakiens d'Al-Qaïda.

France: un centre culturel kurde inculpé pour financement du terrorisme

AFP

PARIS, 7 déc 2007 (AFP) - Le Centre culturel kurde de Paris a été mis en examen vendredi en tant que personne morale pour association de malfaiteurs en relation avec une entreprise terroriste et financement du terrorisme pour ses liens présumés avec l'organisation séparatiste kurde PKK, a-t-on appris de sources proches du dossier.

Le Centre Ahmet Kaya, au centre de Paris, était représenté par l'un de ses dirigeants Kargeha Ozgul. Il s'est vu infliger une caution de 14.000 euros.

Cette association a pour objectif de "favoriser l'insertion progressive" de la population kurde installée en région parisienne, selon le site internet du Centre.

La justice le soupçonne d'être en lien avec le PKK et de lui fournir un soutien financier.

Cette inculpation intervient dans le cadre d'une information judiciaire ouverte en juillet 2006 et qui a conduit à l'interpellation et la mise en examen de 15 Kurdes en février dernier pour les mêmes chefs et "blanchiment d'argent en

relation avec une entreprise terroriste".

De nationalité turque et australienne pour un d'entre eux et régulièrement installés en France, ils sont soupçonnés d'avoir participé au financement d'attentats commis en Turquie par le TAK, les "Faucons de la liberté", une émanation du PKK, ainsi qu'à des combats au Kurdistan irakien.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis, se bat depuis 1984 pour l'indépendance du Sud-Est de la Turquie à la population majoritairement kurde. Le conflit a fait environ 37.000 morts.

L'avocat du Centre, Me William Bourdon, s'est insurgé contre cette mise en examen qui selon lui "ne repose sur rien" et a annoncé son intention de faire une requête en annulation devant la chambre de l'instruction.

"A suivre le juge d'instruction, tous les mouvements de sympathisants kurdes doivent être assimilés avec le PKK, c'est inacceptable," a-t-il affirmé, dénonçant une "logique d'amalgame".

Notes from secret Iran talks led to U.S. reversal

By David E. Sanger and Steven Lee Myers

WASHINGTON: U.S. intelligence agencies reversed their view about the status of Iran's nuclear weapons program after they obtained notes last summer from the deliberations of Iranian military officials involved in the program, senior U.S. intelligence and government officials say.

The notes included conversations and deliberations in which some of the military officials complained bitterly about what they termed a decision by their superiors in late 2003 to end a complex engineering effort to design nuclear weapons, including a warhead that could fit atop Iranian missiles.

The notes contradicted public assertions by U.S. intelligence officials that the design effort was still active. But according to the intelligence and government officials, who spoke Wednesday, they give no hint why Iran's leadership decided to halt the covert effort.

Ultimately, the notes and deliberations were corroborated by other intelligence, the officials said, including intercepted conversations among Iranian officials that were collected in recent months. It is not clear whether those conversations involved the same officers and others whose deliberations were recounted in the notes or whether they included their superiors.

The U.S. officials who described the

highly classified operation — which led to one of the biggest reversals in the history of U.S. nuclear intelligence — declined to describe how the notes were obtained.

But they said that the CIA and other agencies had organized a “red team” to determine whether the information might have been part of an elaborate disinformation campaign mounted by Iran to derail the effort to impose sanctions against it.

Ultimately, U.S. intelligence officials rejected that theory, though they were challenged to defend that conclusion in a meeting two weeks ago in the White House situation room, in which the notes and deliberations were described to the most senior members of President George W. Bush's national security team, including Vice President Dick Cheney.

“It was a pretty vivid exchange,” said one participant in the conversation.

The officials said they were confident that the notes confirmed the existence, up to 2003, of a weapons program that U.S. officials first learned about from a laptop computer, belonging to an Iranian engineer, that came into the hands of the CIA in 2004.

Ever since the major findings of the new National Intelligence Estimate on Iran's nuclear program were made public Monday, the White House has refused to discuss details of what Bush, in a news conference on Tuesday, termed a “great discovery” that led to the reversal.

Some of Bush's critics have questioned why he did not adjust his rhetoric about Iran after the intelligence agencies began to question their earlier findings.

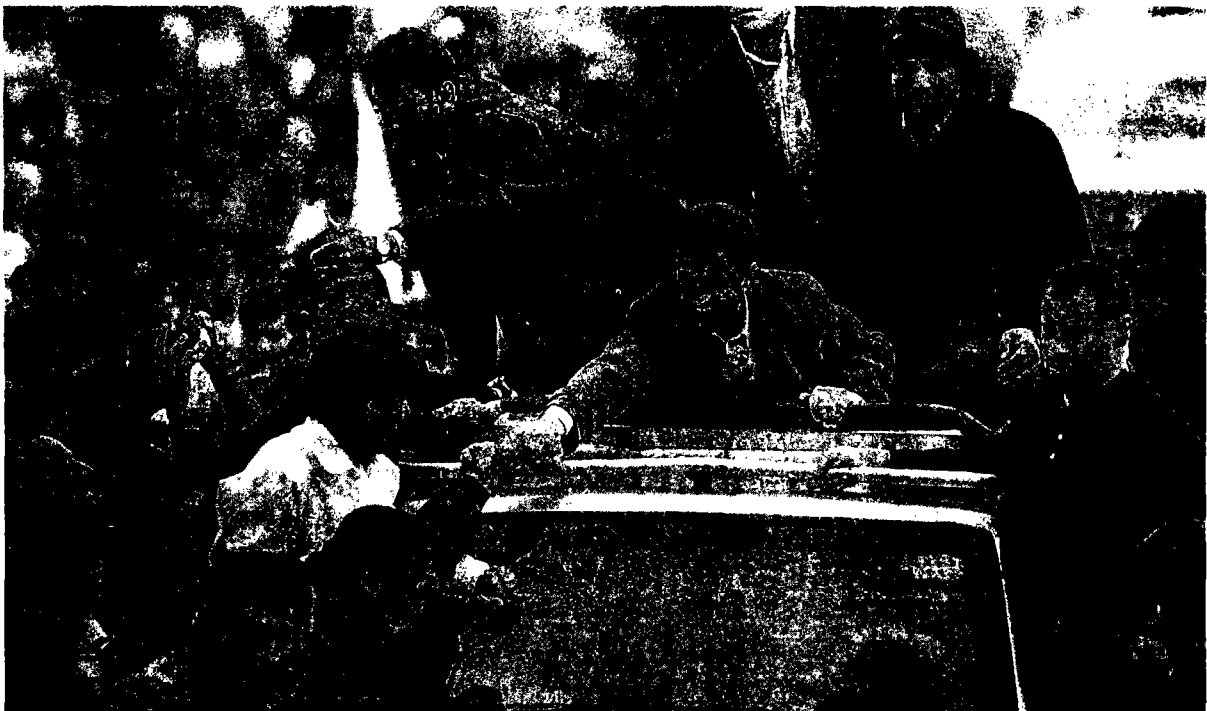
In a statement Wednesday, the White House revised its account of what Bush was told in August and acknowledged that Mike McConnell, the director of national intelligence, had informed him that new information might show that “Iran does in fact have a covert weapons program, but it may be suspended.”

Dana Perino, the White House press secretary, said McConnell had warned the president that “the new information might cause the intelligence community to change its assessment of Iran's covert nuclear program, but the intelligence community was not prepared to draw any conclusions at that point in time, and it wouldn't be right to speculate until they had time to examine and analyze the new data.”

A senior intelligence official and a senior White House official said that McConnell had been cautious in his presentation to Bush in an attempt to avoid a mistake made in the months leading to the Iraq war, in which raw intelligence was shared with the White House before it had been tested and analyzed.

“There was a big lesson learned in 2002,” the top intelligence official said. “You can make enough mistakes in this business even if you don't rush things.”

In fact, some in the intelligence agencies appear not to be fully convinced



Mehdi Ghaseini/The Associated Press

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Wednesday that the latest U.S. assessment of Iran's nuclear program was “a declaration of victory” for the country against world powers.

that the notes of the deliberations indicated that all aspects of the weapons program had been shut down.

The crucial judgments made public Monday said that while "we judge with high confidence that the halt lasted at least several years," it also included the warning that "intelligence gaps discussed elsewhere in this Estimate" led the Energy Department and the National Intelligence Council "to assess with only moderate confidence that the halt to those activities represents a halt to Iran's entire nuclear weapons program."

The account is the most detailed explanation provided by U.S. officials about how they came to contradict an assertion, spelled out in a 2005 National Intelligence Estimate and repeated by Bush, that Iran had an active weapons program. Several news organizations have reported that the reversal was prompted in part by intercepts of conversations involving Iranian officials.

In an article published Wednesday, The Los Angeles Times said another main ingredient in the reversal was

what it called a journal from an Iranian source that documented decisions to close down the nuclear program.

The senior intelligence and government officials said a more precise description of that intelligence would be exchanges among members of a large group, one responsible for both designing weapons and integrating them into delivery vehicles.

The discovery led officials to revisit intelligence mined in 2004 and 2005 from the laptop obtained from the Iranian engineer. The documents in that laptop described two programs, termed L-101 and L-102 by the Iranians, describing designs and computer simulations that appeared to be related to weapons work. Information from the laptop became one of the chief pieces of evidence cited in the 2005 intelligence estimate that concluded, "Iran currently is determined to develop nuclear weapons."

The newly obtained notes of the deliberations did not precisely match up with the programs described in the laptop, said officials who have ex-

amined both sets of data, but they said they were closely related.

On Wednesday, Bush repeated his demand that Tehran "come clean" and disclose details of the covert weapons program that U.S. intelligence agencies said operated from the 1980s until the autumn of 2003.

Iran's government, Bush said, "has more to explain about its nuclear intentions and past actions, especially the covert nuclear weapons program pursued until the autumn of 2003, which the Iranian regime has yet to acknowledge."

Bush spoke at Eppley Airfield near Omaha, Nebraska, where a visit intended to showcase health care and to raise money for a Senate race was overshadowed by the furor caused by the report and Iran's taunting reaction to it.

France and Germany want no letup on Iran

Nuclear program still a danger, they say

By **Katrin Bennhold**

PARIS: France and Germany said Thursday that Iran remained a "danger" and that the international community needed to keep up the pressure over its nuclear program despite a U.S. intelligence report concluding that Tehran was no longer building a bomb.

The joint remarks, from two countries that have been important in the diplomatic standoff with Iran, will have come as a relief to Washington four days after the publication of the U.S. National Intelligence Estimate was feared to erode support for tougher new sanctions.

Speaking in a joint news conference at Élysée Palace, President Nicolas Sarkozy and Chancellor Angela Merkel indicated that the findings had not changed their mind.

"The threat exists," said Sarkozy, one of the staunchest defenders of tough new measures. "Notwithstanding the latest elements, everyone is fully conscious of the fact that there is a will among the Iranian leaders to obtain nuclear weapons."

"I don't see why we should renounce sanctions," he added. "What made Iran budge so far has been sanctions and firmness."

Merkel stopped short of explicitly mentioning sanctions, but also appeared determined to support current negotiations in the UN Security Council about new measures.

"I think that we are in a process and that Iran continues to pose a danger," she said.

The National Intelligence Estimate made public on Monday said that Tehran had frozen its nuclear weapons program in 2003.

But it also said the country was continuing to build up technical know-how that could be used both for civilian and military purposes.

Both leaders urged to continue with a twin strategy of combining pressure with dialogue.

In comments apparently aimed at Russia and China, two members of the Security Council who have dragged their feet on new sanctions, Sarkozy urged that there be a "coherent" position, a view Merkel said she shared.

■ Rice wants more pressure

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice began talks on Thursday in Brussels with European and Russian officials to urge greater international pressure on Iran to halt uranium enrichment and

answer questions about its nuclear programs, The Associated Press reported.

The talks are Rice's first face-to-face sessions with world powers considering new UN sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program since the National Intelligence Estimate was released Monday.

"I don't see that the NIE changes the course that we're on," Rice told reporters as she flew to Belgium for a conference of NATO foreign ministers and talks between the alliance and former Cold War foe Russia, which, along with China, has been particularly resistant to new sanctions.

Rice also will see the Israeli foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, on Friday. Israeli officials say their intelligence forces believe Iran is still working aggressively to build nuclear arms, despite the new U.S. conclusion about Iran.

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
THE WORLD'S DAILY NEWSPAPER

December 7, 2007

Oil showdown in Kurdistan

By Lydia Khalil

Article 3, paragraph 3 of the Oil and Gas Law of the Kurdistan Region seems straightforward enough: "The regional government shall, together with the federal government, jointly manage petroleum operations ... according to the provisions of the federal constitution" [1].

The law seems clear until one discovers that no comparable federal (meaning national) oil law has been passed and that the provisions within the federal constitution are still hotly contested by many quarters within the Iraqi government. The confusion has

not only stalled oil exploration and production efforts, it carries a palpable security threat as well.

Despite opposition from the national government in Baghdad and its neighbors, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has refused to be held back by the indecision and infighting that characterizes the central government. They have charged ahead, passing their own Oil and Gas Law and forming four regional oil-related companies - the Kurdistan Exploration and Production Company, Kurdistan National Oil Company, Kurdistan Oil Marketing Organization and Kurdistan Organization for Downstream Operations - and signed seven new exploration deals with both Kurdish and international petroleum firms. Kurdish officials claim they are well within their legal right to go forward with the exploration deals and that fears of the KRG monopolizing subsequent oil revenues are unfounded.

Iraqi president and Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani explained, "Regarding the Kurdistan region's contracts, they do not deal with oil production and exploitation, but with the initial stage of oil exploration. When we reach the stage of production and exploitation, we need to go back to Baghdad in accordance with Article 12 of the Iraqi constitution. Hence the Kurdish position is misrepresented ... The Kurds have not made any demand to monopolize the oil and its revenues. We implement the relevant constitutional provisions and believe that oil and its revenues should be shared and distributed equally and fairly to all Iraqi regions without exception."

Using oil to ensure autonomy

Despite Kurdish protestations and assurances, the oil contracts are an obvious attempt to raise the KRG's strategic and international profile, as well as a means of consolidating its current level of autonomy and relative prosperity. The Kurds have clearly stated that they will not allow indecision in Baghdad to hinder their hard-won progress nor slow down any momentum towards economic development and regional autonomy.

But what Kurdish officials often fail to mention is that there are a host of other issues that impact Iraqi and regional opinion of the Kurdish oil contracts. Turkey, Iran and Iraq's Sunni Arabs all cast a wary eye over the slightest movements towards Kurdish autonomy. Given this ultra sensitive environment, the new oil contracts are as much of a security risk to the KRG as they are a potential boon to its economy and strategic profile.

The central Iraqi government has already called the exploration contracts illegal and threatened to impose sanctions on any of the foreign companies involved in the deal, preventing them from any future work with the Iraqi state.

Not only that, Iraqi Oil Minister Hussein Shahrishi

recently declared that any oil contracts signed with KRG officials are null and void. "The Iraqi government had warned these companies of the consequences of entering into these contracts, and the consequence is that Iraq will not allow these companies to extract the oil."

It is not entirely clear how the central government plans to enforce this, short of stationing Iraqi military forces in Kurdistan, since KRG officials remain defiant and refuse to bow to Baghdad pressure. In a sharply worded official rebuttal, the KRG pledged to move forward with the oil exploration projects. "We are not deterred by Dr Shahrishi's views. Experience shows that most international oil companies (IOCs) now ignore his unhelpful interventions. We know that the KRG is doing the right thing by encouraging the IOCs to invest in Kurdistan ... We would like to remind Dr Shahrishi that we neither expect nor accept threats, sanctions and punishments from partners in our coalition government in Baghdad. The Kurdistan Alliance List [a parliamentary alliance of the PUK and KDP] is a partner in Iraq, not a rogue region to be threatened or punished ... Empty threats and talk of blackmail will not last. We are sure that eventually common sense will prevail in dealing with these matters."

Accusing Shahrishi of relying on Ba'athist and Saddamist frameworks, Kurdish leaders blasted Shahrishi's record and reminded Iraqis that oil found in northern Iraq will benefit all Iraqis because of the obligations drafted under the Revenue Sharing Law. The response of foreign companies involved in the oil exploration deals will likely resolve the rhetorical battle, but the disagreement between the national government and the KRG has greater consequences for regional security.

More pressing for the Iraqi Kurds, the oil deals threaten to exacerbate their fragile and historically hostile relationship with Turkey. Turkey has stationed thousands of troops along the border it shares with the KRG and has conducted limited incursions to flush out Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) fighters hiding out in the Kurdish mountains. Turkey claims that PKK units operating out of Iraqi Kurdish territory have perpetrated attacks inside Turkey and accuse KRG officials of neglect or even collusion.

While the PKK presence in Iraqi Kurdistan is a pressing security concern, the long-term regional, particularly Turkish, worry is the growing autonomy of the KRG and the prospect of eventual Kurdish secession from Iraqi territory. In the current environment, the two issues are easily conflated.

Dispute over Kirkuk

The recent oil exploration contracts also bring to mind Kurdish strategy in Kirkuk. In the minds of many within the region, and inside Iraq, the key to Kurdish independence lies with Kirkuk, where most of the oil in northern Iraq is located.

Kirkuk is not under KRG administration yet, but the Kurdish leadership is doing everything within its power to ensure that it will be. The Kurds and the Turkomen both have historic claims to Kirkuk and want to rectify the injustice of the Arabization policy imposed on the oil-rich province by Saddam Hussein. No one denies, however, that Kirkuk's oil resources are the main prize.

The current territory under Kurdish regional administration contains only about 0.5% of Iraq's proven oil reserves, while Kirkuk has 11 billion barrels of proven reserves. Iraq has a total of 115

billion barrels of proven oil reserves, though much of the country remains unexplored.

Therefore any Kurdish moves on Kirkuk are viewed with extreme suspicion. The referendum to decide whether Kirkuk province should be administered under the KRG, scheduled to take place this month, has been postponed. If Kirkuk does eventually decide to ally itself with the KRG administration, Turkey will surely not sit idly by and let this happen.

The Turks and Iraqi Arabs are already compiling evidence of aggressive Kurdish action in Kirkuk, such as Kurdish party officials paying Arab families to leave ahead of decisions by the Property Claims Commission and the resettling of supporters of Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in Kirkuk in advance of the referendum.

If Kurdish officials are demonstrating their defiance now in pursuing the oil exploration contracts despite Iraqi and regional opposition, Turkey, Iran and their Iraqi brothers will not be inclined to give the Kurdish leadership the benefit of the doubt when they claim they harbor no intentions to secede by claiming Kirkuk. But Turkey and other regional powers are not the only security threats to the KRG. Iraqi insurgents have also set their sights on Kirkuk.

In the latest attack, a suicide bomber targeted a top Kirkuki security official, killing five and wounding 20. As al-Qaeda and their supporters have been flushed out of Iraq's al-Anbar province and many parts of Baghdad, they are traveling out, upwards and along the borders. Their presence is being increasingly felt at points north. The November 15 suicide attack in Kirkuk was just one of dozens, if not hundreds, of attacks on Kirkuk this year.

The new exploration fields are a promising target to incoming insurgents and an increasingly violent indigenous Kurdish opposition to the PUK-KDP power monopoly in the KRG. A recent explosion at one exploration field, though it was deemed an engineering failure, was immediately thought to be the work of saboteurs.

Conclusion

Though the Kurds insist the law is on their side with regard to the recent oil exploration deals, most of their neighbors and fellow Iraqis disagree. Kurds have achieved much since 1991 - a certain degree of autonomy, influence within the Baghdad government, strong economic ties with Turkey and the support of the United States.

But the continuation and progress of these achievements should not be taken for granted. They threaten to unravel if Turkish suspicion morphs into Turkish aggression or if future conflicts over oil devolve into civil conflict, erasing security gains in the KRG. But the achievements in Kurdistan did not come about without the Kurdish leadership taking risky decisions. Going forward with the oil exploration deals is a gamble they are apparently willing to take, but one not without dangers.

Note

1. The Oil and Gas Law of the Kurdistan Region.

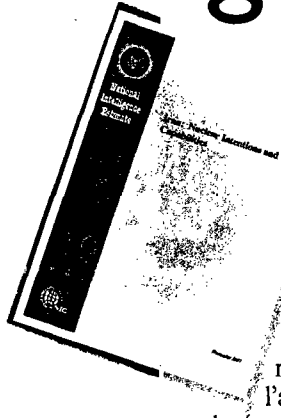
(This article first appeared in The Jamestown Foundation. Used with permission.)

Menace nucléaire iranienne

Le rapport qui change tout



Mahmoud Ahmadinejad le 28 novembre à Téhéran



La révélation de ces conclusions radicalement nouvelles a fait l'effet d'un tremblement de terre à Washington. Pressentant ce séisme, la Maison-Blanche a d'abord voulu garder secrète cette NIE, dont la version complète destinée à l'administration et au Congrès comprend 150 pages. Le patron du renseignement, l'amiral McConnell, l'avait annoncé le 13 novembre. Mais la peur des fuites non contrôlées a poussé l'équipe Bush à faire machine arrière et à rendre public un résumé explosif. Mais que pouvait-on dire dans ce texte destiné à la presse ? Le débat interne entre les faucons et les « réalistes » a duré tout le week-end précédent la publication. Venu discrètement à Paris, le samedi 1er décembre, briefer les autorités françaises sur cette NIE, l'amiral McConnell a confié à ses interlocuteurs ne pas encore savoir ce qui serait révélé au monde deux jours plus tard.

Finalement la NIE déclassifiée ne comporte que huit pages mais constitue bien un camouflet sans précédent pour le président des Etats-Unis. Car elle contredit radicalement la précédente « estimation », celle dont Bush se servait, il y a quelques jours encore, pour justifier ses diatribes belliqueuses à l'égard de l'Iran. Cette synthèse de 2005 affirmait « avec un haut degré de certitude » que « l'Iran était déterminé » à fabriquer une bombe atomique, que son programme nucléaire secret était actif et que Téhéran pourrait disposer d'une arme peut-être dès 2010.

Pourquoi un tel changement d'« estimation » ? Pour deux raisons. La première est d'ordre technique. Selon le « New York Times », l'unité spéciale de la CIA chargée du dossier iranien et surnommée « la Maison perse », a mis la main, au printemps dernier, sur un document top secret : le compte-rendu d'une réunion entre hauts gradés iraniens. Selon ces notes manuscrites, les officiers se plaignaient amèrement de l'arrêt, fin 2003, des travaux sur les têtes nucléaires. Stupéfaits, les agents américains ont rouvert leur dossier de 2005. La pièce à conviction qui, à l'époque, prouvait que Téhéran travaillait activement à la militarisation de l'atome

était une série de schémas d'une tête nucléaire que la CIA avait retrouvés, l'année précédente, dans l'ordinateur portable d'un ingénieur iranien. Mais, en fait, les dernières mises à jour de ces dessins remontaient à février 2003. Il était donc bien plausible que les Iraniens aient arrêté leurs travaux après cette date. Au cours de l'été, les espions ont corroboré ces révélations par des écoutes téléphoniques et autres interceptions. Et à l'automne, ils ont vérifié qu'ils n'étaient pas victimes d'une vaste opération de désinformation orchestrée par Téhéran. Voilà pour l'aspect technique.

Mais il y a une autre raison, politique celle-là, à ce revirement soudain. « Les services américains sentaient qu'une nouvelle guerre se préparait, dit un officiel français. Par cette NIE, ils ont voulu aussi dire à Bush : sans nous ! Celle-là, nous ne la cautionnerons pas ! » Dans cette fronde, le Pentagone a joué les premiers rôles puisque sur les seize agences de renseignement consultées, neuf dépendent de lui.

Ces derniers mois, tout laissait penser que la Maison-Blanche programmait des frappes contre l'Iran. Forte de l'estimation alarmiste de 2005, l'administration Bush tentait de convaincre l'opinion publique mondiale que l'Iran représentait un danger immédiat. A l'écouter, Téhéran, tout à son obsession de l'arme atomique, était sur le point de franchir un point de non retour. Selon les faucons, les sanctions de l'ONU, trop molles, ne pouvaient arrêter les mollahs dans leur course folle vers la bombe. Du coup, à mots à peine couverts, Bush et Cheney menaçaient de bombarder l'Iran afin, assuraient-ils, d'éviter « une troisième guerre mondiale ». Ravis, les *think tanks* néoconservateurs présentaient déjà des plans de frappes en kit : une guerre « sans risque » façon La Redoute - 48 heures chrono, avec force bombardiers furtifs et missiles de croisière.

Tétanisés, les responsables occidentaux et arabes retenaient leur souffle, en attendant l'inévitable déflagration. Beaucoup la prévoyaient pour l'été 2008. D'autres pour plus tôt encore. « Notre estimation, c'est que Bush va taper et peut-être très vite », confiait au « Nouvel Observateur » un responsable français quelques jours avant la publication de la NIE.

Aujourd'hui, les anticipations ont radicalement changé. Le monde entier ou presque est convaincu que l'option militaire est désormais « off the table », comme on dit à Washington ; que la guerre tant de fois annoncée (1) n'est plus d'actualité. Et c'est bien là la principale conséquence du choc produit par la nouvelle NIE. « Une attaque est exclue et cela pour plusieurs années » prédit Hans Blix, ancien patron des inspecteurs en désarmement pour l'Irak. Même Robert Kagan, un géo-stratège très écouté à Washington qui, au début de l'année, considérait que la diplomatie avec l'Iran était une « futilité », même lui, juge que l'option militaire a « disparu ». Et, selon nos sources, les

Après la volte-face spectaculaire du renseignement américain et le démenti apporté à George Bush par ses propres services secrets, la Maison-Blanche a probablement renoncé à frapper les installations atomiques iraniennes. Mais est-elle prête, pour autant, à ouvrir une négociation stratégique avec Téhéran ?

De notre envoyé spécial Vincent Jauvert

La communauté internationale est en état de choc », confiait un responsable français au « Nouvel Observateur », au lendemain de la publication à Washington de la dernière synthèse des renseignements américains sur l'Iran. Que dit cette note, cette *National Intelligence Estimate* (NIE), de si important pour l'avenir du monde ? 1) Téhéran a gelé son programme nucléaire militaire clandestin à l'automne 2003 ; 2) les espions américains « ignorent si [la République islamique] a, aujourd'hui, l'intention de développer » la bombe atomique ; 3) les dirigeants iraniens ne sont pas des fous mais des leaders rationnels dont « les décisions sont régies par une approche coût-avantage ».

Quand Sarkozy persiste...

Sur l'Iran, Nicolas Sarkozy est désormais plus radical que les services secrets des Etats-Unis. Le 6 décembre, il a parlé de « la volonté des dirigeants iraniens d'obtenir le nucléaire militaire ». Or, dans leur rapport du 3 décembre, les espions américains ont écrit : « Nous ignorons si [l'Iran] a actuellement l'intention de développer des armes nucléaires. » Disposerait-on à l'Elysée de renseignements particuliers ? Il ne semble pas. En fait, selon plusieurs sources,



Nicolas Sarkozy et George Bush le 30 novembre

Douttery-Abaca

les autorités françaises n'ont pas reçu, depuis plusieurs années, d'informations nouvelles concernant le programme nucléaire militaire iranien lancé à la fin de la décennie 1980 et elles ne peuvent dire si celui-ci est toujours actif ou pas. Nicolas Sarkozy voulait-il dire en fait que l'Iran souhaite garder ouverte une « option » militaire, ce qui serait plus conforme aux estimations actuelles de l'administration ? Si oui, ne devrait-il pas nuancer ses propos ? ■ V.J.

dépit de ses conclusions ? On ne peut écarter cette hypothèse.

De toute façon, ne nous y trompons pas : le choc du 3 décembre digéré, le débat sur la guerre sera bientôt relancé à Washington – et, bien sûr, à Tel Aviv (voir l'article d'Henri Guirchoun p. 70). En quels termes ? Les opposants aux frappes diront que, c'est vrai, il n'y a pas, en Iran, de justification civile à un programme d'enrichissement de l'uranium puisque le pays regorge d'hydrocarbures ; mais ils ajouteront que, selon la NIE du 3 décembre, ces travaux coûteux sont destinés à asseoir le prestige de l'Iran dans la région et pas forcément à construire une bombe. Ils déclareront aussi que, toujours d'après la dernière « estimation », même si les Iraniens produisent un jour de l'uranium hautement enrichi, cela ne leur servira à rien puisqu'ils ne savent pas construire de bombe, leurs travaux ad hoc ayant été suspendus en 2003.

Mais les faucons contre-attaqueront avec la virulence et le brio qu'on leur connaît. L'un de leurs chefs de file, John Bolton, a déjà lancé les premières salves dimanche dernier. Ils mettront en doute la validité de la NIE. Ils prétendront que ses rédacteurs ont voulu faire un « quasi-putsch » (sic Bolton !), qu'ils ont agi par vengeance contre l'intervention en Irak, que leurs données sont « biaisées » et « politisées ». Ensuite ils diront que la prétendue quête de « prestige » n'est que foutaise, que si les Iraniens sont tant pressés d'accroître leur capacité d'enrichissement, c'est évidemment parce qu'ils ont une idée derrière la tête. Laquelle ? La NIE le dit : « Laisser au moins ouverte l'option visant à développer des armes nucléaires. » Et puis les faucons s'engouffreront dans les ambiguïtés de l'« estimation ». Ils argueront du fait que, de leur propre aveu, les services

américains ignorent si les Iraniens n'ont pas, en fait, repris leur programme nucléaire militaire après juin 2007, voire plus tôt. Ils diront aussi que la NIE déclassifiée ne précise pas à quel stade était ce programme quand il a été arrêté en 2003 ; qu'il était peut-être très avancé et que, si cela se trouve, reprenant leurs travaux passés, les ingénieurs iraniens seront capables de construire une tête nucléaire en quelques mois. Bref, ils crieront

que le risque est trop grand pour que l'on reste les bras croisés, que ne pas bombarder serait une lâcheté historique.

Ces arguments ne convaincront pas l'establishment américain, déjà vent debout contre une guerre en Iran. Mais Bush ? Les néoconservateurs savent persuader leur président préféré de passer outre le consensus washingtonien. On les a vus à l'œuvre. Il y a un an, le conflit en Irak s'enlisait. On parlait d'un nouveau Vietnam. Les plus grandes figures de la diplomatie américaine ont écrit un rapport brillant, acclamé par la presse et le Congrès. Ils y demandaient à Bush de retirer les GI's d'Irak. Or qu'a décidé ce dernier ? De faire le contraire : le *surge*, une augmentation brusque des troupes à Bagdad – un plan concocté par, devinez qui ?, les néoconservateurs.

Cette fois encore, une victoire à l'arrachée des faucons est donc possible, mais très improbable. Alors que va faire le président américain ? Il pourrait choisir la voie de la diplomatie, comme l'y enjoignent les rédacteurs de la NIE du 3 décembre. Voici ce qu'ils suggèrent pour convaincre Téhéran de renoncer au nucléaire militaire : « Une combinaison de menaces (...), alliées à des opportunités offertes à l'Iran d'assurer sa sécurité et son prestige et d'atteindre ses objectifs d'influence régionale par d'autres moyens. » Ils l'invitent donc à proposer à Téhéran un marchandage géos-

tratégique : un « grand bargain ». De nombreux démocrates et quelques ténors républicains le demandent depuis des mois.

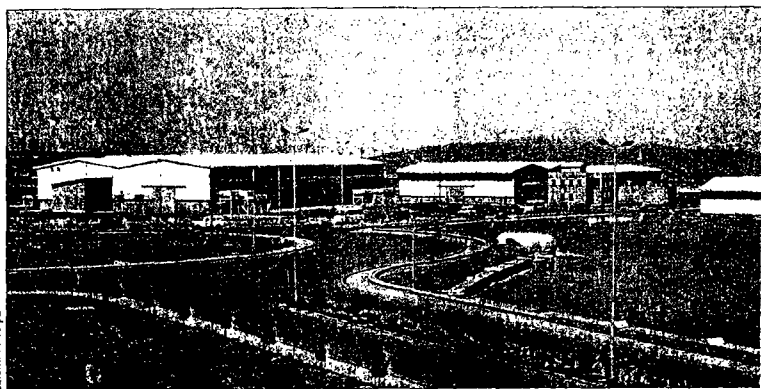
Mais Bush fait semblant de ne pas comprendre ce qu'on attend de lui. Il dit que, oui, il faut un mélange « de carotte et de bâton » pour obtenir un changement d'attitude de l'Iran. Il assure que c'est justement ce que



Hilary Mann et Flynt Leverett. Les anciens conseillers de George Bush plaident pour l'ouverture de négociations entre Washington et Téhéran.

autorités françaises estiment, elles aussi, qu'après la divulgation de la NIE toute frappe contre l'Iran est inconcevable.

Mais est-ce si sûr ? Certains, comme l'ancien conseiller de Bush pour le Moyen Orient, Flynt Leverett, redoutent encore un mauvais coup de cette administration américaine entêtée et sûre de son bon droit.



Salem/AP/Sipa

L'usine d'enrichissement de l'uranium de Natanz – au sud de Téhéran – où l'Iran a installé cet automne 3 000 centrifugeuses.

George Bush et Robert Gates, secrétaire à la Défense, ont redit la semaine dernière que le monde aurait tort de croire que la politique américaine vis-à-vis de l'Iran avait changé, et que, en réalité « toutes les options sont [encore] sur la table ». Était-ce uniquement pour sauver la face, pour continuer à faire pression

sur l'Iran et, ainsi, rassurer les alliés des Etats-Unis, très inquiets d'un éventuel dés-engagement américain au Moyen-Orient ? C'est le plus probable. Mais il y a une autre lecture possible, beaucoup plus inquiétante. Voici laquelle.

La scène se déroule le 17 octobre dernier.

Bush a déjà été briefé plusieurs fois sur les découvertes de la CIA. Il décide de s'adresser à ses compatriotes. Pour leur faire part de la nouvelle ? Pas du tout. Il leur annonce que, désormais, il entend empêcher l'Iran d'acquiescer la bombe mais aussi le « savoir-faire » nécessaire pour en fabriquer une. Quel est ce « savoir-faire » ? Il ne le dit pas. Mais tous les spécialistes comprennent : c'est de la maîtrise de l'enrichissement de l'uranium qu'il s'agit. Or justement cet automne, l'Iran a installé 3 000 centrifugeuses à Natanz. Certes, tout le monde le sait, les ingénieurs iraniens ne savent pas encore faire fonctionner efficacement ces machines de haute précision. Mais, bientôt, peut-être dès le printemps prochain, les espions américains estimeront que ça y est, que ces experts sont sur le point de savoir faire tourner leurs centrifugeuses, d'acquiescer le dangereux tour de main. Par sa mise en garde d'octobre, Bush a annoncé que ce sera là un casus belli. Cette déclaration sur le « savoir-faire » visait-elle donc à minimiser la portée de la NIE en préparation et à se réserver le droit de frapper en

son administration fait depuis 2003, mais que malheureusement rien n'a abouti à cause de l'entêtement des mollahs. Mais cela est inexact. En réalité, Bush n'a jamais vraiment tenté la voie diplomatique pour sortir de la crise.

Quand les Européens ont commencé à négocier avec l'Iran en octobre 2003, leur objectif était justement d'entraîner Washington dans cette discussion, dans ce « grand bargain ». Mais Bush a refusé mordicus. Tous les diplomates européens impliqués s'en souviennent. A l'époque, les faucons étaient exaltés par leur victoire éclair contre Saddam. Au lieu de soutenir la diplomatie européenne, comme Bush prétend l'avoir fait, ils planifiaient une attaque contre l'Iran (ce sont d'ailleurs ces bruits de bottes qui ont, assurent-ils, convaincus Téhéran de suspendre son programme d'enrichissement pendant deux ans.)

Quand, épuisée par le fiasco irakien, la seconde administration Bush a fini, en 2006, par se rapprocher des Européens afin de présenter une offre commune aux Iraniens, elle n'a pas voulu faire le pas décisif que Paris ou Berlin attendaient d'elle – ce pas que justement les auteurs de la NIE du 3 décembre lui suggèrent de franchir enfin : offrir à l'Iran des garanties de sécurité, c'est-à-dire s'engager, en cas d'accord global, à respecter les frontières de la République islamique et à ne pas chercher à renverser son régime actuel.

Une telle clause était dans la proposition initiale des Européens à l'Iran. Seulement voilà, Bush a posé une condition à son ralliement : que la disposition en question soit retirée. Il considère que donner de telles assurances à l'Iran reviendrait à légitimer le régime en place à Téhéran, et il s'y refuse. Si bien que la proposition américano-européenne était, dès le départ vouée à l'échec. Car tout le monde le sait : sans ces garanties américaines de sécurité, l'Iran ne bougera pas.

Au sujet de ces négociations hautement sensibles, l'équipe Sarkozy prend aujourd'hui la défense de la Maison-Blanche. L'affaire des garanties de sécurité est bien le nœud de la crise, déclarent les nouvelles autorités françaises, mais son histoire n'est pas aussi simple qu'il n'y paraît. Elles affirment qu'en lisant attentivement l'offre américano-européenne de 2006, les Iraniens auraient dû comprendre qu'il y avait, entre les lignes, une ouverture sur ce thème. Mais Téhéran n'aurait pas voulu s'engouffrer dans cette petite brèche prometteuse. En fait, l'Iran n'aurait même pas fait connaître son souhait de voir posée la question fondamentale des garanties.

« C'est totalement faux, répond Flynt Leverett, l'ancien conseiller de Bush pour le Moyen-Orient. Les Iraniens ont fait savoir, plusieurs fois – d'abord en mai 2003, via la Suisse, puis par le canal du haut représentant européen Solana et enfin par d'autres canaux – que c'était de cela qu'ils voulaient avant tout parler. Mais l'administration Bush n'a rien voulu entendre. » Et il ajoute : « Pourquoi Sarkozy soutient-il Bush à ce point ? » Mystère.

Quoi qu'il en soit et sauf surprise majeure – que Paris n'exclut pas – il n'y aura donc pas de « grand bargain » en 2008. Après la publication de la NIE, et peut-être à cause d'elle, la crise nucléaire iranienne va traîner. Les Russes et les Chinois vont profiter du choc du 3 décembre pour faire durer à l'ONU les négociations sur de nouvelles sanctions contre la République islamique. Les Européens, eux, continueront de scruter les moindres mouvements à l'intérieur du régime iranien, en espérant – sans y croire – qu'enfin quelqu'un à Téhéran saisira leur offre. Tandis que le reste du monde attendra l'élection du prochain président des Etats-Unis pour savoir comment finalement l'Amérique et l'Iran trancheront leur différend historique – par la guerre ou la paix.

VINCENT JAUVERT

(1) A lire « Iran : la prochaine guerre », de Bruno Tertrais, qui vient de paraître au Cherche Midi.

La minorité chrétienne d'Irak proche de la « désespérance »

Ils ne sont plus que 400 000 dans l'un des berceaux du christianisme. Des évêques irakiens, syriens, jordaniens et égyptiens sonnent l'alarme

Hémorragie, exode : les mêmes mots reviennent pour désigner la même réalité, celle d'un Irak en train de se vider de sa minorité chrétienne. Des évêques irakiens, syriens, jordaniens, égyptiens sont venus sonner l'alarme à Paris, lors de rencontres organisées en novembre par l'Institut européen des sciences de la religion (IESR) et par l'Œuvre d'Orient. Les Eglises de France, le mouvement international Pax Christi et des associations (Chrétiens en Méditerranée...) préparent une campagne de solidarité qui devrait culminer en 2008 pour Pâques.

Pour ces religieux irakiens, l'une des plus vieilles « chrétiens » au monde, née en Mésopotamie six siècles avant l'arrivée de l'islam, est en voie de disparition. Le pays ne compterait plus que 400 000 chrétiens, soit une chute

de plus de la moitié depuis la première guerre du Golfe (1991).

Enlèvements et libérations contre rançon, menaces de mort, spoliations de maison : Mgr Georges Casmoussa, archevêque syriaque de Mossoul, évoque des pressions « insoutenables » pour faire partir la population chrétienne. « Des centaines de familles, des médecins, des ingénieurs, des hommes d'affaires, des commerçants continuent de se réfugier dans des régions plus sûres, dans les villages chrétiens au Kurdistan, ou à l'étranger », explique-t-il.

A entendre l'évêque de Mossoul, la pression des islamistes ne fait que croître : elle va de menaces téléphoniques jusqu'à des enlèvements, de prêtres en particulier. A

Mossoul, l'un d'entre eux a été tué et mutilé à Noël 2006. Le 3 juin, un jeune prêtre de 31 ans et trois assistants ont été assassinés à la sortie de la messe dominicale. Des cars conduisant des étudiants chrétiens à l'université de Mossoul ont été attaqués. « Les chrétiens ne sont pas les seuls touchés, convient Mgr Casmoussa, mais ils sont acculés à l'exode. Pour les musulmans, ils restent des personnes compétentes, pacifiques, cultivées. Mais la confiance

mutuelle est blessée. »

Mêmes témoignages de « profanations » d'églises et d'enlèvements dans le quartier de Dora à Bagdad, où, rapporte Mgr Jean-Benjamin Sleiman, archevêque latin de la ville, « les chrétiens n'ont plus le choix qu'entre la dhimmitude [protection contre soumission] et l'exil ». Pour lui, « l'Etat reconstitué n'est pas encore en mesure de gouverner la société ni d'en arbitrer tous les conflits ».

Entre 1,2 et 1,5 million d'Irakiens – dont au moins 100 000 chrétiens – sont réfugiés en Syrie. Mais le « pays frère » raidit son attitude. Il a fermé ses frontières, et la plupart des réfugiés vivent d'expédients. « Beaucoup n'ont pas de logement ni de permis de travail. Les enfants ne sont pas scolarisés, parce qu'ils n'ont pas de titre de séjour », témoigne Mgr Antoine Audo, évêque chaldéen d'Alep. Leur horizon est bouché. Ils n'ont aucun espoir de retour en Irak et il leur est difficile de trouver des visas pour émigrer aux Etats-Unis ou en Europe. »

La Jordanie compte, quant à elle, 750 000 réfugiés, dont 25 000 à 30 000 chrétiens. Dans ce

pays aussi, les possibilités d'accès et de séjour se restreignent et les conditions de vie sont de plus en plus précaires. « La désespérance est grande, assure Mgr Selim Sayeh, vicaire du patriarcat latin à Amman. Pour cette émigration sans

espoir de retour, la Jordanie n'est qu'un pays de transit. Peu d'Irakiens s'y établissent. Leur seul espoir est d'émigrer au loin. »

Pour eux, les évolutions politiques n'annoncent rien de bon. « Les chrétiens se sentent de moins en moins chez eux, assure Mgr Casmoussa, l'évêque de Mossoul. Le nouvel Irak semble promis aux seules trois communautés majoritaires kurde, sunnite et chiite, et nous sommes disqualifiés. » Des partis politiques confessionnels chrétiens, appelés « chaldéen », « assyrien », « syriaque », ont vu le jour. Ils disputent à la hiérarchie épiscopale, jusqu'alors son seul porte-parole, le contrôle de la minorité chrétienne. « La question ethnique et raciale est aujourd'hui la plus épineuse en Irak. »

commente Mgr Casmoussa. C'est sur cette base que toutes les communautés, y compris les chrétiens, tentent de jouer un rôle sur l'échiquier politique pour obtenir le droit à une citoyenneté égale. » Mais le résultat est que « les chrétiens sont disloqués, minimisés, sous-représentés dans les sphères de décision. » « Ils n'ont pas pu peser pour la rédaction de la Constitution. »

Archevêque latin de Bagdad, Mgr Sleiman déplore d'autant plus cette marginalisation que les chrétiens ont été « loyalistes ». Ils ont participé à toutes les élections. Mais il regrette l'actuel « repli ethnique et confessionnel » des partis qui les représentent : « La première responsabilité des chrétiens devrait être de se rassembler et de reconstruire, avec leurs concitoyens, un Etat de droit. Ils sont culturellement préparés pour incarner une nouvelle politique irakienne de citoyenneté et même une nouvelle laïcité capable de traduire, dans des valeurs communes, la préoccupation pour le bien commun. N'est-ce pas ce que vous appelez la République ? » ■

HENRI TINCQ

Projet français d'accueil de réfugiés irakiens

LA FRANCE est prête à offrir l'asile à des réfugiés irakiens, notamment chrétiens. Un comité interministériel doit se réunir le 17 novembre pour étudier un tel projet.

L'engagement avait été pris dès le mois d'août par le ministre français des affaires étrangères, Bernard Kouchner, qui, en déplacement à Bagdad, a été frappé par le sort des chaldéens et est rentré avec la ferme intention de mettre en place un plan d'accueil.

Le ministre français de l'immigration, Brice Hortefeux, est, assure-t-on dans son entourage, dans les mêmes dispositions que M. Kouchner et prêt à un acte de « générosité ». « La décision politique reste à prendre, relève son cabinet. L'objectif est de réussir une opération maîtrisée. » Le gouvernement entend éviter de provoquer une vague d'immigration en provenance de la région.

La France traitera-t-elle des demandes seule ou avec l'aide du Haut-Commissariat pour les réfugiés des Nations unies (HCR) ? Les demandeurs devront-ils suivre la procédure classique auprès de l'Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides (Ofpra), ou bénéficieront-ils, sous réserves de répondre à des critères particuliers, d'une procédure spécifique limitant les risques d'être déboutés ? Se verront-ils accorder une protection temporaire ou définitive ? Rien n'est encore arrêté.

Opération délicate

Conscient que l'opération est délicate, ne serait-ce qu'en terme de sécurité avant le départ, le cabinet de M. Kouchner se refuse à annoncer un chiffre d'Irakiens accueillis. Il précise que ce plan d'accueil ne saurait se limiter aux seuls chaldéens et exclure d'autres minorités irakiennes

menacées. « L'asile n'a jamais été attribué en fonction de considération religieuse », rappelle-t-on au Quai d'Orsay, tout en soulignant cependant que cette communauté, proche de la France culturellement, est particulièrement à même de s'intégrer dans la société française.

En 2006, plus de 20 000 Irakiens ont demandé l'asile en Europe. Pays l'un des plus sollicités avec les Pays-Bas, la Grèce et l'Allemagne, la Suède en a accueilli près de 9 000. Moins généreuse dans sa politique de visas, la France a, sur 153 demandes déposées à l'Ofpra, admis une centaine de réfugiés.

Depuis plusieurs mois, Forum réfugiés demande avec insistance au gouvernement français d'organiser la réinstallation d'au moins 1 000 Irakiens parmi les plus vulnérables et reconnus comme réfugiés par le HCR. ■

LAETITIA VAN ECKHOÛT

Le Monde
13 décembre 2007

Energie Téhéran signe avec le chinois Sinopec un contrat de 2 milliards de dollars

L'Iran joue la Chine contre les majors pétrolières occidentales

Les contrats signés en bonne et due forme avec les compagnies pétrolières internationales sont rares et l'Iran ne se prive pas de les exhiber comme la preuve qu'il est une terre bénie pour les investisseurs étrangers. Ainsi, le ministre du pétrole a présenté, dimanche 9 décembre, l'accord conclu avec la société chinoise Sinopec pour développer le champ de Yadavaran, dans le sud-ouest du pays. « Si d'autres pays veulent investir

dans les grands projets pétroliers et gaziers iraniens, ils ne devraient pas laisser passer l'occasion », a ajouté Gholam Hossein Nozari. Un avertissement aux majors comme Total qui hésitent à relever les défis politiques et financiers d'une participation au développement de Pars-Sud, l'énorme gisement gazier du Golfe persique. Téhéran leur a donné jusqu'en juin 2008 pour se décider, alors que Washington souhaite de nouvelles sanctions contre le programme nucléaire iranien.

Pékin, qui cherche du pétrole et du gaz partout, ne craint pas les représailles américaines. Il y a un an, la compagnie semi-publique japonaise Inpex a renoncé à exploiter Azadegan, le plus grand gisement iranien, notamment sous la pression des Etats-Unis qui avaient condamné le plus gros accord pétrolier jamais signé entre le Japon et l'Iran. En avril, Washington a protesté contre l'ouverture de discussions entre Téhéran et le pétrolier autrichien OMV.

L'Iran rappelle qu'il détient les deuxièmes réserves mondiales d'hydrocarbures. A Yadavaran, 3,2 milliards de barils sont exploitables (sur 18 milliards au total). L'accord prévoit une production de 185 000 barils par jour en 2014.

« L'Iran a encore très peu de partenaires chinois et l'importance de l'accord c'est qu'il a été signé avec les Chinois », analyse

Nicolas Sarkis, directeur de la revue *Le pétrole et le gaz arabes*. La conclusion du contrat avec Sinopec a pris trois ans, les Chinois jugeant visiblement les conditions commerciales peu satisfaisantes.

Si les pays industrialisés ont besoin du pétrole iranien, l'Iran ne peut se passer de l'expertise et de la technologie des compagnies internationales. Il est incapable de développer seul ses gisements et ne possède pas de compétence dans le gaz naturel liquéfié, essentiel pour ses exportations. Or les compagnies sont peu intéressées par les contrats *buy-back*, qui ne leur donnent pas d'accès aux ressources. « Il y a un débat au sein du pouvoir entre les partisans d'une ligne dure, comme le président Ahmadinejad, et ceux qui veulent assouplir ces contrats pour attirer les capitaux », rappelle M. Sarkis.

Dans le gaz, les investissements sont gelés depuis de nombreuses années, même si de nombreux mémorandums ont été signés avec des majors. « Ce sont pour la plupart des protocoles d'accord qui, dans de nombreux cas, ne se sont pas traduits par la mise en chantier de nouveaux projets gazier », note Clément Therme, de l'Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI), sur *Caucaz.com*. Résultat, l'Iran importe autant de gaz du Turkménistan qu'il n'en exporte vers la Turquie.

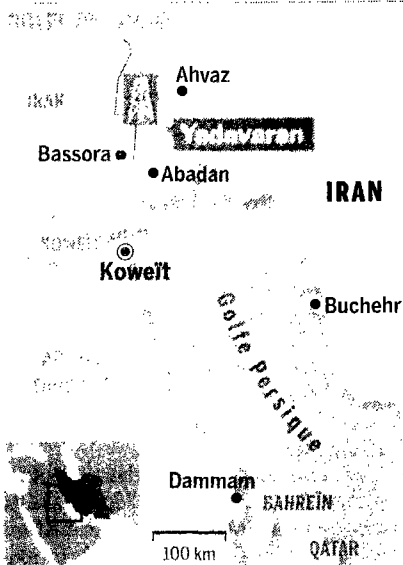
Exportations menacées

Dans le pétrole, l'Iran ne remplit pas le quota octroyé par l'Organisation des pays exportateurs de pétrole (manque d'investissement, déplétion des gisements anciens). Pour maintenir une part importante à l'exportation – 2,5 millions des 4 millions de barils produits chaque jour – et ses rentrées de devises, il rationne les produits pétroliers. Au rythme de sa consommation intérieure, l'Iran pourrait cesser toute exportation de pétrole en 2015, prédisait récemment Roger J. Stern, chercheur à l'université Johns Hopkins (Baltimore).

« Ce risque est très sérieux », confirme M. Sarkis. Le monde serait alors privée des ressources d'un des rares pays, avec l'Irak, à disposer d'un potentiel inexploité pour faire face à une demande qui va croître d'au moins 1,3 % par an.

Avant sa chute en 1979, le chah assurait que la production ne devrait jamais dépasser 7 millions de barils afin de préserver cette richesse pour les générations futures. Elle atteignait alors 5 millions. La guerre Iran-Irak, les sanctions américaines et le sous-investissement l'ont ramenée à 4 millions. ■

JEAN-MICHEL BEZAT



Le patron de Sinopec International, Zhou Baixiu, le ministre et le vice-ministre iraniens du pétrole, Gholam Hossein Nozari et Hossein Noghrehkar Shirazi (de gauche à droite), lors de la signature du contrat de Yadavaran, le 9 décembre, à Téhéran. AFP

AFP

Heurts entre manifestants kurdes et policiers à Istanbul

ISTANBUL, 9 déc 2007 (AFP)- Des heurts entre policiers et sympathisants des rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) se sont produits dimanche à Istanbul lors de manifestations non autorisées.

Dans le quartier populaire d'Okmeydani (rive européenne), quelque 200 manifestants ont scandé des slogans favorables au dirigeant emprisonné du PKK Abdullah Öcalan avant de jeter des pierres et des cocktails Molotov sur les policiers venus disperser la manifestation. a constaté un photographe de l'AFP.

La police a riposté en faisant usage de grenades lacrymogènes et de canons à eau. Aucun blessé n'a été signalé alors que les heurts se poursuivaient dans

les ruelles étroites du quartier.

La chaîne télévisée d'information CNN-Türk a fait état de heurts similaires dans le quartier périphérique de Bagcilar, lui aussi à forte population kurde.

Ces manifestations surviennent alors que l'armée mène une campagne intense contre le PKK dans l'est et le sud-est de la Turquie, à population en majorité kurde, et a lancé au début du mois une opération d'ampleur limitée contre les rebelles retranchés dans le nord de l'Irak.

L'état-major a annoncé cette semaine avoir abattu 14 rebelles dans la province de Sirnak, voisine de l'Irak.

9 décembre 2007

Le Monde

La Turquie envisage une loi d'amnistie en faveur des rebelles du PKK

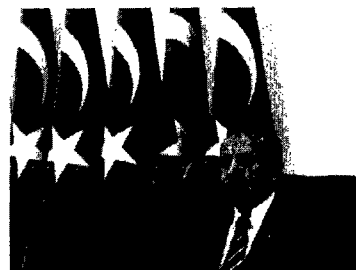
Le gouvernement turc prépare un projet de loi d'amnistie pour les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), selon des déclarations du premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan publiées dimanche. "Oui, une nouvelle loi va peut-être voir le jour", a-t-il déclaré samedi à des journalistes dans l'avion le conduisant à Lisbonne pour le sommet Union européenne-Afrique. "Nous allons voir comment, avec quel type de loi, nous pourrions parvenir à un résultat optimal", a-t-il ajouté.

Le code pénal turc prévoit déjà une dispense de peine pour tout membre d'une organisation illégale n'ayant pas commis de crime, s'étant rendu à la justice avant le lancement d'une enquête à son encontre et ayant donné des informations contribuant à la dissolution de cette organisation. Les résultats de cette disposition ont cependant été limités, et M. Erdo-

gan a dit envisager une mesure "plus étendue". "Nous sommes désormais dans une situation différente. Avec l'aide des médias, nous pouvons avoir de meilleurs résultats, nous pouvons minimiser avec nos travaux les départs pour les montagnes", et "parvenir à un retour des montagnes", a déclaré le premier ministre, en référence aux zones montagneuses de l'est de la

Turquie où opère le PKK, qui revendique l'autonomie. M. Erdogan a souligné que son cabinet n'était pas en négociation avec le PKK. "Nous ne faisons de marchandages avec personne. Nous allons dire : 'c'est la loi, viens, rends-toi'", a-t-il expliqué.

Les déclarations de M. Erdogan interviennent alors que l'armée mène une intense campagne contre



le PKK dans l'est et le sud-est de la Turquie, à la population en majorité kurde, et a lancé au début du mois une opération d'ampleur limitée contre les rebelles retranchés dans le nord de l'Irak (AFP)

Les Kurdes d'Irak veulent des troupes américaines pour longtemps

ERBIL (Irak), 11 déc 2007 (AFP) -- Le gouvernement du Kurdistan irakien souhaite signer avec les Etats-Unis un accord séparé organisant la présence militaire américaine à long terme sur son territoire, a indiqué mardi un responsable kurde.

Dans une déclaration à la presse à Erbil (nord), le vice-Premier ministre Omar Fatah a assuré qu'"un accord stratégique entre le Kurdistan et les Etats-Unis nous satisferait".

Il commentait, en rentrant d'une visite aux Etats-Unis, la signature d'un accord entre Washington et le gouvernement central de Bagdad pour négocier le maintien en Irak de troupes américaines, à l'issue du mandat de l'ONU à la fin 2008.

"Nous sommes satisfaits de cet accord entre Washington et Bagdad", a poursuivi le ministre, "la direction kurde a tenté d'avoir le même plusieurs fois".

"Un accord de ce genre devrait préserver les droits des Kurdes", a-t-il encore ajouté.

"Nous ne sommes pas en faveur d'un retrait rapide des troupes américaines. Nous voulons que ces troupes restent jusqu'à l'établissement d'un Irak démocratique et fédéral", a assuré M. Fatah.

AFP

Les Américains ont aidé les Turcs dans leurs raids aériens en Irak (général)

ANKARA, 16 déc 2007 (AFP) - Les raids de l'aviation turque dimanche sur des cibles kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak ont été effectués avec l'aide des Américains, qui ont fourni des renseignements et donné la permission de pénétrer dans l'espace aérien irakien, a déclaré le chef d'état-major des forces armées turques Yasar Buyukanit.

"Les Etats-Unis ont fourni des renseignements (...) Mais ce qui est plus important, les Etats-Unis nous ont ouvert la nuit dernière l'espace aérien du nord de l'Irak", a déclaré ce haut responsable militaire à la chaîne de télévision privée Kanal D, cité par l'agence d'information Anatolie.

"En faisant cela, les Etats-Unis ont approuvé l'opération", a encore dit le général Buyukanit.

Il a par ailleurs averti les rebelles du PKK (le Parti de travailleurs du Kurdistan, séparatistes kurdes de Turquie) que les conditions hivernales régnant actuellement dans les régions montagneuses du nord de l'Irak ne leur seraient

d'aucune protection.

"Les Forces armées turques ont fait passer le message à l'opinion publique turque et au monde que, que ce soit en hiver ou en été, nous les trouverons et les frapperons (les combattants du PKK), même s'ils vivent dans des cavernes", a ajouté le général Buyukanit.

Il a affirmé que les frappes de dimanche avaient été couronnées de succès et que les cibles, des camps du PKK préalablement identifiés, avaient été détruites, démentant par ailleurs que des villages frontaliers aient été touchés.

"Aucune cible civile, aucun village n'a été frappé, même de façon accidentelle", a poursuivi le général.

Dans un communiqué, l'armée turque avait annoncé que les raids aériens auxquels elle avait procédé tôt dimanche, avaient visé "les régions de Zap, d'Hakurk et d'Avasin, ainsi que le massif de Qandil".

Le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan s'était félicité de cette opéra-

tion "réussie", tandis que son ministre des Affaires étrangères Ali Babacan avait lui aussi assuré que les frappes aériennes n'avaient pas atteint de zones où se trouvaient des civils.

Le Parti de travailleurs du Kurdistan avait, de son côté, affirmé que sept personnes -deux civils et cinq rebelles- avaient été tuées dans ces raids aériens,

dans un communiqué publié sur son site internet.

D'après ce communiqué, les frappes ont également blessé "beaucoup de civils, dont des femmes et des enfants", dans des villages près des montagnes de Qandil.

AFP

La Turquie frappe fort contre le PKK en Irak

ANKARA, 17 déc 2007 (AFP) - - Deux mois après la crise turco-irakienne sur les rebelles kurdes retranchés dans le nord de l'Irak, la Turquie semble avoir pris les affaires en main en lançant une grande offensive aérienne contre le parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) avec le feu vert tacite des Américains.

Même si l'armée turque n'avait fourni lundi aucun bilan sur les raids de la veille, l'ampleur de l'offensive à plus de 90 km à l'intérieur du territoire irakien avec la participation de plusieurs dizaines de chasseurs F-16 ne faisait aucun doute.

"C'est la première fois que la Turquie organise une telle opération aérienne de nuit en territoire ennemi", a commenté un général à la retraite de l'aviation turque, Seyfettin Seymen, cité par le journal Sabah.

Pour cet analyste, l'armée turque a voulu par ces bombardements montrer qu'"il n'y a aucune cible que les appareils turcs ne peuvent détruire" en Irak.

L'armée turque, la deuxième plus importante en nombre au sein de l'Otan après les Etats-Unis, montrait depuis octobre ses dents contre le PKK qui dispose d'environ 3.500 hommes dans la montagne irakienne après des attaques meurtrières contre ses troupes à la frontière notamment.

Les raids ont visé des camps dans le secteur du massif du Qandil, qui sert de repaire aux combattants du PKK, en lutte depuis 1984 contre Ankara.

Selon un communiqué de l'armée turque, les raids ont commencé à 01H00 locales (23H00 GMT) pour se terminer peu avant 04H15 (02H15 GMT). L'armée a aussi procédé à des tirs d'artillerie et de missiles.

Le quartier-général du PKK à Qandil, près de la frontière iranienne, a été entièrement détruit, selon les médias turcs.

Les journaux turcs spéculaient lundi sur le sort du principal chef militaire du PKK en Irak, Murat Karayilan ainsi que de son adjoint Behroz Erdal, qui se trouveraient dans cet endroit au moment des attaques.

Quelque 100 tonnes de bombes ont été larguées sur les cibles ennemies, a indiqué à l'AFP une source militaire qui a requis l'anonymat.

Ces cibles auraient été déterminés grâce aux renseignements "en temps réel" fournis par les Etats-Unis qui occupent l'Irak depuis 2003.

"Les Etats-Unis ont fourni des renseignements (...) Mais ce qui est plus important, les Etats-Unis nous ont ouvert la nuit dernière l'espace aérien du nord de l'Irak", a déclaré le chef d'état-major turc, Yasar Büyükanit

Et dans une mise en garde aux "terroristes" du PKK, le général a indiqué que "les camps et les actions là-bas du PKK sont désormais pour nous des maisons de Big Brother", émission de télé-réalité basée sur le principe d'une surveillance 24/24 des participants par des caméras.

Plusieurs commentateurs estimaient que les opérations turques se poursuivront grâce au mécanisme mis en place entre Turcs et Américains à la suite d'une rencontre début novembre entre le premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan et le président George W. Bush.

Le 1er décembre, Ankara avait déjà mené une première opération limitée en territoire irakien.

Turcs et Américains "ont commencé à sonner le glas du PKK en Irak", affirme dans le quotidien Vatan, le journaliste Rusen Cakir, un expert du PKK, qui estime que la tension entre Ankara et Washington quant à leur "ennemi commun" semble avoir été surmontée.

Washington, grand soutien du Kurdistan irakien, s'oppose à une incursion massive de troupes turques en Irak mais les raids turcs montrent qu'il ne voit pas d'inconvénients à des raids ciblés, selon l'analyste.

En ce qui concerne les relations turco-irakiennes, la convocation de l'ambassadeur de Turquie à Bagdad pour demander que cessent les bombardements, n'est que de "pure forme" a estimé un diplomate turc sous couvert d'anonymat.

"La Turquie n'a cessé de dire qu'elle sévirait contre les terroristes en Irak" a-t-il souligné, se félicitant cependant des récentes mesures prises par les Kurdes d'Irak contre le PKK sur leur territoire.

Kirkouk: l'ONU veut convaincre de la nécessité d'un report du référendum

AFP

BAGDAD, 17 déc 2007 (AFP) -- L'ONU en Irak s'est attaquée à l'épineux problème de Kirkouk, où Kurdes, Arabes et Turcomans sont divisés sur le statut de cette zone riche en pétrole revendiquée par la région autonome du Kurdistan, en proposant de repousser un référendum prévu avant la fin de l'année.

Dans un communiqué, au langage qualifié de "cryptique" par un diplomate à Bagdad, la mission d'assistance pour l'Irak (UNAMI) a fait état récemment d'un accord entre les principaux responsables irakiens et kurdes pour repousser de six mois l'éventualité d'une consultation sur le statut de Kirkouk.

Ce communiqué évoque "la nécessité d'un délai technique", et salue "l'accord général" reçu des autorités irakiennes et kurdes.

La constitution irakienne, dans son article 140, a stipulé qu'un référendum devait avoir lieu avant le 31 décembre 2007 pour décider si cette région riche en pétrole devait passer sous l'autorité du gouvernement du Kurdistan irakien autonome.

Mais rien n'est prêt, et les tensions ethniques à Kirkouk, que les Kurdes considèrent comme leur, sont telles que le Premier ministre du Kurdistan irakien Nachirvan Barzani a décrit la ville comme une "bombe à retardement".

Kirkouk et sa province sont habités de kurdes, d'Arabes et de Turcomans, dans des proportions mal connues. Une politique d'arabisation de Saddam Hussein a forcé à l'exil des dizaines de milliers de kurdes, et a installé à leur place des populations venues d'autres régions de l'Irak.

Aujourd'hui, le retour des communautés chassées et le départ des familles alors installées créent une situation dangereusement volatile.

"Il a été indiqué à l'ONU que la prochaine étape la plus appropriée est de démarrer en janvier 2008 et pour six mois un processus de facilitation de la mise en oeuvre de l'article 140", indique le communiqué de l'ONU.

"En clair, a commenté pour l'AFP un diplomate qui a suivi les tractations de

l'ONU et ne souhaite pas être cité, les responsables irakiens et surtout kurdes ont accepté l'idée de repousser de six mois la tenue du référendum".

Les six mois de délai seront mis à profit pour instaurer, sous le contrôle de l'ONU, dans la région de Kirkouk, et ailleurs dans le pays, des mécanismes de réimplantation des populations, déplacés dans le cadre de la manipulation des frontières provinciales de l'ancien régime.

Aucun responsable irakien ou kurde n'a fait de commentaire public sur le report du référendum, sujet hautement sensible.

Les Kurdes notamment ont fait de la tenue d'une consultation une condition claire de leur soutien aux gouvernements dominés par les chiites, en place depuis la promulgation de la constitution en 2005.

"Si rien ne se fait d'ici la fin de l'année --et rien ne se fera--, nous envisageons toute une série de scénarios catastrophe: le retrait du soutien kurde au gouvernement de Nouri al-Maliki; un +fait accompli+ kurde à Kirkouk, suivi de tensions avec les arabes et les turcomans, des manifestations kurdes à Kirkouk", a commenté un autre diplomate, toujours sous couvert de l'anonymat.

"L'ONU a voulu arrêter la montre", a-t-il souligné en évoquant les efforts déployés pour éviter que la tension ne conduise à une crise ouverte.

Selon plusieurs sources internationales, le représentant du secrétaire général de l'ONU en Irak, Staffan de Mistura, est allé présenter l'option du report accompagné de négociations aux autorités irakiennes et kurdes.

"Il leur a dit +il y a une formule pour résoudre le problème de l'article 140 : lançons un processus sérieux pour mettre en oeuvre cet article dans six mois, avec l'aide de l'ONU. Et prenons en compte les problèmes, pour trouver des solutions+."

M. de Mistura n'a pu être joint pour confirmer ces entretiens, mais son bureau ne les a pas démentis. Il doit se rendre lundi à Erbil, pour rencontrer des parlementaires kurdes, ont indiqué ses services sans donner plus de détail.

LE DEVOIR

17 décembre 2007

La Turquie irrite de nouveau l'Irak

La reprise des raids turcs contre les combattants kurdes réfugiés dans le nord de l'Irak met à mal «les relations amicales des deux pays»

Souleimaniyah, Irak -- L'aviation turque a bombardé hier le nord de l'Irak, d'où opèrent des combattants kurdes, mettant de nouveau à exécution les menaces d'intervention de la Turquie chez son voisin pour y éliminer les sanctuaires rebelles. Sitôt annoncée, l'intervention a jeté un froid entre les deux pays.

Le vice-ministre irakien des Affaires étrangères, Mahmoud al-Hajj Humoud, a en effet convoqué l'ambassadeur de Turquie à Bagdad, jugeant que ce genre de raid risquait d'affecter «les relations amicales entre les deux pays». L'aviation turque a bombardé hier plusieurs villages du nord-est de l'Irak, d'où opèrent des combattants kurdes en lutte contre Ankara, pour éliminer les sanctuaires rebelles. «Cette attaque a détruit des hôpitaux, des écoles et des ponts. Nous demandons que les autorités turques cessent ce genre d'action contre des innocents», a déclaré dans un communiqué le vice-ministre irakien des Affaires étrangères.

Sept personnes, cinq combattants et deux civils, ont été tués par ces frappes effectuées par des chasseurs bombardiers dans la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien (extrême nord-est), aux confins de la Turquie et de l'Iran, selon un bilan du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) publié sur son site Internet.

Les raids ont visé des villages dans le secteur du massif du Qandil, une zone boisée et très escarpée qui sert de repaire aux combattants du PKK, en lutte contre le pouvoir central d'Ankara, selon l'armée turque et les autorités kurdes. Selon un communiqué de l'armée turque, les raids aériens dans ce massif, mais aussi dans les régions de Zap, Hakurk et Avasin, ont commencé à 1h locale pour se terminer peu avant 4h15. L'armée a aussi procédé à des tirs d'artillerie.

Dans un discours retransmis à la télévision, le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a estimé «réussie» cette opération et réaffirmé qu'Ankara était prêt à utiliser les moyens diploma-

tiques, économiques et militaires pour mettre en déroute les rebelles. «De telles opérations vont se poursuivre si nécessaire», a pour sa part prévenu le vice-Premier ministre turc Cemil Cicek.

L'Irak et les Etats-Unis ont déjà fait pression sur la Turquie pour qu'elle n'intervienne pas massivement au Kurdistan irakien, qui reste la région la plus calme d'Irak. «Nous appelons l'armée turque de faire la différence entre le PKK et les gens ordinaires. Nous ne voulons pas que le conflit entre les troupes turques et le PKK dégénère en conflit entre les forces turques et le peuple du Kurdistan», a prévenu Jamal Abdullah, porte-parole du gouvernement régional kurde en Irak.

Bénédiction américaine?

Ces raids auraient toutefois été effectués avec l'aide des Américains, qui ont «fourni des renseignements» et autorisé l'entrée dans l'espace aérien irakien, a affirmé le chef de l'état-major turc, Yasar Buyukanit.

«L'Amérique nous a ouvert l'espace aérien irakien, la nuit dernière. En nous ouvrant l'espace aérien irakien, l'Amérique a donné son aval à l'opération», a déclaré le général Yasar Buyukanit, dont les propos ont été rapportés par l'agence anatolienne de presse.

À Washington, un porte-parole du Pentagone n'a pas souhaité réagir à ces affirmations, soulignant toutefois que les États-Unis coopéraient avec la Turquie dans sa lutte contre le PKK en lui fournissant notamment des renseignements.

Plus tôt, la présidence de la région autonome kurde avait, elle, «fermement condamné» cette opération qui «viole la souveraineté irakienne».

Le 1er décembre, la Turquie avait mené une première opération limitée visant un groupe de combattants kurdes en territoire irakien. Ankara



avait annoncé de «lourdes pertes» dans les rangs du PKK, qui avait démenti cette information.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, Washington et l'Union européenne, a utilisé dans un passé encore récent ses bases en Irak -- où sont cantonnés quelque 3500 combattants -- pour lancer des attaques en Turquie.

Ankara a menacé à plusieurs reprises d'intervenir directement en Irak, si Bagdad n'était pas en mesure d'empêcher les opérations du PKK à partir de cette zone sous le contrôle des autorités régionales kurdes.

Le PKK est une rébellion autonomiste en lutte contre le pouvoir central d'Ankara depuis 1984. Ces années de violences ont fait 37 000 morts.

Le 21 octobre, des rebelles venant du Kurdistan irakien avaient tué 12 soldats turcs lors d'une attaque près de la frontière, et le Parlement turc avait autorisé le gouvernement à mener une intervention militaire en Irak.

Cette perspective avait mobilisé la communauté internationale, notamment les États-Unis, alliés de la Turquie et grands soutiens du Kurdistan irakien, qui y voyaient un risque de déstabilisation de la seule région d'Irak relativement épargnée par la violence.

Les frappes turques en Irak ont atteint toutes leurs cibles (armée turque)



ANKARA, 17 déc 2007 (AFP)

Les frappes effectuées dimanche par l'aviation et l'artillerie turques contre des repaires des rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le nord de l'Irak ont atteint toutes leurs cibles, a déclaré lundi l'armée turque.

"Les travaux de détermination des pertes humaines et des dommages matériels sur les sites visés par l'opération qui s'est achevée avec succès continuent", a affirmé l'état-major dans un communiqué. "Selon les premières évaluations, toutes les cibles prévues ont été touchées en plein coeur".

L'armée turque a mené son offensive à plus de 90 km à l'intérieur du territoire irakien avec la participation de plusieurs dizaines de chasseurs F-16. Elle a aussi procédé à des tirs d'artillerie et de missiles.

L'aviation turque a bombardé le massif de Qandil, une région boisée et très escarpée aux confins de la Turquie et de l'Iran, où est situé le quartier général des quelque 3.500 rebelles du PKK qui utilisent la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien comme une base arrière pour leurs actions en Turquie.

L'état-major turc a démenti la possibilité de pertes civiles lors de l'opération,

évoquées par des sources pro-PKK et le gouvernement irakien.

"Tous les objectifs ont été inclus dans la liste des cibles après qu'une analyse détaillée et des plus pointilleuses eut établi avec certitude qu'aucun civil n'habitait les lieux", indique le communiqué.

L'agence de presse pro-PKK Firat a rapporté dimanche que l'opération avait fait sept tués, dont deux civils.

Le chef de la diplomatie irakienne Hoshyar Zebari a protesté lundi contre les bombardements et déploré des "dommages collatéraux parmi la population civile".

La chaîne télévisée d'information CNN-Türk a diffusé lundi des images tournées par des caméras infra-rouge embarquées sur des avions impliqués dans l'opération.

On y voit, dans de minuscules hameaux, des bâtiments visés et frappés de plein fouet par des bombes sans que les constructions avoisinantes soient apparemment atteintes.

AFP

L'Irak condamne les frappes turques au Kurdistan

BAGDAD, 17 déc 2007 (AFP) - Les autorités irakiennes ont condamné lundi les frappes de l'armée turque sur le nord de l'Irak visant des sanctuaires de rebelles séparatistes qui ont menacé de procéder à des représailles.

"Des avions turcs ont bombardé des villages irakiens dans le Kurdistan (nord), près de la frontière turque, faisant plusieurs victimes civiles innocentes" dimanche avant l'aube, indique le Parlement dans une déclaration.

"Nous condamnons fermement cette violation de la souveraineté de l'Irak et du principe de bon voisinage", poursuit-il en appelant Ankara au dialogue.

De son côté, le chef de la diplomatie irakienne Hoshiyar Zebari a protesté contre les bombardements des sanctuaires des combattants kurdes turcs du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

"Nous comprenons les inquiétudes turques sur la présence du PKK, mais il y a eu des dommages collatéraux parmi la population civile. De telles actions doivent être menées en coordination avec le gouvernement irakien", selon lui.

L'aviation turque a bombardé des villages du massif de Qandil, une région boisée et très escarpée, aux confins de la Turquie et de l'Iran, repaire du PKK dans la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien où sont cantonnés quelque 3.500 combattants.

Selon l'agence pro-PKK Firat, les bombardements ont fait sept tués, cinq combattants et deux civils.

Mais dans un communiqué, l'état-major turc, affirmant que les frappes avaient atteint leurs cibles, a démenti la possibilité de pertes civiles.

L'armée turque, qui avait lancé le 1er décembre une première opération limitée contre le PKK, a mené dimanche son offensive à plus de 90 km à l'intérieur du territoire irakien avec la participation de chasseurs F-16. Elle a aussi tiré à l'artillerie et des missiles.

Quelque 100 tonnes de bombes ont été larguées sur les cibles "ennemies", selon une source militaire à Ankara. Le QG du PKK à Qandil a été entièrement détruit, selon les médias turcs.

Le chef d'état-major turc Yasar Buyukanit a affirmé que les Etats-Unis, alliés de la Turquie mais aussi grands soutiens du Kurdistan irakien, avaient donné leur accord tacite à ces raids en fournissant des "renseignements" et en donnant la permission de pénétrer dans l'espace aérien irakien.

A Washington, un porte-parole du département d'Etat a érudé une question sur cet éventuel feu vert. Mais Washington a jugé les raids turcs "conformes" à des frappes déjà effectuées par la Turquie.

En revanche, l'Union européenne a appelé Ankara "à la retenue" et le patron de l'ONU Ban Ki-moon s'est dit "préoccupé" aussi bien par les raids turcs qui pourraient avoir fait des victimes civiles que par "la poursuite" des attaques du PKK.

Au Kurdistan irakien, des villageois ont dû fuir, parfois pieds nus dans la neige, leurs maisons et villages du massif de Qandil après les bombardements.

"Nous dormions lorsque les avions turcs ont bombardé notre village. Avant, c'était Saddam qui détruisait nos maisons, maintenant ce sont les Turcs", dit en colère à l'AFP un fermier de 75 ans, Hassan Ibrahim.

Dans un communiqué transmis à l'agence Firat, le PKK a menacé de riposter aux raids. "Notre peuple a tout à fait le droit de se défendre et de riposter (...) Notre peuple va faire ce qui est nécessaire".

Le PKK, en lutte depuis 1984 contre le pouvoir central d'Ankara, est considéré comme un groupe terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'UE.

Le 21 octobre, le PKK avait lancé en provenance d'Irak une attaque près de la frontière qui a tué 12 soldats turcs, et le Parlement turc avait autorisé une intervention militaire en Irak.

Cette perspective avait mobilisé la communauté internationale, dont les Etats-Unis qui y voient un risque de déstabilisation de la seule région d'Irak relativement épargnée par la violence. Et les autorités irakiennes s'étaient engagés à tenter de limiter la liberté d'action du PKK.

AFP

Incursion turque en Irak: l'armée "fait le nécessaire" déclare Ankara

ANKARA, 18 déc 2007 (AFP) - Les dirigeants turcs se sont contentés d'affirmer mardi que l'armée turque "faisait le nécessaire" contre les rebelles kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak, en réponse aux questions pour savoir si des soldats turcs étaient entrés dans cette zone.

Les militaires "font le nécessaire dans la lutte contre le terrorisme", a dit le président Abdullah Gül aux journalistes qui l'interrogeaient lors d'un déplacement dans la ville de Konya (centre), selon les chaînes de télévision.

"La Turquie n'a qu'une seule cible là-bas et celle-ci est le terrorisme (du PKK) et tout le monde le sait et l'a compris", a souligné M. Gül, laissant entendre que la population civile locale n'avait rien à craindre.

Il a également mis l'accent sur les relations de bon voisinage entre son pays et l'Irak. "L'Irak est un pays frère", a-t-il notamment dit.

A Ankara, le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan, interrogé par la presse, a utilisé des termes similaires: "Actuellement l'armée fait ce qui est nécessaire".

"Le nécessaire a été fait jusqu'à présent et nous nous ferons le nécessaire dans l'avenir", a-t-il dit lors d'une conférence de presse commune avec son homologue macédonien, Nikola Gruevski, en visite en Turquie.

M. Erdogan a insisté que son pays "prenait toutes les mesures diplomatiques, économiques et militaires" pour contrer le PKK, saluant la position de la communauté internationale vis-à-vis de ces démarches, notamment militaires.

Tout comme M. Gül, le chef du gouvernement a insisté que la seule cible de l'armée turque dans le nord de l'Irak était le PKK, "notre ennemi".

"Nous n'avons aucune visée territoriale sur l'Irak, nous n'avons aucune attitude négative vis-à-vis de la population locale", a-t-il ajouté.

Des soldats turcs ont pénétré pour la première fois depuis le début de la crise dans la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien (nord), d'où opèrent des rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), a affirmé de son côté Jabbar Yawar, porte-parole des forces de sécurité kurdes (peshmergas).

Selon une télévision locale kurde irakienne, les troupes turques ont pénétré sur plusieurs kilomètres à l'intérieur de l'Irak et se sont déployées dans nombre de villages.

Selon l'édition en ligne du quotidien turc Hurriyet, les soldats pourraient appartenir à des unités de commandos stationnées dans le sud-est anatolien et tentent d'empêcher la fuite des rebelles chassés de leurs positions par des bombardements du week-end.

L'aviation et l'artillerie turques avaient visé à l'aube dimanche des positions du PKK dans le massif de Qandil, au Kurdistan irakien, qui abriterait environ 3.500 combattants rebelles, ainsi que d'autres bases du PKK en territoire irakien le long de la frontière turque.

Le PKK est considéré comme un groupe terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'UE.

AFP

Incursion turque en Irak: les Etats-Unis se gardent d'objecter

WASHINGTON, 18 déc 2007 (AFP) - La Maison Blanche s'est gardée mardi de soulever des objections à une incursion militaire turque dans le nord de l'Irak, se retranchant derrière des informations "contradictoires" selon elle en provenance de la région.

La porte-parole de la Maison Blanche Dana Perino, qui n'a pas non plus contesté que cette intervention ait eu lieu, n'a pas dit explicitement si le gou-

vernement américain la soutenait. Mais elle a affirmé que le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, cible de l'incursion, représentait une "menace pour la Turquie, pour l'Irak et pour les Etats-Unis".

"Je peux vous dire que, naturellement, nous nous coordonnons avec les autorités turques et irakiennes dans cette zone. Le PKK est une menace pour la Turquie, pour l'Irak et pour les Etats-Unis. Nous continuons donc à partager

les informations, à partager le renseignement avec eux", a dit Mme Perino devant la presse.

"Nous avons demandé à la Turquie de veiller à ce que les opérations soient ciblées et limitées", a-t-elle dit.

Selon le gouvernement du Kurdistan irakien, environ 300 soldats ont mené mardi la première opération terrestre turque dans le nord de l'Irak depuis que le parlement turc a autorisé de telles incursions en octobre pour combattre le PKK, rebelles kurdes de Turquie se servant du Kurdistan irakien comme base arrière.

Le gouvernement américain s'est beaucoup employé depuis octobre à réfréner

son allié turc, craignant la réaction des Kurdes irakiens et s'inquiétant de la déstabilisation d'une partie de l'Irak qui passe pour l'une des plus stables.

Les dirigeants turcs n'ont pas confirmé l'incursion, se contentant d'affirmer que l'armée turque "faisait le nécessaire" contre les rebelles.

Interrogée sur un soutien ou un encouragement américain à une telle opération, la porte-parole de la Maison Blanche a invoqué "des informations contradictoires sur le terrain". "Alors, avant de nous exprimer plus précisément, je crois que nous devrions attendre qu'il y ait plus d'informations concrètes du terrain sur la profondeur de l'incursion, le nombre de gens, qui au juste était engagé", a-t-elle dit.

AFP

Incursion turque en Irak, Rice accuse le PKK de menacer la stabilité

ERBIL (Irak), 19 déc 2007 (AFP) - Les troupes turques ont mené mardi une incursion dans le nord de l'Irak contre des rebelles kurdes que la secrétaire d'Etat Condoleezza Rice a accusé, depuis Bagdad, de déstabiliser la région.

L'armée turque a confirmé mardi soir avoir mené cette opération terrestre, affirmant avoir infligé un revers aux rebelles kurdes et de "très lourdes pertes" à leurs bases lors de raids aériens pendant le week-end.

Il s'agit de la première opération terrestre de l'armée turque depuis que le Parlement l'a autorisée en octobre à pénétrer en Irak pour déloger les séparatistes du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) de leur sanctuaire irakien d'où ils lancent des opérations meurtrières en Turquie.

Selon la présidence de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien (nord), 500 soldats turcs ont pénétré dans une zone inhabitée de l'extrême nord-est irakien à la recherche de rebelles du PKK. L'armée turque, pour sa part, n'a pas donné de précisions sur le nombre de soldats engagés dans l'opération.

Entrés à l'aube dans ce secteur, "ils ont commencé à se retirer vers le territoire turc", a indiqué en soirée un communiqué du bureau du président du Kurdistan irakien, Massoud Barzani.

"Ils ne sont pas arrivés à proximité des lignes des peshmergas", les forces de sécurité kurdes d'Irak, a ajouté la présidence sans faire état de combats.

Mme Rice, qui a effectué une visite d'une journée en Irak, a refusé de commenter directement cette incursion, lors d'une conférence de presse avec son homologue Hoshyar Zebari organisée après une rencontre à Bagdad avec le président Jalal Talabani.

Mais elle a souligné que les Etats-Unis, l'Irak et la Turquie avaient "un intérêt commun à stopper les activités du PKK qui menace la stabilité du nord" irakien frontalier de la Turquie.

Les combattants du PKK, estimés à quelque 3.500, sont cantonnés dans la région difficile d'accès du massif du Qandil, dans l'extrême nord-est d'Irak.

M. Zebari a minimisé la portée de l'opération turque. "Une autre incursion militaire limitée se déroule en ce moment même, mais c'est dans une zone de haute montagne peu peuplée".

Selon le gouvernement du Kurdistan irakien, les soldats turcs ont progressé sur une profondeur de trois km en Irak. Un membre du PKK a affirmé qu'ils avaient traversé "la frontière irakienne à Khawakurt", aux confins irano-turcs.

Pour marquer sa désapprobation du soutien américain à la Turquie, M. Barzani a annulé une rencontre prévue à Bagdad avec Mme Rice.

Selon le chef d'état-major turc Yasar Buyukanit, Washington a donné son accord tacite aux bombardements aériens et d'artillerie turcs dimanche contre des villages irakiens frontaliers. Une centaine de tonnes de bombes ont été larguées sur les positions du PKK, selon une source militaire turque.

Un bilan invérifiable de l'agence pro-PKK Firat a fait état de cinq combattants et deux civils tués dans ces bombardements.

Selon le Haut commissariat de l'ONU pour les réfugiés, quelque 1.800 personnes ont fui leurs villages après les frappes turques.

A Ankara, le président Abdullah Gul a indiqué que l'armée "faisait le nécessaire" pour combattre le PKK, en lutte depuis 1984 contre le pouvoir central d'Ankara.

L'incursion dans la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien, la seule encore relativement épargnée par les violences en Irak, a été annoncée au moment de la visite de Mme Rice en Irak.

Celle-ci s'est rendue d'abord à Kirkouk pour soutenir les efforts de réconciliation de l'ONU dans cette région pétrolière revendiquée par les Kurdes, où se côtoient Kurdes, Arabes, Turcomans et chrétiens.

Mme Rice a souhaité apporter son soutien aux initiatives du nouvel émissaire de l'ONU en Irak, Staffan de Mistura, qui a obtenu un report de six mois d'un référendum prévu avant fin 2007 pour décider d'un éventuel rattachement de Kirkouk à la province du Kurdistan.

A Bagdad où elle a rencontré aussi le Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki, Mme Rice a appelé à accélérer les efforts de réconciliation.

Pendant la visite de Mme Rice qui a quitté Bagdad en soirée, trois attentats ont frappé des régions d'Irak faisant au moins 22 morts

L'EXPRESS

18 décembre 2007

Kurdistan

Irak: les troupes turques se retirent

A la suite d'une incursion terrestre turque au Kurdistan irakien ce mardi matin, la présidence du Kurdistan a annoncé dans l'après-midi le retrait des troupes d'Irak.

Les troupes turques qui étaient entrées dans le nord de l'Irak ce mardi à l'aube ont commencé leur retrait, a annoncé la présidence du Kurdistan irakien dans un communiqué.

Des soldats turcs avaient pénétré ce mardi matin dans le Kurdistan irakien (nord), d'où opèrent des combattants rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), avait déclaré Jabbar Yawar, porte-parole des forces de sécurité kurdes. "Des soldats turcs, appuyés par l'aviation, ont traversé à 4h la frontière irakienne à Khawakurt", aux confins de l'Irak et de la Turquie, avait pour sa part déclaré un membre du PKK.

Selon une télévision locale kurde irakienne, les troupes turques avaient pénétré de plusieurs kilomètres à l'intérieur de l'Irak et pris position dans plusieurs villages. Selon l'édition en ligne du quotidien turc Hurriyet, les soldats pourraient appartenir à des unités de commandos tentant de bloquer les rebelles chassés de leurs positions par des bombardements dimanche. Une première dans la crise Il s'agit de la première incursion de troupes au sol turques depuis le début de la crise, en octobre, qui a vu la Turquie menacer à plusieurs reprises d'intervenir militairement chez son voisin pour y déloger les rebelles du PKK. Cette annonce d'une

incursion turque intervient alors que la secrétaire d'Etat américaine Condoleezza Rice est arrivée mardi à Kirkouk, dans le nord de l'Irak, pour une visite surprise.

Ces informations sur une opération terrestre font également suite à d'intenses bombardements de l'aviation et de l'artillerie turques dimanche contre des positions du PKK dans le massif de Qandil, dans le Kurdistan irakien, qui abriterait environ 3.500 combattants rebelles. Des frappes vivement condamnées par les autorités de Bagdad et du Kurdistan irakien qui les considèrent comme une violation de la souveraineté irakienne.

AZERBAÏDJAN

Les nationalistes azéris prêts à dépecer l'Iran

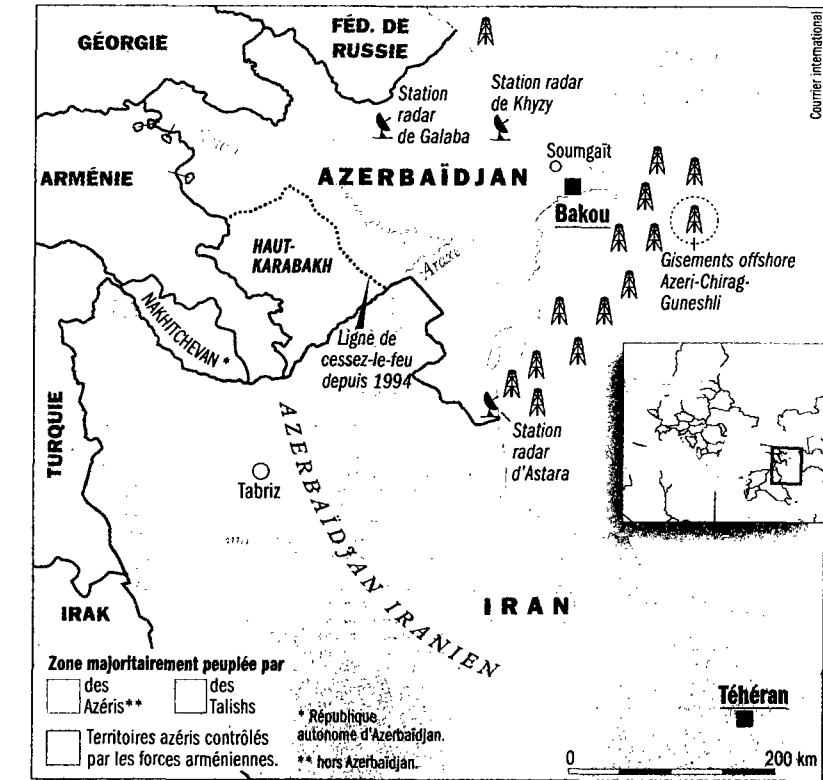
L'euphorie pétrolière qui règne depuis deux ans fait tourner bien des têtes. Certains rêvent désormais d'un Grand Azerbaïdjan unifié qui pourrait naître de l'éclatement de l'Iran en cas de conflit avec les Etats-Unis.

NEZAVISSIMAÏA GAZETA (extraits)
Moscou

En 2006, au bout de longues années d'un travail acharné, d'attente et de polémiques, les gisements Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli ont enfin commencé à produire à plein. En 2007, les ventes de pétrole ont ainsi permis de porter le budget national à 7 milliards de dollars, et le fonds de réserve a dépassé les 5 milliards. Les revenus pétroliers devraient dépasser les 10 milliards de dollars en 2010. Par ailleurs, les 2 millions d'Azéris qui travaillent à l'étranger, principalement en Russie, envoient de l'argent au pays, à hauteur de 2 milliards à 2,5 milliards de dollars par an. Les prix élevés du pétrole permettent au gouvernement de développer l'économie, de financer divers programmes sociaux et de créer de nouveaux emplois (environ 100 000 ces derniers temps). Une classe moyenne émerge peu à peu, détentrice de revenus relativement confortables à l'échelle locale.

Il ne fait guère de doute qu'Ilkham Aliev [l'actuel président] remportera l'élection présidentielle qui doit avoir lieu à l'automne prochain. Pour la majorité des gens, c'est lui qui, au côté de son père, le défunt Gueïdar Aliev [détenteur du pouvoir de 1969 à 2003], est l'auteur du miracle économique actuel. L'opposition, empêtrée dans ses dissensions et toujours incapable de s'unir, n'a rien à rétorquer. Les ambitions et l'orgueil personnel de ses leaders rendent impossible la désignation d'un candidat unique.

Mais l'euphorie pétrolière a fait tourner bien des têtes. Ainsi, une campagne se développe actuellement afin d'attirer l'attention sur la question de l'"Azerbaïdjan du Sud", c'est-à-dire les provinces du nord de l'Iran, essentiellement peuplées d'Azéris. Dans les colonnes des journaux locaux, il est de plus en plus fréquent de lire des articles sur "le mouvement national des Azéris" en Iran, leur "lutte pour l'indépendance" et leur "droit à l'autodétermination". Articles qui rappellent, par leur esprit et leur contenu, les textes répandus dans les journaux arméniens à la fin des années 1980, qui avaient contribué à créer le climat idéologique favorable à l'entreprise d'annexion du Haut-Karabakh.



Aujourd'hui, à Bakou, l'éventualité d'une guerre contre l'Iran et ses conséquences pour la Transcaucasie sont l'un des sujets les plus discutés. Beaucoup se montrent raisonnables et comprennent que, même si les Etats-Unis se contentaient d'une attaque aérienne contre des sites iraniens, cela pourrait avoir des conséquences irréversibles. Il se trouve pourtant des journalistes et des hommes politiques pour clamer leur attente impatiente d'une frappe contre l'Iran. L'idée d'un "Grand Azerbaïdjan unifié" qui pourrait naître d'un éclatement de l'Iran a déjà été lancée. Les partisans de cette idée sont séduits par la perspective de transformer l'Azerbaïdjan en une puissance régionale, un leader économique et politique de la Transcaucasie. Pour eux, si cela se réalisait, régler enfin le conflit du Haut-Karabakh ne serait plus qu'une question technique.

EN CAS DE GUERRE, L'IRAN A DES PARTISANS EN AZERBAÏDJAN

Selon des statistiques établies en 2003, l'Iran compte 66,5 millions d'habitants, dont environ 18 millions d'Azéris, qui, après les Persans, représentent le groupe ethnique le plus important de la société iranienne, à laquelle il est

d'ailleurs bien intégré. La majorité d'entre eux vivent dans le nord du pays. Ils sont nombreux à occuper de hautes fonctions dans la vie politique et spirituelle, dans les milieux d'affaires et l'armée. Ces vingt ou trente dernières années, on n'a noté aucune tendance séparatiste sérieuse dans les régions où la population azérie est le plus fortement représentée.

En Azerbaïdjan même, plusieurs facteurs favorisent l'influence religieuse et politique de l'Iran : identité de la religion (60 % des musulmans d'Azerbaïdjan sont chiïtes, et le chiïsme est la religion d'Etat de l'Iran), mécontentement d'une partie de la population face au partage jugé inéquitable des biens matériels, en particulier des revenus pétroliers. Parmi les mécontents, la création d'un "Etat islamique juste"

est une notion très populaire. Par ailleurs, le sud de l'Azerbaïdjan est peuplé d'environ 100 000 Talychs, une minorité nationale persanophone. Tout cela signifie que, en cas de guerre, l'Iran pourrait compter sur des partisans en Azerbaïdjan.

Ces deux derniers mois, un certain nombre de hauts responsables des Etats-Unis et de l'OTAN se sont rendus à Bakou. Ils ont proposé à l'Azer-

baïdjan de créer, avec la Géorgie, un "front idéologique antirusse" uni en Transcaucasie et ont poussé Bakou à annoncer officiellement son intention d'adhérer à l'OTAN et à afficher sans honte la présence militaire américaine sur son territoire. Pour l'instant, Bakou a raisonnablement refusé les deux premières propositions. Pour ce qui est de la présence militaire, il est impossible d'en dissimuler l'ampleur.

Selon certaines sources, plus de 2 000 militaires américains stationneraient en permanence sur le territoire azerbaïdjanais. En 2006, des stations radar ont été construites aux frontières avec l'Iran (à Astara) et avec la Russie (à Khyzy). En 2012, le bail de location russe de la station radar de Gabala arrivera à expiration. A cette date, les Américains ont visiblement l'intention de la récupérer. Ils auraient aussi achevé de moderniser et de remettre en parfait état de fonctionnement sept aérodromes (voire neuf, selon certaines sources) dans le pays.

Officiellement, tout cela est présenté comme un ensemble de mesures destinées à "protéger les oléoducs et surveiller la situation en mer Caspienne", mais il est évident pour toute personne de bon sens que ces objectifs-là nécessiteraient des vedettes militaires, des corvettes et des unités navales légères plutôt que des radars ou des aérodromes.

Manifestement, dans sa stratégie militaire, Washington considère l'Azerbaïdjan comme une base avancée bien pratique pour porter des attaques aériennes contre l'Iran.

LA VIE DEVIENDRAIT DU JOUR AU LENDEMAIN UN ENFER

Lors du récent sommet des pays de la Caspienne qui s'est tenu à Téhéran, l'Azerbaïdjan s'est engagé à ne pas mettre son territoire à la disposition de pays tiers désireux de mener une opération militaire. Il est peu probable qu'il tienne parole, car, s'il rechignait au moment crucial, les Etats-Unis pourraient mettre en œuvre tout un arsenal de moyens de pression allant de l'élection présidentielle à un changement de position sur le problème du Haut-Karabakh, et pourraient même organiser dans le pays une "révolution orange".

Téhéran a maintes fois averti que, si des avions américains prenaient part à une attaque en décollant d'Azerbaïdjan, la riposte serait immédiate. L'armée iranienne dispose de missiles stratégiques et tactiques capables d'atteindre le territoire azerbaïdjanais. Les forces antiaériennes de l'Azerbaïdjan ne seraient sans doute pas en mesure de stopper un éventuel raid iranien. Une guerre contre l'Iran détruirait totalement l'équilibre des forces qui existe à ce jour au Proche- et au Moyen-

Orient, et transformerait toute la région en un immense Irak. Dans tous les pays musulmans, les islamistes radicaux en seraient renforcés, y compris en Azerbaïdjan, où des dizaines, peut-être des centaines de partisans de l'Iran descendraient dans les rues mus par la soif de vengeance. Attentats, actes de sabotage, réfugiés iraniens deviendraient une réalité que l'on a du mal à imaginer quand on regarde aujourd'hui la foule paisible qui flâne le long de la promenade du front de mer de Bakou.

La vie de nombreux Azerbaïdjanais, qui profitent depuis ces deux dernières années des bienfaits d'une croissance économique continue, deviendrait du jour au lendemain un enfer. Ils ne pourraient pas rester en marge des combats, cachés derrière le dos des Etats-Unis, pour ensuite partager avec eux les fruits de la victoire. L'Azerbaïdjan serait immanquablement pris dans l'orbite des actions militaires et deviendrait une cible pour une riposte iranienne. Ainsi, les partisans de la guerre, qui sont en ce moment aveuglés par leur ivresse nationaliste et le mirage d'un "Grand Azerbaïdjan", devraient s'attendre à une cruelle déception.

Zourab Todoua*

* Politologue, chercheur à l'Institut de religion et de politique (Moscou).

IRAK VIOLENCES

Le Monde
14 décembre 2007

Un triple attentat endeuille Amara, ville chiite du sud de l'Irak

AU MOINS 41 personnes ont été tuées et plus de 150 blessées dans un triple attentat à la voiture piégée, mercredi 12 décembre à Amara, ville chiite du sud de l'Irak. Après une période de calme relatif dans le pays, les violences ont repris, y compris à Bagdad, frappée par une série d'explosions à la voiture piégée et d'attentats-suicides qui ont fait plus de cinquante victimes depuis la mi-novembre.

L'attentat d'Amara est l'un des plus meurtriers d'Irak depuis des mois, dans une région généralement épargnée par ce type de violence. La riche province pétrolière de Missane, dont Amara est la capitale, est en revanche le théâtre d'affrontements sporadiques entre milices chiites rivales de Moqtada Al-Sadr (l'Armée du Mahdi) et d'Abdel Aziz Al-Hakim (Brigades Al-Badr). Ces rivalités ont été exacerbées avec le début de retrait des forces britanniques.

Le transfert de la province de Missane aux autorités irakiennes, en août 2006, avait été suivi de violents combats à Amara. L'armée irakienne avait dû y déployer

3 000 soldats et imposer un couvre-feu pour rétablir l'ordre. Aujourd'hui, le gouvernorat est dirigé par Adel Modher, un des dirigeants du mouvement sadriste, tandis que les forces de police sont contrôlées par le parti d'Abdel Aziz Al-Hakim.

« Les habitants d'Amara sont habitués aux combats entre milices ou entre tribus, aux règlements de comptes, voire aux assassinats ciblés, mais pas à des attentats de cette ampleur », explique Hosham Dawod, du CNRS, qui consacre actuellement ses recherches au sud de l'Irak.

« Les explosions ont visé le centre-ville, frappant des civils appartenant à des tribus et des clans rivaux, sans distinction, explique-t-il. Les habitants y voient donc l'œuvre d'une main extérieure à la province. C'est possible. Au moment où les Etats-Unis se vantent d'avoir ramené la sécurité à Bagdad et dans les provinces sunnites, frapper Amara est un message fort. La province de Missane n'est désormais plus à l'abri. » Jeudi matin, l'attentat n'avait pas été revendiqué. ■

CÉCILE HENNON

Iraq calmer, but more divided

The U.S. troop buildup has brought down violence, but that has failed to spark cooperation among politicians. If anything, the country appears more balkanized into ethnic and sectarian enclaves.

By Ned Parker, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

BAGHDAD -- The U.S. troop buildup in Iraq was meant to freeze the country's civil war so political leaders could rebuild their fractured nation. Ten months later, the country's bloodshed has dropped, but the military strategy has failed to reverse Iraq's disintegration into areas dominated by militias, tribes and parties, with a weak central government struggling to assert its influence.

In the south, Shiite Muslim militias are at war over the lucrative oil resources in the Basra region. To the west, in Anbar province, Sunni Arab tribes that once fought U.S. forces now help police the streets and control the highways to Jordan and Syria. In the north, Arabs, Kurds and Turkmens are locked in a battle for the regions around Kirkuk and Mosul. In Baghdad, blast walls partition neighborhoods policed by Sunni paramilitary groups and Shiite militias.

"Iraq is moving in the direction of a failed state, a highly decentralized situation -- totally unplanned, of course -- with competing centers of power run by warlords and militias," said Joost Hiltermann of the International Crisis Group. "The central government has no political control whatsoever beyond Baghdad, maybe not even beyond the Green Zone."

The capital's Green Zone mirrors the chaos outside. Once the base of Saddam Hussein's dictatorial regime, it is now the seat of Iraq's fractured and dysfunctional representative government. The U.S. troop buildup was intended to help Iraq's national leaders overcome differences and give them space to pass compromise measures to end the country's sectarian war, but lawmakers remain divided and continue to harbor suspicions about each other's motives.

In the summer, the country's Sunni Arab minority quit the coalition government, leaving Shiites and Kurds with a razor-thin majority in parliament. They appear unable to push forward any solution to the country's problems, whether a national oil law, a review of Iraq's new constitution or legislation defining the powers of provincial councils. All efforts to define relations between Baghdad and outlying regions are stalled.

"The absence of government in a lot of areas has allowed others to move in, whether militias or others," said an American diplomat, who like others, spoke on condition of anonymity.

He said that in the next year, the Iraqi government must step in and assert itself as the dominant force. "The No. 1 priority on the mind of the prime minister has got to be, 2008 is the year of services," he said. "It's difficult, but the window hasn't closed."

With such a goal in mind, the Iraqi government has budgeted more than \$19 billion for public sector investment for 2008, but official spending is beset by corruption and sectarianism. U.S. military officers regularly complain that the education, health and water ministries bypass Sunni neighborhoods in west Baghdad.

Western analysts question whether a government made up of only Shiites and Kurds will be able to impose order on a country so splintered that even provinces with homogenous Shiite and Sunni populations are beset by conflict.

The national government's dysfunction sets the stage for more violence as different groups vie for dominance in cities, provinces and regions. Although the bloodshed is not likely to reach the levels seen at the height of the civil war in 2006, analysts

expect more strife.

No quick solution

"It is like a baby being born, struggling and shouting," said Sheik Fatih Kashif Ghitaa, the director of the Al-Thaqalayn Center for Strategic Studies, which advises the Iraqi government.

Ghitaa predicted that the government would have to enact legislation such as that dealing with oil revenue and provincial powers by spring -- when the drawdown of U.S. combat brigades for the Baghdad security plan begins in earnest. Otherwise, the stalemate would just drag on.

Even then, he warned, the passage of legislation would intensify the violence for at least a six-month period as winners sought to claim the spoils in the provinces. "We are going to see some problems between Shia and Shia and problems among Sunnis and Kurds, especially in Mosul," he said.

Ramadi, capital of Anbar province, would also see an increase in violence as Sunni tribal groups maneuvered for power, he added. "This is the price of democracy."

Prime Minister Nouri Maliki has sought to address the splintering of the country, particularly in the south, where most of Iraq's Shiite population lives. There, Maliki, who is with the Islamic Dawa Party, is working with the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, the leading Shiite party in the ruling coalition, to try to stabilize cities torn by militia infighting.

"They agree on what needs to be done in the south," said an official from Maliki's office. "This is a test for the government on whether they can establish control in a very volatile area," the official said.

Militias have reached an informal truce in Basra ahead of the expected transfer this month of security responsibility for the entire province from the British to the Baghdad government, but a Western advisor to the Iraqi government said Iraqi troops were still not up to the task.

A major problem for locally recruited police and army units in Iraq is pressure from militias.

"The issue you have in the army is that soldiers are recruited in regional areas and trained in those areas and employed in those areas. The expectation is they will probably stay in their home areas. If you have deployments in the south, the rank and file will be Shia, the west Sunni and the north Kurd. They will not be a rainbow mix of all groups," a Western official said.

Anthony H. Cordesman of the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies said he doubted the national government could stabilize Iraq soon. "They don't have a strong central government at this point, and it's going to take years to create the instruments."

In a recent report, Cordesman said a strong U.S. role was needed to ensure stability and dismissed the notion of the "soft partition" of Iraq into regional blocks advocated by U.S. senators in a nonbinding resolution this fall. Soft partition entails the creation of semiautonomous regions, based on the Kurdish model, that would receive funding from Baghdad but govern themselves.

Cordesman blamed decisions by the United States for much of Iraq's current mess, including poor planning for the post-invasion period and, later, the administration's rush to national elections in January 2005, which Iraq's Sunnis boycotted. He

warned that Iraq was at best midway through a turbulent metamorphosis.

"It generally took half a decade to get anywhere from a situation like the one Iraq has today to that which approaches stability," he told The Times.

"There is a reasonable prospect that you can move this toward a set of workable compromises if the United States continues to provide support and handle its military transition in a way that gives Iraqis enough time to not openly confront each other."

Troops' concerns

Mid-level U.S. officers in Iraq also worry about what comes next as the military draws down from current numbers of 160,000.

Maj. Barry Daniels, the operations officer for the Army's 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, recalls how last year his soldiers had an impossible task of combating Shiite and Sunni extremists across west Baghdad's large Mansour district. The troop buildup enabled his men to focus on just one neighborhood, the Sunni insurgent stronghold of Amiriya. Now, at the end of his deployment, his men have forged an alliance with a Sunni paramilitary group that polices the district.

"The big question for 2008 is what happens once all these surge battalions leave, because all your battle space is going to spread back out again," Daniels said.

Across Baghdad and central Iraq, the relative calm is linked to the Americans' alliances with Sunni paramilitary groups and Shiite cleric Muqtada Sadr's freeze on his Mahdi Army's operations, but no one knows whether the fighters on both sides are just biding their time until the U.S. military leaves and using this interim period to organize themselves.

"This is an opportunity for the government of Iraq to reconcile at the national level," Daniels said. "I think if they do that you are not going to have a bunch of mini-warlords. I'm afraid if they don't, and the American people decide that they have had enough of it and we go home, you could have a full-blown civil war. That's my personal concern."

Greater problems lie ahead in provinces such as Anbar, where the U.S. fought fierce battles against Sunni rebels in 2004 and which is now perhaps the United States' greatest success story.

There, the Anbar Awakening Council, an alliance of tribes that turned against the insurgent group Al Qaeda in Iraq, has picked a feud with the main Sunni political bloc, the Iraqi Accordance Front.

Council members accuse the Sunni parties on the provincial council of embezzling funds. "Do you know that the projects in Anbar are only ink on paper? They are paying the expenses and it is stolen by the provincial council," said Ali Hatem Sulaiman, a senior Anbar tribal leader, who has feuded with other Awakening Council leaders. "I am talking honestly in order to convey the reality. You want reality? This is the reality."

The assassination of the council's first leader, Sheik Abdul-Sattar abu Risha, in September also hinted at turbulence beneath the surface. Although the attack was blamed on Al Qaeda in Iraq, the sheik's killers allegedly included members of his own security detail.

Other developing hot spots in Iraq include the

northern cities of Kirkuk and Mosul, in a strategically important region with large oil reserves. Both have been roiled by Sunni militant attacks since the summer, including two deadly car bombings that left hundreds dead.

Mindful of the challenges, Western officials are pushing Maliki to reconcile Iraq's warring factions.

"He has to show he is going to be the leader of all

Iraqis. He is going to have to make some very hard, tough decisions here," Army Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, the No. 2 U.S. commander in Iraq, told The Times last month.

In private, Western officials continue to voice their long-held concern that Maliki is surrounded and isolated by a coterie of hard-line advisors from his religious Islamic Dawa Party.

"What I fear is that there is a group of people close to the prime minister who feed him misinformation, whether knowingly or not, probably not, to give them the benefit of the doubt that spin him up," a Western advisor said. "He has to be shown this is the way or he is out."

December 8, 2007

The Charlotte Observer

Kirkuk: Edging out its Arab migrants

By LAUREN FRAYER Associated Press Writer

Umm Nasser sits on a curb in northern Iraq, trying to decide where her home is.

The black-draped Shiite woman left her native Baghdad for this contested city 27 years ago - one of tens of thousands lured by Saddam Hussein's campaign to settle Arabs in this oil-rich area near Iran and Turkey while displacing Kurds he did not trust because of their separatist views.

Saddam redrew the province's borders to maximize its Arab population, and paid Arabs from elsewhere in Iraq to move here.

Now Arabs like Umm Nasser are being encouraged to leave as part of a constitutional mandate to undo the demographic changes Saddam forced on this community. Kurds hope the population shift will pave the way for their autonomous administration to take control of Kirkuk and its vast oil wealth.

But Turkey and other countries in the region with Kurdish minorities have long feared that Kurdish rule of Kirkuk would encourage separatist sentiment within their own borders.

A referendum is expected next year on whether Kirkuk will join the semi-autonomous Kurdish zone to its north, or continue to be ruled by Baghdad.

When she arrived nearly three decades ago, Umm Nasser was a fresh-faced newlywed, pregnant with the first of what would be six children - all born in Kirkuk.

Now the 47-year-old sits in the street outside a government building, lining up to register to leave the province.

The Arabs who came here under Saddam - still called Wafadeen, or "newcomers," in Arabic - receive about \$16,000 in exchange for transferring their residency and food ration cards to their ancestral homelands, mainly in Baghdad and the south. The moves are all voluntary.

So far about 1,200 families have received checks, according to U.S. and Iraqi officials who believe some 60,000 Arabs will eventually file applications here to do so.

Meanwhile, Kurds who fled Kirkuk in the 1980s and 1990s are returning by the thousands to file repatriation claims. Some of their houses have been occupied by Arabs for decades,

and about 500 Kurdish families have set up camp at a dilapidated soccer stadium, awaiting government approval to move back into the city.

The migration of both communities - Kurdish and Arab - has drastically altered Kirkuk's landscape since the 2003 U.S. invasion. The stakes are high.

Much of Iraq's vast oil wealth lies under the ground here, as well as in the south. Apart from the petrodollars, Kurds have a strong cultural and emotional attachment to Kirkuk, which they call "the Kurdish Jerusalem."

"The referendum is the center of attention here, because Arabs, Turkomen and Kurds all claim historic and ethnic rights to this province," said Howard Keegan, head of the State Department team aiding reconstruction in Kirkuk. "They're all tugging on the same rope."

The referendum is mandated by the Iraqi constitution's Article 140, which also calls for a province-wide census by the end of 2007. U.S. and Iraqi officials say few details have been worked out on how to administer the census and referendum, and it was postponed until sometime next year.

Keegan said he expected a census in about three months and the referendum in six to nine months.

"It would be difficult to achieve a legitimacy in the process in a quicker time frame, but there's pressure to do so," Keegan said.

Kurdish lawmakers - confident they have a majority - are pushing for a quick referendum, hoping for a political union with their economically prospering brethren to the north, he said.

"For every day the referendum doesn't happen, it's perceived as a good day for the Arabs and Turkomen and a bad day for the Kurds," Keegan said.

Local officials are awaiting guidance from Baghdad on how to conduct the census and referendum: who will do the counting, who is eligible to vote and whether there will be a transition period before Kirkuk's final status becomes official.

Some Kurds have accused the federal government of stalling the process for fear of losing this oil-rich area to the Kurdish regional government.

"I don't think it's a grand plot to stop the repatriation of Kurds. It's truly a difficult logistical problem to conduct this process fairly," said Army Maj. Gen. Mark P. Hertling, the top U.S. commander in northern Iraq.

"You've got a Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad trying to deal with some very dicey issues. Mediating a dispute between Arabs and Kurds in a northern province is probably not their No. 1 priority right now," Hertling said.

The offer of resettlement under Article 140 has given Umm Nasser a choice

discrimination against Arabs in Kirkuk - which has a larger Kurdish community and a wealthier Turkomen one.

Ethnic and sectarian tension has burgeoned across Iraq since Saddam's fall, as ordinary people search for a post-authoritarian identity. In Kirkuk, the search has yielded a strong sense of nationalism among Kurds - whose deaths by the thousands under Saddam gave them a sense of entitlement once he was gone, Umm Nasser said.

Mohammad Kamal, a powerful Kurd-



Kurdish children clean up outside their family's makeshift home in Kirkuk, 290 kilometers (180 miles) north of Baghdad on Wednesday, Nov. 21, 2007. About 500 families have set up temporary shelters at a soccer stadium outside the city, waiting for government approval to move back into their ancestral homes.

between her hometown of Baghdad and Kirkuk, where she and her husband started a new life 27 years ago.

She was enticed by Saddam's incentives but also by Kirkuk's verdant hills and quaint downtown, with buildings painted bright pink, yellow, aqua. The oil-rich economy meant jobs for her husband and a chance to leave their lower middle class life behind in Baghdad.

"As Shiites, what was safer for us at that time than doing what the Sunni dictator wanted?" she said of the oppression she felt, even as a fellow Arab, under Saddam's regime.

Now Umm Nasser - who gave only her nickname "mother of Nasser" because of increasing security concerns - has swapped optimism for a new kind of fear.

She did not like Saddam. But since his ouster, she is worried about

ish politician who recently helped broker an end to an Arab boycott of local politics, said he hoped more Kurds would reach out to Kirkuk's Arabs and not repeat the same discrimination Kurds faced under Saddam.

"Arabs should feel no pressure to leave. Time has passed, and the Wafadeen who choose to stay even after Article 140 is completed will be considered the same as the original families here," Kamal said.

Umm Nasser acknowledged she received no threats or pressure to leave Kirkuk, but said she cannot shake the fear of being an Arab minority in a sea of Kurds.

"I'm afraid someone will eventually force me out, and I don't know how long the offer of money will be there," she said. "So I feel like I should take it now, and say goodbye to this town I have learned to call home."

The Washington Post

The Kurdish Question

December 9, 2007 - Reviewed by Quil Lawrence

How a rebel group has tried to capture a people's aspirations.

The guerrillas of the Kurdistan Workers Party, known by the initials PKK, are stuck in the mountains, literally and figuratively. The Kurdish rebels know every mile of the rough peaks and deep gorges along the borders of Iraq, Turkey and Iran. They have cliff-side bunkers, black-market supply routes and plenty of ammunition. What they lack is a path forward.

This fall, the PKK made a series of bloody raids into Turkey from its hideouts in northern Iraq, killing dozens of Turkish soldiers and practically daring the Turkish military to mount a large-scale, cross-border retaliation. This situation is precarious not only for the rebels, but also for U.S. forces. The Turks, who have massed tens of thousands of troops close to the Iraqi border, have been pressing the United States for years to crack down on the Kurdish independence movement. The U.S. military, however, has little to gain from opening a new front in Iraq. Twice in the past six months, the tensions have threatened to blow up into a full-scale war involving Turkey, Iran, Iraq and the United States -- the only question being exactly who would be allied with whom.

How this came to pass is the subject of Aliza Marcus's timely book on the PKK and its imprisoned leader, Abdullah Ocalan. A former correspondent for the Boston Globe and Christian Science Monitor, she draws on eight years of experience covering the Kurds and a vast reservoir of interviews with PKK fighters.

Blood and Belief begins with the formation of the PKK in 1978 by disaffected Kurdish students in Turkey. Ocalan's own beginnings are somewhat comical; his marriage to the daughter of a middle-class politician, he once said, was proof of his ability to withstand any hardship the rebel life had to offer. But his guerrilla career was anything but funny. In the 15 years after the PKK launched a separatist war against the Turkish state in 1984, the fighting claimed some 35,000 lives, mostly poor Kurds in southeastern Turkey. In 1999, the United States helped Turkey arrest Ocalan, who had fled to

Italy and Russia and was finally captured in Kenya. Since then, the few thousand PKK fighters left in the mountains have stumbled between cease-fires and ultimatums, unable either to cut ties with their jailed leader or to figure out exactly what to do next.

On a recent journey to a PKK outpost inside northern Iraq, I found the rebels living in psychological as well as physical denial. "Why does everyone call us terrorists?" one Kalashnikov-toting Kurd asked. "The Turkish government has given the Kurds no rights, no schools, no language. We have a right to live in freedom."

The Kurds surely have a cause, but the PKK's disregard for civilian lives has put them on terrorist blacklists both in the United States and in the European Union. The guerrillas hint that they would stop fighting if offered a blanket amnesty. But they show no savvy about how to improve their image, especially their cult-like devotion to Ocalan.

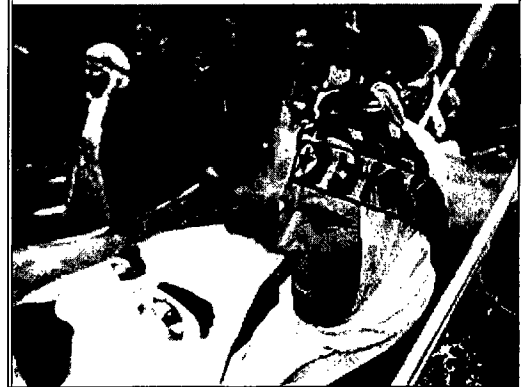
Marcus's book helps explain this, too, by chronicling the horrifying business of the PKK's consolidation of power. Her account of Ocalan's quest to become the sole voice of Turkish Kurds is the first of its kind in English, describing the PKK's savagery toward groups that should have been fellow travelers in the fight for Kurdish rights. Ocalan shared the penchant of dictators around the world for killing any perceived rival, at times discrediting or executing even his most able lieutenants. It's an achievement of Blood and Belief that despite the bloodletting, Marcus still generates empathy -- not for the murderous Ocalan, but for the desperate Kurds who joined the PKK revolution feeling they had nowhere else to turn.

The book is not always an easy read. It suffers from the lack of a decent map, and sometimes the narrative becomes disjointed among all the changing names and factions of the PKK. On the other

THE PKK AND
THE KURDISH
FIGHT FOR
INDEPENDENCE

BLOOD AND BELIEF

Aliza Marcus



BLOOD AND BELIEF
The PKK and the Kurdish Fight For Independence
By Aliza Marcus
New York Univ. 351 pp. \$35

hand, Marcus is compelling as she describes the PKK fighters who continued with the cause, believing it was greater than Ocalan's obvious flaws. She conveys the trapped feelings of Kurdish boys and girls who train under a mural of Ocalan's face painted on a cliff. And she brings home the most important point: The PKK hasn't been roused from its mountains in two decades of fighting, and there's no reason to think another Turkish incursion will bring the rebels down. *

Quil Lawrence is Middle East correspondent for the BBC/PRI radio program "The World" and author of the forthcoming book "Invisible Nation: How the Kurds' Quest for Statehood is Shaping Iraq and the Middle East."

TEHRAN TIMES

December 10, 2007

Rafsanjani: Kurdish leaders are our good friends

TEHRAN -- In a meeting with a group of Iraqi Kurdish leaders here on Sunday, Expediency Council Chairman Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said ""Kurdish leaders are our good friends.""

Religious and cultural commonalities between Iranians and Kurds require the officials of the two countries to boost their cooperation, Rafsanjani noted. He then appreciated the Iraqi President Jalal Talabani for dismissing allegations that Iran is meddling in Iraq. Kurdish leaders, for their part, expressed gratitude over Iran's support for Iraqi Kurds during the rule of

Saddam Hussein and thereafter. They also called on Iran to continue its support for the Iraqi people. Rafsanjani then referred to efforts by U.S. leaders to demonize Iran in the eyes of its neighbors, saying Washington has been exaggerating the threat of Iran's nuclear program to the extent that its regional allies have protested it. U.S. friends believe that the real threat comes from Israel's atomic weapons and have called the United States policies double-standard and defective, the former president noted.

Turkey eyes law to get PKK members to quit: report

December 9, 2007

The Boston Globe

ISTANBUL (Reuters)

inform on the group.

Turkey's government is considering a new law to encourage members of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) to leave the separatist guerrilla group, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan was quoted as saying on Sunday.

Ankara blames the PKK for almost 40,000 deaths since the start of its campaign in 1984 and in recent months has massed tens of thousands of troops in the southeast for possible cross-border strikes against rebels based in northern Iraq.

Turkish law already allows members of the PKK who have not been involved in attacks to avoid punishment, but only if they hand themselves in and

"Now we can develop it further. Before we passed a law but the number of people who benefited from it was not to the degree that we wanted," Erdogan was quoted as saying by top-selling daily Hurriyet. Other newspapers also carried the report.

"With a new initiative we can minimize the number of people going up into the mountains (joining the PKK), we can eradicate that. Then we can encourage people to come down from the mountains," Erdogan said.

Erdogan said the government was working on the plan with the powerful armed forces and said it would not negotiate with the PKK. He did not give

details.

"We're not negotiating with anyone. We will say 'this is the law, come hand yourself in,'" he said.

Ankara, like the United States and European Union, considers the PKK a terrorist organization.

Erdogan's AK Party, which has invested heavily in development in the impoverished, mainly Kurdish southeast, made sweeping gains in the region in July's parliamentary election, taking support away from the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party.

But elsewhere in Turkey, an escalation of guerrilla violence in recent months has stirred nationalist sentiment and Erdogan could face fierce opposition to any initiative perceived as an amnesty.

AP Associated Press

Iraq's Yazidis Look to Kurdish Region

December 11, 2007

By PAUL SCHEMM Associated Press Writer

LALESH, Iraq (AP) -- Iraq's embattled Yazidi minority, the target of the worst single terrorist attack since the U.S.-led invasion, now is looking to the Kurdish regional government for protection.

In August, four suicide truck bombs detonated simultaneously in the small village of Qahataniya near the Iraqi border town of Sinjar, killing more than 500 Yazidis, a devastating blow to a community of no more than 500,000 people.

"While there have always been massacres and attacks, never has there been something as terrible as Sinjar," said Karim Suleiman, the head of the Yazidi cultural center in the town of Sheikhan, near Mosul. "We've never experienced something like this."

The Yazidis live along the sensitive faultline separating Kurds from Arabs - a line whose location will be determined by a vote scheduled for April.

Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution states that there will be a referendum in the areas bordering the Kurdish autonomous region, including the northern oil city of Kirkuk, so that people can choose whether to be ruled by the central government or the Kurds.

The Yazidis are concentrated in key areas for the referendum, including lands coveted by the Kurds north of Mosul and around Sinjar on the Syrian border. The Kurds see the referendum as a chance to right Saddam Hussein's historic wrongs of forced population transfer and Arabization. The Arabs see it as a Kurdish land grab.

Over the centuries the Yazidis, who primarily speak Kurdish, have identified themselves as Arabs or Kurds, depending who held the upper hand. The community now has firmly thrown its lot in with the Kurdish regional government.

"We hope that the land now lived on by the Yazidis will join the Kurdish area," the community's leader, Amir Tahseen Beg, told the Associated Press from his residence in Sheikhan. "This will depend on the referendum, but our areas must return to the original motherland."

The Yazidis have always existed on the fringes of the region's history - the occasional victim of pogroms when local leaders have accused them of devil worship. The community is widely viewed with suspicion and Yazidis have complained about discrimination, and even persecution, from both their Arab and Kurdish neighbors.

The Yazidis say that they are ethnic Kurds worshipping the original religion of their people before the advent of Islam, venerating in particular Malak Taus, the chief of the angels - known in other religions as Lucifer - who takes the form of a blue peacock.

With the creation of the Kurdish autonomous region in 1991 under the protection of U.S. forces, the Yazidi community was divided, with some 90 percent of its people remaining under Iraqi government control - a government they say oppressed them, prevented them from practicing their religion and even declared them Arabs in 1977.

"Where the Kurds are, the Yazidis are and where the Yazidis are, the Kurds are - we are one people and one nation," said Baba Sheikh Khurto Hajji Ismail, the community's religious leader. "The Yazidis are from the old religion of the Kurds."

Yazidi religious practices have been described as a blend of Eastern religions

with hints of the ancient pre-Christian Persian Zoroastrian and Mithraic practices, as well as elements of Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

All the monotheistic prophets are recognized, but Abraham and Noah are especially venerated.

The Yazidis' most important occasion is the Eid al-Jamma, or pilgrimage holiday, when the community scattered across Iraq, Turkey, Armenia, Georgia and Germany gathers in the temple city of Lalesh, nestled in a picturesque valley just north of Mosul.

In October 2006, the week-long festival was held for the first time in years due to improved security. Thousands of Yazidis, dressed in Kurdish, Arab, Turkish and European dress, walked barefoot among the conical temples of the sacred village, paid their respects and greeted rarely seen distant relatives.

The festival was canceled this year after the bombings in Sinjar.

"There are not many of us, so things like this really affect us," said Luqman Suleiman Mahmoud who was recently visiting the empty temple valley. "My people are like links in a chain, so any small thing affects us all," he said, adding that there have been few weddings or celebrations since the attack.

In the immediate aftermath of the bombings, Kurdish regional president Masoud Barzani dispatched a force of 400 Kurdish militia, known as peshmerga, to Sinjar to protect the Yazidis - a provocative move considering his official jurisdiction does not extend to those lands.

"We did not get the approval of the central government because these forces have been sent for a short time and for humanitarian reasons," said Jabar Yawer, spokesman for the peshmerga.

The move was appreciated by Yazidi leader Tahseen Beg, and has reinforced the sense that the community's future must lie with the Kurdish autonomous region. He said his people just have one request from the government.

"We asking that the Yazidis be recognized," in the regional constitution being drawn up, which only has a clause granting equal rights to the different ethnicities in the region, including Kurds, Arabs, Turcoman, and Christian Assyrians, he said. "We are not just asking for respect for different ethnicities, but we would like a clause recognizing different religions within the ethnicity of the Kurds."



December 12, 2007

ASIA TIMES

Fighting talk from Turkey's generals

By Gareth Jenkins

In November, Turkish journalist Fikret Bila published a book entitled *Komutanlar Cephesi* (*The Commanders' Front*) based on interviews with eight retired Turkish military commanders.

Prior to its publication, extracts from the book were serialized in Turkish in *Milliyet* and in English in the *Turkish Daily News*. *Komutanlar Cephesi* focuses primarily on the military campaign to suppress the insurgency of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). However, it also addresses the wider issue of the political and

cultural rights of Turkey's substantial Kurdish minority, who are currently estimated to account for around 20% of the country's population of 75 million.

The book also contains interesting insights on the way in which members of the military view the policies and intentions of the United States and the European Union. Bila enjoys good relations with the Turkish security establishment. In his interviews, he avoided questions about the impact of the more controversial aspects of Turkey's struggle against the PKK, including: widespread human-rights abuses, the well-documented campaign of assassination against suspected PKK sympathizers [1] and the forced evacuation of over 3,500 villages in the predominantly Kurdish southeast of the country by Turkish security forces.

The PKK becomes a strategic priority

Former chief of the general staff Kenan Evren, who led the 1980 military coup and served as Turkey's president from 1982 to 1989, admitted that the first PKK attack in August 1984 took the military by surprise. Initially the Turkish military attempted to combat the PKK using conventional weapons and tactics.

However, the number of PKK attacks escalated from 47 in 1984 to 245 in 1987 and 1,111 in 1990. Lieutenant General Hasan Kundakic, who was a field commander during the early years of the PKK's insurgency, noted that the first generation of PKK militants were also the best trained, having spent several years preparing for the insurgency in camps in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. Once this first generation began to suffer losses, their replacements were less well-trained and less effective.

General Dogan Gures, who served

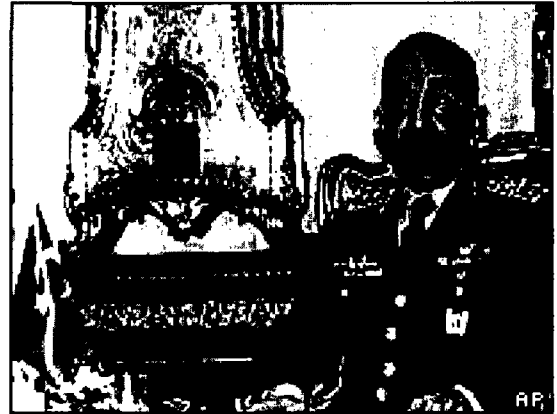
as chief of staff from 1990 to 1994, spent heavily on re-equipping the military, buying M-111 and M-114 armored personnel carriers from the Netherlands and Cobra and Super Cobra helicopters from the United States. Gures believed that the G-3 rifles being used by the Turkish army were inferior to the AK-47s favored by the PKK. In 1991, he acquired 100,000 AK-47s free of charge from stocks which had belonged to the recently collapsed East Germany. Gures said that Turkey also bought a large quantity of weapons and equipment on the black market in Iraq from stocks abandoned by Saddam Hussein's army in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War.

The PKK produced a change in Turkey's strategic priorities, according to Kundakic. Previously, Greece had been regarded as the main threat and the First Turkish Army, which is based in Thrace, received priority in terms of equipment and personnel. Starting in the early 1990s, however, priority shifted to the Second Turkish Army, which is based in south-eastern Turkey.

Marital law, which had been declared throughout Turkey in the wake of the 1980 coup, was lifted in the southeast of the country in 1987 and replaced by a state of "Extraordinary Situation" (OHAL). Under OHAL, security was the responsibility of the police and gendarmerie under local governors and the Ministry of the Interior. The regular military was completely excluded from the command structure. Gures said that he decided simply to ignore OHAL's chain of command and assume control of all security throughout the OHAL region.

General Gures noted that during the late 1980s, the security forces had only conducted daytime operations against specific PKK targets. As a result, the PKK was able to control large swaths of the countryside in southeastern Turkey after dark. Gures founded Turkey's first Special Forces battalion, increased commando training and ordered units in the field to stage night operations and control territory rather than just seek out PKK units.

Most of the commanders agreed that the establishment in spring 1991 of a safe haven for the Iraqi Kurds worked to Turkey's advantage; not least by enabling Turkey to stage cross-border operations against PKK bases in northern Iraq without danger of a confrontation



with Saddam Hussein's forces. Former corps commander General Necati Ozgen claimed that a cross-border operation in October 1992 involving 50,000 Turkish troops broke the back of the PKK, leading to its eventual military containment during the mid-1990s.

Together with the other commanders, however, Ozgen complained that the civilian government had squandered the opportunity provided by the Turkish military's success on the battlefield by failing to address the social and economic problems that were fueling support for the PKK. Ozgen accused the government of not investing in education in the region while Lieutenant General Altay Tokat criticized it for not trying to boost the local economy.

Almost all of the commanders were also highly critical of the government for failing to hang PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan after his capture and imprisonment in 1999. Tokat argued that the decision to spare Ocalan had boosted the morale of PKK militants and prevented the organization's collapse.

There was similar denunciation of the Turkish Parliament's failure on March 1, 2003, to pass a resolution which would have allowed US troops to transit through Turkey and open a second front against Iraq during the 2003 Gulf War. Kundakic insisted that, if the parliamentary resolution had been passed, Turkey could have finished off the PKK by establishing a military presence in northern Iraq.

Tokat went one step further and argued that Turkey could have used the parliamentary resolution to create a de facto Turkish protectorate over the Iraqi province of Mosul. Ozgen argued that Turkey could still invade northern Iraq, destroy the PKK bases in the area and establish a permanent security zone. He dismissed concerns

about a possible military clash with the United States by arguing that the Turkish military was more than strong enough to confront the United States on the battlefield.

Foreign support for the PKK

Although they were less bellicose than Ozgen, almost all of the commanders were deeply suspicious of the Kurdish policies propagated not only by the United States but by the West in general. Kundakic claimed that the United States had been actively cooperating with the PKK since the 2003 Gulf War as part of its strategy of trying to assert control over the greater Middle East. Both the EU and the United States were supporting the PKK, according to General Gures, and favored the eventual establishment of an independent state.

General Ismail Hakki Karadayi, who was chief of staff from 1994 to 1998, pointed to the PKK's use of US, French and Italian-made weapons as proof of foreign support for the organization. Tokat asserted that what he described as the "imperialist powers" were seeking revenge on Turkey for the opposition of the Turkish nationalist movement to the Kurdish state recommended by the short-lived Treaty of Sevres in 1920. General Aytac Yalman, who served as commander of the Turkish Land Forces from 2002 to 2004, also drew a parallel between the current situation and the Treaty of Sevres.

The one commander who did not see an American hand behind the PKK was General Hilmi Ozkok, who was chief of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) from 2002 to 2006. Ozkok said that he had personally never seen evidence of US support for the PKK. Ozkok was also alone in believing that the commander of a unit of Turkish Special Forces in Suleymaniye,

northern Iraq, was right not to resist when taken into custody by US troops in July 2003 on suspicion of plotting to assassinate an Iraqi Kurdish official. All of the other commanders thought that he should have ordered his men to fight to the death, and several suggested that he should have been court-martialed for not doing so.

Resolving the crisis

In the 1980s, the Turkish state officially denied the existence of the Kurds, their language and their culture, claiming that they were "mountain Turks" who had temporarily forgotten their true identity. However, all of the commanders are now not only prepared to ac-

knowledge the existence of Kurds, but supported their right to speak their own language and preserve their own culture. Evren went so far as to suggest that all civil servants posted to southeastern Turkey should be able to speak both Turkish and Kurdish.

The endorsement of the Kurdish language was not wholesale, however: General Ozkok, the most liberal of the commanders interviewed by Bila, still insisted that Kurdish should not be used as a medium of instruction in schools, describing such use as a threat to national unity.

Only Ozkok appeared optimistic about the prospects for a resolution of Turkey's Kurdish problem,

predicting that EU accession would result in higher welfare levels that would undercut the appeal of separatist nationalism. The others were more pessimistic.

Tokat believed that an independent Kurdish state would soon be established in northern Iraq, which would inspire Turkey's own Kurdish independence movement. Karadayi maintained that the Turkish state had to be more aggressive in combating both Kurdish nationalism and the PKK. Yalman said that Turkey had failed to solve its Kurdish problem during its first two phases, which he described as the "social phase" and the "military phase" and that it was now entering a third "political phase", which

was likely to be even more problematic. The greatest fear of General Gures was that Turkish public opinion would eventually become so tired of the Kurdish problem that there would eventually be popular support for ceding territory for the creation of a Kurdish state.

Gareth Jenkins is a writer and journalist resident in Istanbul, where he has been based for the last 20 years.

Note

1. For example, Timur Sahar and Ugur Balik, *Itirafci, Bir JITEM'ci Anlati* (Aram Yayıncılık: Istanbul, 2004).

(This article first appeared in [The Jamestown Foundation](#). Used with permission.)

TODAYS ZAMAN

December 12, 2007

Top commanders lash out at DTP, European Union

Chief of General Staff Gen. Yaşar Büyükanıt said on Tuesday that acts of terrorism have been both politicized and legalized in recent years, pointing to the presence of deputies from the Democratic Society Party (DTP) in Parliament.

Büyükanıt delivered a speech at a symposium titled "Prevention of Economic and Ideological Support for the PKK/Kongra-Gel," organized by the Turkish General Staff Military History Archives and Strategic Studies Institute (ATASE) on Tuesday in the capital. He noted that domestic and foreign support flowing to the terrorist organization is an interaction and stated that acts of terror perpetrated by separatist and terrorist groups has recently been politicized and legalized, in particular reference to deputies from the pro-Kurdish DTP in Parliament.

Stating that the objective of the symposium is to curb psychological and financial support to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Büyükanıt noted, "It is not easy to find ways to prevent resources from going to the terrorist organization because it is supported by domestic and foreign entities."

He underlined that foreign support for the separatist organization comes to a large extent from northern Iraq, adding: "Domestic and foreign support trigger each other. If the terrorist organization was not supported by internal dynamics, the scope of foreign support to members of the separatist group would not be that large. In other words, domestic support leads foreign sources to support the terrorist organization."

Noting that countries around the world have squandered significant opportunities on the path to the restoration of peace and the strengthening of democracy, the rule of law and human rights, Büyükanıt said: "Now such concepts serve the interests of terrorist organizations. These concepts are of vital importance to foreign countries. When they hear members of a terrorist organization dwelling on such concepts, they believe that that the terrorist group is right in its fight."

"The entire Turkish nation should be very careful in its acts. Terrorism has been both

politicized and legalized," he said.

Deputy Chief of General Staff Gen. Ergin Saygun, on the other hand, stated that the stance of certain countries, including Turkey's allies, encourages members of the outlawed PKK in their terrorist activities, while noting that financial and psychological support flowing to the terrorist organization should be cut to curb such activities.

In his speech, Saygun noted that the stance adopted by certain countries, including Turkey's allies, is the most crucial factor that paves the way for members of the terrorist organization to find safe havens and continue their armed attacks.

Noting that financial, psychological and military support going to terrorist organizations should be obstructed to flush out members of those groups, Saygun stressed that all countries need to contribute to the worldwide struggle against acts of terrorism perpetrated against innocent civilians by armed terrorist organizations.

Saygun stated that the United States, the European Union and NATO have recently pledged to help Turkey crack down on the PKK separatist organization. "The EU has taken significant and promising steps to contribute to Turkey's fight against the PKK terrorist group in the last few weeks. But we also see that conferences that spread the propaganda of the terrorist organization in question are organized in the European Parliament and in the French and UK parliaments by members and proponents of the separatist group," he said.

Saygun stressed that such conferences encourage members and proponents of the



terrorist organization to support bloody attacks waged by the PKK and provide political support for the terrorist organization. "We cannot understand why some countries still continue to call members of the terrorist group 'PKK guerillas,' 'armed fighters' and 'Ankara dissidents'."

Saygun noted that the PKK receives financial aid from European countries where it conducts illegal operations such as drug and human trafficking.

"Steps taken by Turkey in its fight against terrorism are criticized by European countries for reasons of human rights, but these countries forget that they take stricter measures against terrorist organizations when necessary. Though all European countries remain silent in the face of tough measures taken to curb terrorist attacks waged against their countries, they are critical of a court case opened to close down a political party that explicitly supports a terrorist organization," he said.

Squatting in stadium, Kurds used as pawns

Vote over province hinges on homeless

By Stephen Farrell

KIRKUK, Iraq: Even by the skewed standards of a country where millions are homeless or in exile, the squalor of the Kirkuk soccer stadium is a startling sight.

On the outskirts of a city adjoining some of Iraq's most lucrative oil reserves, a rivulet of urine flows past the entrance to the barren playing field.

There are no spectators, only 2,200 Kurdish squatters who have converted the sporting dugouts, stands and parking lot into a refugee city of cinder-block hovels covered in Kurdish political graffiti, some for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the party of President Jalal Talabani.

These homeless Kurds are here not for soccer but for politics. They are reluctant players in a future referendum to decide whether the oil-rich Tamim Province in the north and its capital, Kirkuk, will become part of the semi-autonomous Kurdish regional government or remain under administration by Baghdad.

Under the Iraqi Constitution, the referendum is due before Dec. 31.

But in a nation with a famously slow political clock, one of the few things on which Kirkuk's Kurdish, Arab and Turkmen communities agree is that yet another political deadline is about to be missed.

This unstable city can ill afford much more delay and uncertainty.

The fusion of oil, politics and ethnic tensions make Kirkuk one of the most potentially explosive places in the country. Its fate is seen as a crucial issue by all sides in the debate about whether Iraq will eventually be partitioned among Kurds, Sunni Arabs and Shiite Arabs.

What rankles the impoverished Kurds at the stadium the most is that while they remain in a foul-smelling limbo, on the other side of town some of the Arabs who were forcibly moved here by Saddam Hussein still live in comfortable suburbs, a legacy of the dictator's notorious Anfal campaign in the 1980s to depopulate Kurdish areas and "Arabize" Tamim.

Moreover, some of the squatting Kurds complain that it is their own leaders who forced them to move to Kirkuk, to pack the city with Kurdish votes before the referendum.

Hajji Walid Muhammad, 67, a taxi driver here, grumbled that after the 2003 war, the Kurdish authorities told a gathering of Kurds who were born in Kirkuk but living nearby in Chamchamal, "Even if you own a small tent you have to go back to your own homeland."

When asked what would have happened if he had refused, Muhammad said: "By God's name, they

Photographs by Michael Kamber for The New York Times

The Tamim referendum's casualties: A Kurdish woman and a girl baking bread at their makeshift home in Kirkuk's stadium. Below, two Arabs in the city checked lists last month to see if their families could claim the equivalent of \$16,000 and a piece of land in exchange for leaving town. Bottom, a view of what is left of the soccer stadium.



would cut off our food basket and not pay us our salary and give us nothing else and force us to go back. They ordered us to go back.”

Najat Jaseem Muhammad said that the authorities “encouraged” him to leave Chamchamal, where he had lived since 1997. “They said: ‘If you do not return, we will lose Kirkuk. You are Kurdish, and Kirkuk must return to the arms of Kurdistan,’” he said. “It was not a matter of being forced, but if anyone stayed over there they would not have been supplied with anything and they would have been oppressed. They would have stopped my work.”

In a province where the population balance has been distorted by decades of gerrymandering and forced settlement, the Constitution calls for a three-stage sequential process to resolve the issue. First a process of “normalization” to restore the city’s population balance to what it was before Saddam’s decrees, then a census, then the referendum.

A coalition agreement in 2006 between the governing parties of Baghdad set deadlines of March 31, 2007, for the

“normalization,” July 31 for the census and Nov. 30 for the referendum, ostensibly giving the city a month before the Dec. 31 deadline mandated in the Constitution.

But even that first stage is incomplete. U.S. and international officials who have pushed for progress concede that the Dec. 31 date is unfeasible.

The inevitable delay of the referendum frustrates the Kurds, who are confident of victory and suspect delaying tactics by opponents intent on keeping the land — and the oil.

In contrast, the delay is welcomed with ill-concealed delight by the Arabs of Kirkuk.

“I believe the main error was to set a holy date for the referendum,” said Tahsin Kahya, an Arab member of the Kirkuk Provincial Council. “A problem created over 35 years cannot be fixed in seven or eight months,” he said, ticking off with the ease of frequent practice the constitutional, logistical, legal, parliamentary, boundary, property and financial hurdles he argued should delay a referendum for “years, of course.”

In a volatile city where Sunni insurgent violence has been reduced significantly in recent months but not eliminated, how the Kurds react to the missed deadline will be crucial.

The issue is further complicated by Turkey’s desire to safeguard the Turkmen minority in Kirkuk and its hostility to the notion of the Kurds gaining control of the oil fields there. Istanbul fears that this could embolden the Kurds to declare their own state, thereby encouraging Kurdish separatists in northeastern Turkey.

“No Iraqi government could ‘give’ Kirkuk to the Kurds and hope to survive, in view of broad popular opposition in Arab Iraq,” said the International Crisis Group, a nonprofit organization that seeks to prevent or resolve deadly conflicts.

“The Kirkuk question could, therefore, trigger total deadlock, breakdown and violent conflict, just when the Bush administration hopes its security plan for Baghdad will yield political dividends.”

Syrian government arrests dozens of dissenters

By Thanassis Cambanis

The Syrian authorities this week arrested more than 30 people who had been working for political change, escalating a crackdown on dissent just a week after critics elected a leadership committee in an unusually direct and public challenge to the authority of President Bashar al-Assad.

A majority of those arrested were questioned and released, dissidents and human rights advocates said. But three of the most outspoken opposition leaders remained in custody Thursday, and others had been summoned to state intelligence offices for questioning.

Last month, government security forces blocked access to the popular Web site Facebook, the host to a vibrant if virtual debate about the president. On Sunday, security agents began rounding up dozens of known dissidents who have met this fall to create a joint opposition front, acting much like a political party in a state that operates under emergency laws that ban any organization not connected with the government and ruling Baath Party.

The arrests occurred on the heels of Syria’s participation in the Middle East peace conference at Annapolis, Maryland, which was perceived in the region as a diplomatic coup for Damascus and a sign of a thaw in tense relations between Assad and the White House.

Emboldened by a sense that Syria’s hard-line anti-American policies in the region have paid dividends, human

rights advocates say, the authorities in Damascus have turned their focus to shutting down the last remaining channels of public debate.

“This goes back to what we’ve always seen as a problem, that the opening with the West has never been contingent on Syria improving its human rights record,” Nadim Houry, a Beirut-based researcher who tracks Syria for Human Rights Watch, said in a telephone interview this week. “It’s contingent on Syria cooperating on Lebanon, Iraq and the peace process.”

Dissidents and human rights advocates contend that the fact that a group of intellectuals with no political organization at its disposal, many of whose leaders are frail or incarcerated, still poses a threat is a sign that the regime itself is weak.

Akram Bunni, a newspaper columnist and brother of a well-known imprisoned human rights lawyer, was detained Tuesday; he has continued to write in Arab newspapers about the “moral bankruptcy” of Assad’s rule.

“They’re concerned about public opinion,” Bunni said in a wide-ranging conversation at his home in Syria in October, before his arrest. “They don’t want anyone, internationally or internally, to see that there are public figures who might be an alternative to the regime.”

Activists in Syria said the ongoing crackdown was, paradoxically, a sign of strength as well as weakness — the regime has consolidated enough internal

power to re-establish “red lines” limiting public criticism of the country’s absolute leader.

Assad allowed a brief flowering of free expression and civil society activity when he assumed the presidency following his father’s death in 2000. But over the years he has gradually tightened his control over the country’s small political class, with arrests and new regulations. Over the last year, Syria’s security services have cast a wider net, arresting not only seasoned political activists but

also individuals who posted comments deemed subversive on Web sites.

Still, dissidents have continued to challenge the government, disobeying a ban on public meetings.

On Dec. 1, Riad Seif, a former businessman and member of Parliament and now an opposition spokesman, held a meeting at his home of more than 160 political activists who had signed the Damascus Declaration in October 2005, calling on the state to lift its repressive emergency laws and allow free speech and political organization, Syrian human rights activists said.

In a direct challenge to the regime, which prohibits independent political parties, the dissidents formed a body called The National Council, electing a president, Fidaa al-Hourani, and a five-member leadership committee, which includes Bunni.

The group spans the political spectrum, including Communists, Islamists, former Baathists, secular nationalists and Kurds.

A younger generation of activists, schooled on the Internet rather than the underground political organizations of the 1970s, has also spoken out, mostly on postings on opposition Web sites and on Facebook groups. Several have ended up in prison, and others, like Ahd al-Hendi and Mohammed al-Abdallah, have taken refuge in Beirut.

"They are afraid because people on-line meet together, share ideas, criticize

the regime, do things they cannot do in reality," Hendi, 23, who was arrested for a month last year after posting critical reports to an opposition Web site, said in an interview last week in Beirut. "They are strong on one hand, but on another they are so weak they are afraid of an Internet café!"

Despite the contentions that the current crackdown stems from a sense of insecurity, some Syrian analysts and diplomats have said that the Assad regime

has staved off a series of major crises and now feels strong enough to restore the limits that once cowed critics.

"States around us are collapsing and there's a high perception of danger, but Syria is deterring the dangers," a Syrian analyst who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he feared government harassment said in an interview in Damascus in October. "The opposition doesn't pose a threat."

Turkey escalates attacks against guerrillas in northern Iraq

In south, U.K. force transfers control to central government

By Sabrina Tavernise
and Paul von Zielbauer

Turkish fighter jets bombed Kurdish militant targets in northern Iraq before dawn Sunday in an escalation of Ankara's effort to weaken the Kurdish guerrillas based across the border. In the south, meanwhile, British forces handed over control of Basra Province to the Iraqi government, relinquishing military control of the final region under their supervision after four and a half years.

In a formal ceremony, which was held indoors to avoid mortar attacks from the militias that have battled British forces over the years, Major General Graham Binns, the British commander in Basra, said Iraq was prepared to take over the province, with British forces assuming much lower profile support role.

"I came to rid Basra of its enemies, and I now formally hand Basra back to its friends," Binns said before signing documents giving Iraqi forces operational control of the province, which holds most of Iraq's proven petroleum reserves. "We will continue to help train Basra security forces. But we are guests in your country, and we will act accordingly."

U.S. officials said Basra, which is mostly Shiite, could prove to be a real test for the Iraqi government. Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno, the No. 2 American commander in Iraq, said Sunday that officials were concerned about whether Iraqi forces would be able to prevent Iran, which shares a border with Basra Province, from creating trouble in the region.

In the north, Turkish attack aircraft struck targets in the border regions of Zap, Avashin and Hakurk, the Turkish military said. An Iraqi official said one woman had been killed. The strikes, which began around 1 a.m. and lasted for about three hours, also hit Qandil,

an area farther inside Iraq, where some of the commanders of the Kurdish militant group, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, are believed to hide.

A top Turkish general said Ankara had received U.S. approval for the airstrikes. "America last night opened Iraqi airspace to us," the state news agency Anatolia quoted the general, Yasar Buyukanit, as saying, according to Reuters. "By opening Iraqi airspace to us last night America gave its approval to the operation."

It was the second set of strikes against the PKK since the Turkish prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, met with President George W. Bush in Washington last month. The first, on Dec. 1, consisted of artillery attacks from Turkey on targets inside Iraq.

Turkey, a member of NATO, had been threatening a military operation into northern Iraq. But it appears to be sticking to a more limited offensive because a larger-scale invasion, like those it carried out in the 1990's, would anger the United States, an important ally.

In Baghdad, Deputy Foreign Minister Muhammad al-Hajj Humoud summoned the Turkish ambassador and demanded an end to strikes that "may affect the friendly relations between the two governments and peoples," the Foreign Ministry said, according to Reuters.

The Kurdish rebels, who have bases in Turkey and Iraq, have been fighting the Turkish military since the 1980s. They want an autonomous Kurdish region in eastern Turkey.

In Turkey, NTV reported that the strike had involved more than 50 planes and that the targets were based on U.S. intelligence. The military said that it had hit border areas with artillery fire after the airstrikes and that helicopters had also flown missions along the border.

"We as the government are determined to use all political, geopolitical and military vehicles against the separatist terror organization in the most effective way," Erdogan said Sunday on Turkish television.

At the same time, the government says it is working toward a longer-term solution and has begun to amend a law

that would pardon certain fighters. The effort, which opposition politicians have been highly critical of, has failed several times in the past.

"Let's look together for ways of winning over the people instead of alienating them," Erdogan said recently. "If we are to get rid of terrorism, this can become possible by keeping open the door of democratic politics as a way of solving problems."

After the transfer ceremony in Basra, Mowaffak al-Rubaie, the Iraqi national security adviser, challenged Basra's provincial and city leaders to stabilize the

region. "The security of Basra is one of our main responsibilities," Rubaie said. "I address, directly, the governor, the general commander of the security forces in Basra, the provincial council and the people of Basra. Will you agree with militias? Will you engage in corruption? Will you go easy on terrorism?"

British paratroopers first arrived in the city of Basra virtually unopposed during the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. In September of this year, British forces withdrew to an air base on the outskirts of the city, abandoning a former palace built by Saddam Hussein after

coming under several mortar and coordinated small-arms attacks from Shiite-led factions vying for control of the city.

The two main rival groups are a militia led by the anti-American Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr and the Supreme Iraq Islamic Council, a militia affiliated with the political faction of the same name.

Sabrina Tavernise reported from Istanbul and Paul von Zielbauer from Baghdad. Sebnem Arsu contributed reporting from Istanbul and Iraqi employees for The New York Times from Basra and Sulaimaniya.

Turkey's economy

A cloud no bigger than a hand

ANKARA AND ISTANBUL

The Turkish economy is doing well, but it is also vulnerable

IN 2001 Turkey's president, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, flung a copy of the constitution at the prime minister, Bulent Ecevit, helping to plunge the country into its worst financial crisis since the war. This year Turkey has lurched from one political mess to another. In April a top general threatened a coup; an early general election was held in July; in August Abdullah Gul, a former foreign minister whose wife wears an Islamic-style headscarf, became president over the army's objections; then Turkey threatened to invade northern Iraq. Yet, in contrast to 2001, the markets have barely blinked through all the turbulence.

In truth, the economy is far healthier than it was, thanks mainly to a rigid adherence to IMF-prescribed reforms on the part of the ruling Justice and Development (AK) party. Since AK came to power in 2002 GDP growth has averaged 6.6%, inflation has fallen to single digits and foreign direct investment (FDI) has soared. AK's economic record is one reason why it won a sharply increased share of the vote (although fewer seats) in July.

Yet Lorenzo Giorgianni, the IMF's top man for Turkey, rightly says that this strong economic performance should not be taken for granted. Year-on-year GDP growth in the third quarter was the lowest for six years, at just 1.5%. The credit crunch and fears of an American recession are curbing investors' appetites for emerging markets. Turkey, with a huge current-account deficit, is especially vulnerable. Negotiations for Turkish membership of the European Union, the prospect of which is an anchor for investor confidence, have soured. The IMF pro-

gramme itself is due to expire next May and the government has yet to decide whether to renew it.

The current-account deficit is being boosted by a rising energy bill. As manufacturers shift to higher value-added goods, they need costlier inputs. Coupled with an overvalued Turkish lira, all this has served to push up the import bill. In previous years the deficit was financed by hot money, making the economy more vulnerable. Now nearly two-thirds of the deficit is covered by FDI, which may hit \$22 billion this year. Metin Ar, president of Garanti Securities in Istanbul, predicts that, with the privatisation of motorways and plans for new energy-distribution networks, FDI could rise to \$30 billion next year. "Foreigners are so keen to get a foot into the market that they are happy to pay double, triple the real value of assets."

With their dizzyingly high profits and much untapped retail potential, Turkish banks look appealing targets. New regulations can require capital-adequacy ratios to be as high as 20%, against the international minimum of 8%. "We don't allow any bank to go below 12%," says Mehmet Simsek, the economy minister. He adds that the state-owned Halkbank is soon to be put on the block.

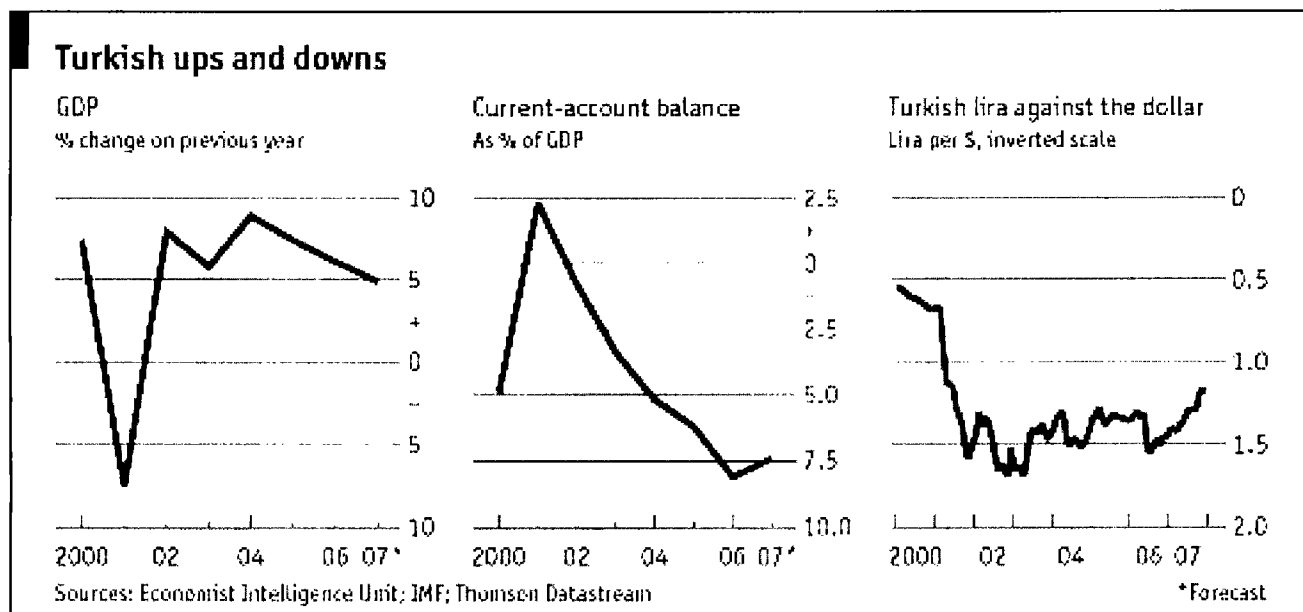
Mr Simsek, who was snatched into the job from Merrill Lynch in London, agrees that "markets like external anchors" and concedes that Turkey is not immune to external shocks. Yet he sees no crisis on the horizon. His main task is to push through a social-security reform that is a test of the government's commitment to reform. His biggest bugbear is high la-

bour costs. He provoked an outcry when he complained that Turkey had one of the highest wage burdens among OECD countries. High taxes on labour, plus onerous welfare benefits, are a big obstacle to the creation of new jobs. Unemployment hovers at around 10%.

There is little doubt that Mr Simsek has the will and the brains to do what is needed. Ercan Uygur, an economist who taught Mr Simsek at Ankara University, says he was "one of my best students". Yet some political observers worry that Mr Simsek, who is only 40, may not have enough clout. Unlike his predecessor, Ali Babacan, now Turkey's foreign minister, Mr Simsek is a newcomer to AK politics. His swift rise has provoked some jealousy within the party.

In truth Mr Simsek cuts an unusual figure in the government, and not only as a former investment banker with an American wife. He was born into grinding poverty in the mainly Kurdish province of Batman. He did not even learn Turkish until he was six. By his own admission, he is more comfortable speaking English. A big Shakira fan, he provoked mirth at a recent cabinet meeting when he misused the word *transparan*, meaning see-through, while talking about the budget.

Yet for now, at least, Mr Simsek has the full confidence of his prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. And it is Mr Erdogan who calls the shots. The concern is whether it may be Mr Simsek who gets the blame should the economy slow further and foreign investors take fright.



TODAYS ZAMAN

December 12, 2007

Barzani rules out Kurdish state in key public appearance

Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani yesterday appeared before cameras for the first time after he came back from a mysterious trip abroad and assured that Iraqi Kurds did not seek independence by pressing for a contentious referendum on status of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk.

M. Alihan Hasanoğlu Arbil

"Some neighboring countries say Kurds will set up an independent state if Article 140 [of the Iraqi constitution that calls for the referendum] is implemented," Barzani told a conference in Arbil. "But there is no such thing. I am an Iraqi. I am an Iraqi citizen of Kurdish origin," he went on.

Turkey as well as other neighbors of Iraq oppose a referendum which was originally slated to take place before the end of 2007. Ankara says the vote would not reflect the true wishes of Kirkuk's ethnically mixed population since the demographic composition has been altered due to an influx of Kurdish immigrants from different parts of Iraq in the recent years. Ankara also says oil and other resources of Iraq should belong to entire Iraq.

Barzani said the Iraqi Kurdish administration, which currently includes three provinces in northern Iraq, would respect any result from the referendum and insisted that the vote would be held eventually.

"There is no such thing as cancellation of the referendum. Sooner or later, it will take place. Depending on the outcome, Kirkuk would either be part of Kurdistan region or Iraq. Kirkuk will decide on this," he said.

The Kurdish leader also called for Iraqi authorities to change the country's national flag, saying the Kurds had been promised that the existing flag would be replaced when Saddam Hussein regime was overthrown, a pledge yet to be fulfilled.

A delegation of Iraqi Kurdish officials, led by regional Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, yesterday held talks in Baghdad on Kirkuk and disputes between the Kurdish region and the Iraqi central administration concerning oil contracts the regional government has signed with foreign companies.

With national legislation stalled, Kurdish authorities have signed more than a dozen contracts with foreign companies over the objections by Oil Ministry officials in Baghdad, who consider the deals



illegal.

Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish government approved a regional oil law in August, paving the way for foreign investment in their northern oil and gas fields. But the national Oil Ministry has declined deals signed under the agreement illegal and threatened to blacklist companies that sign them.

Los Angeles Times

December 17, 2007

Turkish fighters bomb northern Iraq

The attack is the most aggressive yet against Kurdish rebels. Villagers say civilians were hit, and describe a terrified nighttime flight from their homes.

By Asso Ahmed and Tina Susman, Special to The Times

SURADEH, IRAQ -- Turkish jets bombed several villages in northern Iraq early Sunday in the most aggressive action in years against Kurdish rebels who take sanctuary in the Kurdistan border region of Iraq.

Local officials said at least one civilian was killed and several wounded. The Firat news agency, which is linked to the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, said that five guerrillas and two civilians were killed and that many of the damaged buildings were schools and homes.

The targeted towns included Suradeh, a hamlet of about 30 homes nestled in the Qandil mountains more than 50 miles from the Turkish border. On Sunday afternoon, residents who had sought shelter in frigid mountain caves during the nighttime bombardment returned to a scene of damaged homes and dead livestock. Many were packing up and leaving in fear of additional attacks. As they bundled blankets, dishes, food and clothes into vehicles or onto the backs of mules, they spoke of the predawn terror.

"My youngest daughter is still crying and saying, 'Mama, I'm scared,'" said Muneera Khalid, who sought shelter in a cave with her husband and three children, ages 7, 10 and 14. It took them half an hour to reach the cave, going on foot in the dark after the

first airstrikes began about 2 a.m.

"Why is the Turkish army bombing our village?" she said, breaking into tears.

In Turkey, press reports quoted Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan as saying the bombings were "a comprehensive operation against camps of a terrorist organization in the north of Iraq."

He warned of more military assaults against the PKK, which has fought the Turkish government since 1984 for a separate Kurdish state.

The United States considers the organization a terrorist group, and during a visit to Iraq this month, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John D. Negroponte said Washington shared Turkey's goal of ending PKK activities "once and for all."

The Reuters news agency quoted Turkey's top



military commander, Gen. Yasar Buyukanit, as saying the United States had approved the raid. Washington has denied Turkish claims that it gave the green light for previous raids, and a State Department official would not comment on the latest report.

Some U.S. officials previously suggested that they would not oppose Turkish strikes on the PKK, as long as they did not involve occupation of Iraqi territory. However, the United States also worries

that increased military activities along Iraq's northern border could uncork new volatility in the country at a time when security has been improving elsewhere in Iraq.

When asked about America's position at a briefing Dec. 4, a State Department spokesman, Tom Casey, said: "We've talked in the past, as have the Iraqis, as have the Turkish government, about our desire to see everyone work together on this and not engage in any broad military incursions, and our position hasn't changed on it."

Turkish action had been anticipated since the government in Ankara sent about 100,000 troops to

the border region in October after an increase in PKK raids on Turkish targets. Turkey's parliament has also approved a resolution giving the government the legal go-ahead for cross-border operations.

A Turkish military statement said the jet fighters, backed by long-range missiles fired by ground troops, targeted PKK sites and returned to their bases at 4:15 a.m. Turkey's Hürriyet newspaper said the PKK's main command center was among the targets hit.

But residents said that civilians bore the brunt of the attacks. Musheer Ahmed said his daughter lost a

leg in the bombing and his home was destroyed. Nashneel Bayz, a teacher, said she was sleeping in her bedroom when the windows were shattered by bombs.

"I ran like a crazy person. I saw the others running in panic and terror. It was chaos," Bayz said. "We are non-armed people, we have nothing, and they send modern airplanes to bomb us."

She said those who suffered were civilians rather than PKK fighters.

"The PKK positions are still intact," she said. "We even had some PKK fighters with us in the cave, in addition to women, children."

17 December 2007

BBC NEWS

EU concern at Turkish air strikes

The European Union has voiced concern at Turkish air strikes on Kurdish areas of northern Iraq, urging restraint and respect for territorial integrity.

Ankara should "refrain from taking any military action that could undermine regional peace and stability", the EU's Portuguese presidency said.

Turkey says its attacks are aimed at Kurdish PKK rebels sheltering in Iraq.

Iraqi officials said the bombs hit 10 villages near the border, killing one woman. The PKK reported seven deaths.

Turkey is seeking EU membership and calls by Brussels to grant Turkish Kurds minority rights have dogged negotiations in the past.

In its statement on Monday, the EU presidency called for better dialogue between the governments of Turkey and Iraq "in order to ensure that the Iraqi territory is not used for any terrorist actions against Turkey".

Iraq's government earlier summoned the Turkish ambassador and demanded a halt to the strikes, saying they were unacceptable and could seriously harm relations between the two countries.



Iraqi reports say 10 villages were hit by Turkish bombs

The US, a strong Turkish ally, has denied giving permission for Turkish aircraft to enter Iraqi airspace but confirmed it had been informed of the strikes in advance.

'Fifty planes'

The Turkish military said its air strikes on PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) bases deep inside northern Iraq were launched

at 0200 on Sunday (2300 GMT Saturday).

During an operation lasting three hours, targets were hit in Zap, Hakurk and Avasin, as well as areas in the Kandil mountains.

Turkish media reports say up to 50 planes were involved in the operation.

The Turkish military said only "terrorist" targets were hit, but the PKK reported that two civilians had been killed along with five of its fighters.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan hailed the raids as a "success" and said his government was determined to use all political and military means, both inside and outside Turkey, against the PKK.

The US has urged Turkey to step back from a major operation against the PKK in northern Iraq because it fears military action could destabilise what has become one of the most peaceful and prosperous regions of the country.

BBC NEWS

17 December 2007

US denies backing Turkey PKK raid

The US has denied it gave permission for Turkish aircraft to carry out air strikes against Kurdish PKK separatist rebels in northern Iraq on Sunday.

The US embassy in Iraq said commanders had not approved the attacks, but had been informed before they took place.

The Turkish military earlier said the US had given tacit approval by opening Iraqi airspace for the operation.

Iraqi officials said the bombs hit 10 villages near the border, killing one woman. The PKK reported seven deaths.

Iraq later summoned the Turkish ambassador and demanded a halt to the strikes, saying they were unacceptable and could seriously harm relations between the two countries.

Turkey has regularly targeted the PKK inside Iraq in recent months, but this is thought to be the first fighter jet raid outside its own territory.

'Informed'

The Turkish military said its air strikes on Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) bases deep inside northern Iraq were launched at 0200 on Sunday (2300 GMT Saturday).

During an operation lasting three hours, targets were hit in Zap, Hakurk and Avasin, as well as areas in the Kandil mountains. Turkish media reports said up to 50 planes were involved in the operation.

We have not approved any decision, it is not for us to approve US embassy in Baghdad

The Turkish military said only "terrorist" targets were hit, but the PKK said five of their fighters and two civilians were killed, while local Iraqi officials said 10 villages were attacked and one woman killed.

Afterwards, Turkey's most senior general, Gen Yasar Buyukanit, said the US had given "intelligence" that aided the operation.

"But what is more important is that the United States last night opened northern

Iraqi airspace to us. By doing that, the United States approved the operation," he said.

A US embassy official asked to comment on the general's remarks said US military commanders had merely known the raid was going to take place.

"We have not approved any decision, it is not for us to approve. However, we were informed before the event," the official told Reuters news agency.

The US has urged Turkey to step back from a major operation against the PKK in northern Iraq because it fears military action could destabilise what has become one of the most peaceful and prosperous regions of the country.

'Success'

The Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, hailed the raids a "success" and



said his government was determined to use all political and military means, both inside and outside Turkey, against the PKK.

them.

Ankara toughened its line against the group after a spate of rebel attacks inside Turkey that prompted widespread calls for action.

In October, Turkey's parliament voted to allow the military to launch operations into Iraq to combat the PKK, which had stepped up attacks in Turkey.

Ankara has massed up to 100,000 troops near the mountainous border with northern Iraq, backed by tanks, artillery and warplanes.

As many as 3,000 PKK members are believed to be based inside northern Iraq. Turkey has accused the local Kurdish authorities of supporting



December 18, 2007

Rice visits Kurdish region in Iraq

Rice makes surprise visit to Kirkuk, Baghdad

BAGHDAD (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made an unannounced visit Tuesday to Kirkuk in the oil-rich Kurdish region, where the U.S. administration has emphasized what it sees as new signs of cooperation and progress, and then flew to the Iraqi capital for meetings with national leaders.

At Rice's first stop in Kirkuk, she met with members of a civilian-military reconstruction unit and with about two-dozen provincial politicians of all stripes.

"It is an important province for the future of Iraq, for a democratic Iraq, an Iraq that can be for all people," she said at the start of the meeting with the provincial leaders.

Sunni Arabs ended a year-long political boycott earlier this month in Kirkuk — the hub of Iraq's northern oil fields — under a deal that sets aside government posts for Arabs. It was the biggest step yet toward unity ahead of a referendum on the area's future.

Rice was highlighting that development, although a separate ethnic group is still boycotting the provincial governing council, and the new role of the United Nations in resolving the future of disputed Kirkuk.

"It truly is the crossing point for every one of Iraq's ethnicities, every one of Iraq's religions and sects," said David Satterfield, Rice's top adviser for Iraq. "Kirkuk is often identified as a flashpoint for the future of Iraq."

Rice's visit is her first since a surprise joint appearance with U.S. President George W. Bush and Defense Secretary Robert Gates in September, ahead of a report card to Congress on Iraq's progress. The assessment gave disappointing marks to Iraqi political efforts, which remain mired in political squabbling and sectarian maneuvering, and better grades to U.S.-assisted security benchmarks.

In Baghdad, Rice was meeting the vice president, Jalal Talibani, and numerous other leaders. A meeting with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki was scheduled, and Rice was to see the new U.N.

special representative in Iraq.

The U.N. representative, who arrived last month, represents an expanded role for the U.N. He is to help manage competing interests leading up to the Kirkuk referendum expected in the latter half of 2008. Iraq's constitution required the referendum by the end of this year.

Satterfield said preparing for the Kirkuk referendum is an example of a job best done by a world body such as the U.N. instead of by the United States.

Turkey and other countries in the region with Kurdish minorities have long feared that Kurdish control of Kirkuk's vast wealth would encourage Kurds toward declaring independence from Iraq — a move that Iraq's neighbors could not tolerate.

Kurds are generally thought to have a slight majority in the province, with Sunni Arabs close behind, though a census has not been conducted in 50 years. Provinces cannot schedule new elections until passage of a law known as the Provincial Powers Act, which is currently mired in Iraq's parliament in Baghdad.

Tuesday's visit was meant to underscore an overall reduction in violence that the Bush administration largely attributes to the escalation of U.S. forces Bush ordered a year ago.

Attacks in Iraq are at their lowest levels since the first year of the U.S. invasion in 2003, finally opening a window for reconciliation among rival sects, Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno, America's No. 2 commander in Iraq, said Sunday.

There are fresh threats, however. The Turkish army sent 300 soldiers about 1.5 miles (2.4 kilometers) into northern Iraq in an overnight operation on Tuesday, Kurdish officials said. Turkey says it must cross the border to pursue Kurdish rebels who use the border region to attack Turkey. Iraq's government objects and the United States has stood between the allies for months.

Iraqi leaders had complained Monday that Turkey had not coordinated with Baghdad before sending dozens of warplanes to bomb Kurdish rebel targets in a larger operation in northern Iraq on Sunday. The target area is in the Kurdish-controlled region



north of Kirkuk.

Sunday's assault was the largest aerial attack in years against the outlawed separatist group. Turkey's military chief said the strikes used U.S. intelligence, and U.S. officials said Washington was informed of the plan.

Kirkuk is an especially coveted city for both the Shiite-dominated Iraqi government in Baghdad and the Kurdish one in Irbil.

Kurds want to incorporate it into their self-rule area, but the idea has met stiff resistance from Arabs.

Much of Iraq's vast oil wealth lies under the ground in the region, as well as in the Shiite-controlled south. Apart from the petrodollars, Kurds have a strong cultural and emotional attachment to the area and consider Kirkuk, which they call "the Kurdish Jerusalem," part of their ancestral homeland.

Rice did not hold a separate meeting with the semiautonomous Kurdish leadership while in Kirkuk. Kurdish leaders have chafed under U.S. demands for greater inclusion in the Baghdad government and swifter work to complete a framework law for managing and distributing Iraq's oil wealth.

Kurdish leaders also favored a quicker referendum on Kirkuk and resented U.S. pressure this fall to do more to hunt the Kurdish rebels.

Russia delivers fuel to Iran nuclear plant

By Helene Cooper

WASHINGTON: The United States lost a long battle when Russia on Monday delivered nuclear fuel to an Iranian power plant that is at the center of an international dispute over Iran's nuclear program. Iran, meanwhile, announced plans to build a second power plant.

In revealing that it had delivered the first fuel shipment to the power plant at Bushehr, in southern Iran, Russian officials said that the fuel would be under the control of the International Atomic Energy Agency while it was in Iran, and that Tehran had given guarantees that the fuel would be used only for the power plant.

The Bush administration, for its part, took pains not to criticize the Russian move publicly and said the fuel delivery meant that Iran should suspend its nuclear enrichment program.

"If the Iranians accept that uranium for a civilian nuclear power plant, then there's no need for them to learn how to enrich," President George W. Bush told reporters Monday.

A White House spokesman, Gordon Johndroe, said: "There is no doubt that Russia and the rest of the world want to keep Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. And today's announcement provides one more avenue for the Iranians to make a strategic choice to suspend enrichment."

But, privately, administration officials said that they had been hoping, with dwindling confidence, that Russia would continue to stall on delivering

the fuel, in part to send a message to Iran that the United States and its European, Chinese and Russian allies were hanging tough in their attempts to punish Iran for refusing to suspend enrichment.

"We for many years tried to stop it, and for the last year we've known there was no way to stop it, and that it was coming, and we held our breath on the timing," a senior administration official said.

From the American standpoint, the timing of the delivery of the Russian fuel could not have been worse, coming just two weeks after the release of a U.S. intelligence estimate that concluded that Iran had stopped its nuclear weapons program in 2003.

While administration officials maintain that the national intelligence estimate does not mean that the United States and its allies should ease up the pressure against Iran, the practical consequence of the report has been to embolden Iran in its conviction that China and Russia, two of the countries with perhaps the smallest appetite for tough sanctions, will not agree to a new round of tough sanctions at the United Nations.

Russia's decision to deliver fuel to Bushehr further emboldens Iran, several administration officials and European diplomats said privately.

Indeed, Iran said that it had no intention of suspending its uranium enrichment just because it had received the fuel shipment for Bushehr, a point that it underscored by saying, for the first time, that it needed to enrich uranium

for another new nuclear power plant in the south of the country. That announcement came through the Fars news service.

Gholamreza Aghazadeh, head of Iran's Atomic Organization, said that Iran needed to produce fuel for a second plant under construction.

"We are building a 360-megawatt indigenous power plant in Darkhovein," Aghazadeh said. "The fuel for this plant needs to be produced by the Natanz enrichment plant," he added, according to the news agency.

Darkhovein is a city in the southern province of Khuzestan, north of Bushehr, which is better known for its oil fields. Bushehr and Darkhovein were both projects planned before the 1979 revolution, and abandoned later. It was not clear how much progress had been made at Darkhovein.

The delivery of the first fuel shipment appears to set the clock ticking on when the Bushehr power station could become operational, although this remains uncertain.

The Russian contractor responsible for the plant, Atomstroyexport, said the plant would be technically ready to operate no sooner than six months after all the uranium fuel rods needed to power the station were delivered. The company said it planned to deliver about 80 tons of nuclear fuel to Iran over the next two months.

"The first phase of delivery has been completed," said Irina Esipova, a spokeswoman for Atomstroyexport. "A small amount of fuel is already on the premises of the Bushehr station in a special storage facility."

The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement: "After the Russian fuel is processed at the Bushehr nuclear power plant, it will be returned to Russia for further processing and storage."

Oil prices drop as Turkey pulls back from Iraq

By Mark Shenk

NEW YORK: Crude oil prices fell Tuesday, erasing an early gain, as Turkish troops began to withdraw from northern Iraq and on speculation that warmer weather in the eastern United States would curb fuel use.

Turkish forces started to pull back after they had penetrated 8 kilometers, or 5 miles, into the Iraqi Kurdish region, according to reports.

Prices had risen more than \$2 after the announcement that Turkish forces had entered the region.

"The Turkish incursion doesn't look like as much of a threat as when we first learned about it," said Phil Flynn, a commodities trader with Alaron Trading in Chicago.

What's more, the National Weather Service forecast higher-than-normal temperatures in a 6-to-10 day period in

the Northeast of the United States.

Crude oil for January delivery fell 14 cents to \$90.49 a barrel in late trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The January contract expired Tuesday. The February contract dropped 97 cents to \$90.08 a barrel.

"We failed to break through on the upper end of our range, so we are now testing the lower end," said Tom Bentz, a broker at BNP Paribas.

"I think this market will stay in a tight range through the end of the year. The lower end is in the \$86-\$88 area and the upper end is in the \$92-\$93 area."

Exports from northern Iraqi oil fields to Turkey's terminal at Ceyhan, on the Mediterranean Sea, averaged 400,000 barrels a day last month, the highest since the U.S.-led invasion of the country in March 2003.

Turkey has been fighting guerrillas of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or

PKK, which is seeking autonomy for Turkey's largely Kurdish southeastern region and uses northern Iraq as a base

from which to attack Turkish forces. The conflict has lasted more than 20 years and has cost almost 40,000 lives.

In France, striking workers at Total, the French oil company, caused output to drop by almost half at five of its domestic refineries, and access to one of the facilities was blocked, union representatives said.

"The refinery strike in France and the skirmish in northern Iraq sent us

higher early today," said James Ritterbusch, president of Ritterbusch & Associates in Galena, Illinois.

"They were not enough to get us to break out of the recent range."

Bloomberg News

December 19, 2007

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
THE WORLD'S DAILY NEWSPAPER

Iraq's Kurdish leader snubs Rice

The head of Iraq's Kurdish regional government has refused to meet the US secretary of state because of the US position on Turkish cross-border raids.

Massoud Barzani had been scheduled to meet Condoleezza Rice in Baghdad, but withdrew "as a sign of protest" after several villages were bombed on Sunday.

The air strikes on alleged positions of PKK separatist rebels were followed by an incursion by 300 troops on Tuesday.

They moved 3km (1.9 miles) over Iraq's border, but later reportedly withdrew.

The UN refugee agency, the UNHCR, has said almost 2,000 people in northern Iraq have fled their homes in recent days as a result of the Turkish operations.

'Sign of protest'

Speaking to reporters in the northern Iraqi city of Irbil, the prime minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Nechirvan Barzani, said its president had refused to meet Ms Rice because of Washington's tolerance of the recent Turkish raids.

"It was decided that Massoud Barzani would go to Baghdad to take part in a meeting with Condoleezza Rice and other officials, but he will not go now as a sign of protest against the American position on the bombings by Turkey," he said.

"It is unacceptable that the United States, in charge of monitoring our airspace, authorised Turkey to bomb our villages," he added.

Following the Turkish air strikes on Sunday, the US embassy in Baghdad denied that US military commanders had approved the attacks, but admitted they had been informed they would take place.

After meeting Iraqi officials in Baghdad, Ms Rice said the US, Turkey and Iraq shared a common interest "in stopping the activities of the PKK".

She argued that the separatist rebel group threatened to undo the progress that has

been made in northern Iraq.

"This is a circumstance in which the US has constantly counselled that we need an overall comprehensive approach to this problem and that no one should do anything that threatens to destabilise the north," she said.

Her Iraqi counterpart, Hoshiyar Zebari, who is a member of Mr Barzani's Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), said the Iraqi government remained concerned about the threat to civilians in the north.

But he noted that the recent Turkish raids had been in sparsely populated areas.

Iraqi officials have said the Turkish air strikes on Sunday targeted 10 villages and killed one woman. The PKK has reported seven deaths.

'Whatever is necessary'

Earlier, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan re-asserted his country's

It is unacceptable that the United States, in charge of monitoring our airspace, authorised Turkey to bomb our villages

Nechirvan Barzani

PM, Kurdish Regional Government

right to defend itself from attacks by the PKK.

"We are using our rights based on the international law against a terrorist organisation," he told a news conference in Ankara.

"Our army is doing whatever is necessary. Our security forces will continue to do whatever is necessary," he added, echoing comments made by President Abdullah Gul.



The declaration came after a spokesman for the Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga security forces told the BBC that some 300 lightly armed Turkish troops crossed the border into northern Iraq.

The spokesman said the soldiers moved up to 3km (1.9 miles) inside Iraq in an area called Seeda Kan - in the triangle between Iraq, Iran and Turkey.

Later, Fouad Hussein, chief of staff of President Barzani, said the troops withdrew less than 24 hours after the incursion.

"The Turkish force that entered is no longer there," Mr Hussein told Reuters.

The incursion was believed to be the first major Turkish troop deployment in Iraq since Turkey's parliament voted in October to allow the military to launch cross-border operations to combat the PKK.

Ankara accuses the PKK of using bases inside Iraq to launch attacks on Turkey.

Turkey has massed up to 100,000 troops near the mountainous border with northern Iraq, backed by tanks, artillery and warplanes.

As many as 3,000 PKK members are believed to be based inside northern Iraq. Turkey has accused the local Kurdish authorities of supporting them.

Turkey and Iraq Tension mounts

ANKARA

Turkey's incursions into northern Iraq

TURKISH warplanes bombed Kurdish rebel positions deep inside northern Iraq on Sunday December 16th in one of the biggest cross-border air strikes in recent years. The Turkish army declared that all their targets had been hit and the country's hawkish chief of the general staff, General Yasar Buyukanit, dismissed reports of civilian casualties as "terrorist propaganda". The bombings were followed the next day by an overnight incursion

across the border by about 300 Turkish troops. They were said to be lightly armed, and only moved some 3km inside Iraq. But, taken together, the two actions were a considerable escalation in hostilities across the border.

The deployment of troops is believed to be the first such move since the Turkish cabinet backed action last month to hunt down Kurdish rebels from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in their bases over

the border. And the evidence suggests that the raids were also prompted by Turkey's closer military co-operation with the United States. Turkey's most senior general said that the air strikes had been sanctioned by America, which had also provided the intelligence for them.

America has long opposed Turkish intervention in northern Iraq, fearing that this could destabilise the only relatively peaceful bit of the country. But America's re-

fusal to clobber the rebels on Turkey's behalf has deepened anti-American feelings in Turkey. Recent polls suggest that a mere 9% of Turks like America. Many believe America is bent on establishing an independent Kurdish state that may eventually lay claim to Turkey's own Kurdish provinces.

America's approval for the air raids was thus aimed at salvaging relations with Turkey, an important NATO ally. But America must be hoping that the ground incursion does not get any bigger; Iraqi Kurds fret that the true aim of such an incursion is not to vanquish the PKK but to destroy their semi-independent statelet.

In exchange for American support for the air raids, and a promise to order the Iraqi Kurds to take action against the PKK, Turkey's prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is thought to have made his own



promises to President George Bush; to recognise the Iraqi Kurds' regional government and to craft a new amnesty law for PKK fighters. A previous amnesty that pardoned only those who would rat on their comrades proved a flop; last week the government announced it was tinkering

with the law. It is expected to pardon all PKK soldiers who can prove they were not involved in any violence. After more than two decades of war against the rebels, Turkey's generals and politicians concede that military measures alone cannot fix its festering Kurdish problem.

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Dec. 20, 2007



By **Trudy Rubin** Inquirer Columnist

ERBIL, Iraq - The president of Iraq's Kurdish region, Masoud Barzani, leader of the legendary Barzani clan, was angry - at Turkey and at the United States.

On Saturday, Turkey bombed Iraqi Kurdish villages, killing two civilians and sending hundreds fleeing; 300 Turkish soldiers later made a raid across the Iraqi border. The attacks were meant to target Turkish Kurdish separatists from the PKK terrorist movement, who are based in Iraq's northern mountains. The United States provided Turkey with the coordinates for the air strikes.

"We know Iraqi air space is under U.S. control," Barzani said bluntly on Monday in his well-guarded presidential office, when I asked him whom he blamed. Standing stiffly, in his signature red and white checked Kurdish turban and olive-drab fatigues, he added: "If there wasn't a [U.S.] green light, the Turks could not have carried out the attack." Barzani then turned down an invitation to lunch with Condoleezza Rice during her quick visit to Iraq.

So what's going on in Kurdistan, the most peaceful, booming region in Iraq? Is there a danger of a war in the north between two U.S. allies? Is America betraying the Kurds?

The answer to both questions is no

U.N., U.S. have key roles in resolving Kurd-Turk frictions

(for now). Despite the tragic deaths, new possibilities have arisen in recent days that could help defuse Kurdish-Turkish tensions and peacefully resolve Kurdish claims to the contested, and oil-rich, city of Kirkuk. But for either to happen, the United States will have to act more strategically as a mediator than it did in the case of the Turkish bombs.

The air attack had as much to do with internal Turkish politics as it did with Turkish claims that the Kurdish regional government wasn't doing enough to root out the PKK. The issue has become caught up in tensions between a moderate Islamist Turkish government that seeks better relations with the Iraqi Kurds, and a secular Turkish military that feels it is losing ground and is looking for an issue to help it recoup.

In recent months, the Turkish military has massed tens of thousands of troops on the Iraq border. The invasion threat seems to have passed. But the Turkish military suspects leaders of the Kurdish regional government of harboring a desire for independence that would fuel Kurdish separatism in Turkey.

The Kirkuk issue plays into these fears. Many Turks believe the Kurds want to regain control of Kirkuk (a once-Kurdish city forcibly Arabized by Saddam Hussein) to use the city's oil wealth to finance statehood. Kurdish government leaders' strong denials don't convince them. Meantime, the failure to hold a referendum by the

end of 2007 to resolve the status of Kirkuk - as called for by Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution - has turned the city into a new center of sectarian violence.

So why do I see a new chance for Kurdish-Turkish rapprochement?

Reason one: Now that the Turkish military has made its military point, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan may be better positioned to push for a diplomatic solution.

"The Turks did what they wanted to do, and we don't need any more tensions," I was told by the prime minister of the Kurdish regional government, Nechirvan Barzani. He hopes "after this there could be the beginning of dialogue with the Turks."

The Turkish government may be interested. The day before the air strikes, Emre Taner, chief of Turkey's national intelligence organization, visited Erbil on behalf of Erdogan and Turkish President Abdullah Gul. His message to top Kurdish leaders: The Turkish government wants good relations with the the Kurdish regional government, and it also wants the question of Kirkuk to be solved constitutionally.

Reason two: There is new hope for progress on Kirkuk. All parties have agreed to let the United Nations Mission for Iraq devise a way to implement Article 140 within six months. Stefan De Mistura, the impressive U.N. special representative to Iraq, has won Kurds' trust; he helped organize

he helped organize the return home of more than one million Iraqi Kurdish refugees from the mountains of Turkey after the 1991 Gulf War.

"The ticking bomb [of Kirkuk] still ticks," De Mistura told me in Erbil, "but we have put a new engine into the acceleration of the process, called the United Nations, which has the expertise and can provide legitimacy to the process." In this process, says De Mistura, "Turkey has to be an important part."

Indeed, the makings of Turkish-Kurdish rapprochement can already be seen in Erbil. The dusty, low-slung provincial capital is booming with construction, which is almost all done by Turkish firms using Turkish workers. Trade with and transport from Turkey is Kurdistan's lifeline.

But despite positive signs, the border dispute with Turkey could still explode. Having defused Turkish charges that we're soft on the PKK, the United States must now persuade the Turkish military that the issue can't be resolved by force.

"Turkey and the Kurds are both allies of the United States," says prime minister Nechirvan Barzani. "This issue should be a top [U.S.] priority for a solution. Don't open another front" in the north, he pleads, "just as the security situation is getting better in Iraq."



Turkish Shelling Displaces 1,800 Northern Iraqis From Homes

December 18, 2007

GENEVA - The U.N. refugee agency expressed concern Tuesday over the increasing number of people being driven from their homes by Turkey's shelling of northern Iraq.

More than 1,800 people have fled their homes in the Sangasar sub district of Sulaimaniyah Governorate and in Doli Shahidan in Erbil Governorate last weekend, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said.

On Sunday, Turkey launched airstrikes against rebels from the Kurdish Workers' Party in northern Iraq. As many as 50 fighter jets were involved in the biggest attack on the Kurdish Workers' Party in years.

An Iraqi official said the planes attacked several villages, killing one woman. The rebels said two civilians and five rebels died.

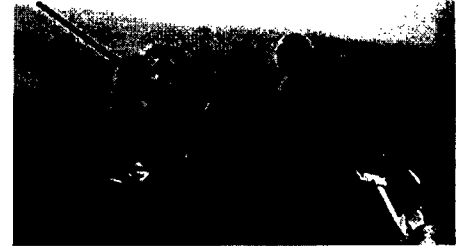
There was more shelling and displacement on Monday, said Astrid van Genderen Stort, a spokeswoman for the High Commissioner for Refugees. Some people are leaving their homes for fear of future attacks, she added.

The displaced have found shelter with relatives and friends, but with the start of winter it is difficult for the host families to take care of additional people, van Genderen Stort said.

"Many of those displaced say they cannot afford to pay monthly rents of US\$200 to US\$300 (euro140 to euro210) for alternative accommodation and ... fear they cannot stay much longer with their host families," she said.

About 2.4 million people have been driven from their homes to other locations in Iraq, and an additional 2.2 million have fled to neighboring countries, most to Syria and Jordan, according to the High Commissioner for Refugees.

The agency distributed blankets, mattresses, stoves, lanterns and other relief goods on Tuesday to families most in need in Sulaimaniyah and Erbil, van Genderen Stort said.



Telegraph

December 18, 2007

Kurds' power share row with Iraqi government

By Damien McElroy in Erbil

Kurdish leaders in northern Iraq have threatened to withdraw support from the Baghdad government if demands for federal power-sharing and a fair share of oil wealth are not met.

US aid for Turkish attacks angers Kurds

Nechirvan Barzani, the prime minister of Kurdish northern Iraq, said that Iraq's Shia-led coalition government, which relies on Kurdish MPs to survive, "must be changed" if it does not transfer powers to his region.

"What we ask for as Kurds comes within the constitution of Iraq," he said. "We did whatever we could do to ensure that Iraq could succeed, but Iraq is a complicated country. Now we have reached one question, whether we are partners in the government or not. We don't have that kind of feeling.

"Certainly if we do not see any response from Baghdad to solve the issues raised, we would be obliged to

take another route," he said.

Under Iraq's new constitution, three northern provinces were granted autonomy from Baghdad to form a Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Clauses guaranteed rights over oil revenues and a referendum over disputed areas, including the strategic city of Kirkuk. Baghdad has since contested KRG efforts to attract foreign oil investment and failed to deliver the referendum.

"The problem in Baghdad is you have a structure, you have a prime minister, but you have nobody to make a decision," said Mr Barzani.

Relations between the two governments hit an all-time low last month when Hussein Shahrstani, Baghdad's oil minister, said that companies dealing with the Kurds would be black-listed. The bulk of Iraq's oil wealth lies outside the Kurdish region but its reserves are an attractive pool of future supply. The announcement cast a shadow on tentative efforts by Western firms to enter the region.

The Kurdish government furiously



denounced Mr Shahrstani's attempts to suppress its rights.

Kurdistan is in a different league, if not yet a different country, from the rest of Iraq. It is attempting to establish its credentials as a Dubai-style business centre. The region is safe and booming.

A foreign diplomat said: "Crunch time is coming

Los Angeles Times

December 19, 2007

U.S. practicing balancing act on Kurdish question

Condoleezza Rice, in Iraq for reconciliation work, urges caution after Turkey pursues rebels across the border.

By Alexandra Zavis - Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

BAGHDAD — Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice cautioned Tuesday against any action that could destabilize Iraq after Turkey sent about 300 troops across the border in pursuit of Kurdish separatist guerrillas.

The one-day incursion began hours before Rice arrived in Kirkuk on the latest high-profile attempt to reignite Iraq's stalled reconciliation process after a sharp downturn in violence.

U.S. officials have touted a 60% drop in attacks nationwide since the U.S. military completed a 28,500-troop buildup in June. The United States is in the midst of a delicate balancing act between two close allies: the Turkish government and the Kurdish regional authorities in northern Iraq, where Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) guerrillas often hide in between attacks on targets in southern Turkey.

The U.S. considers the PKK a terrorist organization. During a visit this month, Deputy Secretary of State John D. Negroponte said Washington shared Turkey's goal of ending PKK activities in Iraq "once and for all." And Turkish officials have said that the United States is supplying intelligence to assist in their attacks on the militant group.

At the same time, U.S. officials do not want any steps taken that could upset stability in Iraq's largely autonomous Kurdistan region, an island of relative tranquillity and economic growth.

Rice reiterated her position Tuesday that the U.S., Iraq and Turkey share a "common interest in stopping the activities of the PKK."

But she said circumstances demanded "an overall, comprehensive approach to this problem."

"No one should do anything which threatens to destabilize the north," she told reporters in Baghdad.

Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani refused to fly to Baghdad to meet Rice, citing U.S. support for limited incursions by Turkish forces fighting the PKK.

In the latest case, Kurdish officials said Turkish troops penetrated about 1 1/2 miles into Iraqi territory overnight, moving through rugged mountains near the Iranian border used by PKK rebels. Wire reports quoted the Turkish Defense Ministry as saying that its troops responded to a group of rebels spotted trying to infiltrate Turkey and dealt them a "heavy blow."

A news agency linked to the PKK reported that the rebels ambushed the Turkish troops, killing eight of them and injuring



many more. It made no reference to PKK casualties.

Jabbar Yawir, deputy regional minister in charge of the peshmerga security forces in Iraqi Kurdistan, confirmed that clashes had occurred but said he had no information on casualties. Shortly after nightfall, the Turkish forces withdrew to their side of the border, he said.

Yawir characterized the incursion as "limited" and noted that the fighting took place in a remote region, far from any civilian population. But he warned that "if the Turkish forces penetrate to safe areas, where the Kurdish villages are located, then the Kurdistan region will defend itself."

Turkish news reports quoted Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan as saying, "Our army is doing what it has to do right now."

"We do not have any negative attitude towards Iraq's territorial integrity, and we do not have any negative attitude towards the civilian citizens and our friends in Iraq," he told reporters in Ankara, the capital. "However, they are terrorists and our enemy, and those who are in the camps there are threatening our national unity."

Turkey has insisted on its right to pursue the rebels, and in its most serious air assault in years, its military jets bombed several villages Sunday in northern Iraq, killing at least one civilian and injuring several others.

Iraqi officials say they weren't notified in advance about Sunday's attack and have formally protested to the Turkish government about the civilian casualties.

"We believe any unilateral actions to destabilize the situation will harm Iraq's interests and Turkish interests at the same time," Iraqi Foreign Minister Hosh-

yar Zebari said at a news conference with Rice on Tuesday. "But at the same time we fully understand and appreciate the legitimate security concerns Turkey has over the PKK terrorist activities against them."

Rice sidestepped a question about whether the U.S. had received advance notice of Tuesday's incursion. U.S. officials have acknowledged that they were informed of Turkey's plans Sunday, but Rice emphasized that the attack was Ankara's decision.

Rice's first stop Tuesday was Kirkuk, an oil-rich city about 150 miles north of Baghdad that remains a tinderbox for Sunni Arabs and Kurds.

Kurds want to incorporate the city into their largely autonomous region, but the idea has met resistance from the city's Sunni Arabs, whom Saddam Hussein had encouraged to settle there. A referendum on the issue has been delayed until next year.

Rice's visit was intended to highlight a recent agreement under which Sunni Arabs ended a yearlong boycott of the provincial council in exchange for government posts. The city's ethnic Turkmens are still refusing to participate in the council.

U.S. officials have credited their troop buildup with helping to bring violence in Iraq down to its lowest level since 2003, the first year of the war. The decision of anti-U.S. Shiite Muslim cleric Muqtada Sadr to freeze the activities of his militia and a rebellion by thousands of Sunni tribesmen against the extremists they once backed have also been key factors in the downturn, which Rice said had created a window in which political reconciliation needed to take place.

"We all understand that democracy is hard

and that it takes time," she said. "But it is also the case that when people elect leaders, they expect them to make very strong efforts to move forward."

Zebari acknowledged, "We need a political and legislative surge to augment and strengthen these gains."

Despite the progress, deadly attacks continue on a daily basis.

Police said a suicide bomber detonated the explosives strapped to his waist in a cafe in Attarah, a Shiite village about five miles north of Baqubah, the capital of Diyala

province, killing 16 people and injuring 28 others. Insurgents fleeing the troop buildup in Baghdad are believed to have established sanctuaries in the province, according to U.S. intelligence.

Another suicide bomber drove an explosives-laden car into a police checkpoint in Baqubah, killing two people and injuring 12 others, police said.

In Baghdad, four people were killed and seven injured when a car bomb exploded at downtown Nasr Square, police said. At least eight others were found shot to

death, five of them execution-style.

U.S.-led forces detained seven suspects during raids early Tuesday targeting Sunni insurgents in Baiji, Mosul and east of Samarra, the military said. A fugitive Shiite militant was captured with 11 other suspects in the Aziziya area, southeast of Baghdad.

Special correspondents Asso Ahmed in Irbil and Yesim Borg in Ankara and special correspondents in Kirkuk and Baghdad contributed to this report.

Newsweek

December 21, 2007

Friends Again

U.S. support for Turkey's raids against rebel Kurds have improved relations between Washington and Ankara. Can the entente last?

By Sami Kohen and Owen Matthews

Since well before the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, Turkey complained quietly—and sometimes not so quietly—about rebel Kurds based in northern Iraq staging terror attacks deep inside Turkey. But it was only when Turkey turned up the volume with a threat to invade northern Iraq and cut off supplies to U.S. bases in Iraq that Washington listened.

This week's raids into northern Iraq by up to 300 Turkish commandos are evidence of that. Information that emerged this week suggests that President Bush may have made a deal with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan during his Nov. 5 visit to Washington by which the Turks would get a green light to attack the bases of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. According to a top adviser present at the Washington talks, Erdogan told Bush that the U.S. president had to choose between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurdish groups. Bush's reaction was that Washington would support Ankara but that the Turkish operation should be "limited" and that a political settlement should also be sought, according to the adviser. In fact, the U.S. had little choice: Washington has long said that the PKK is a terror group and its existence in northern Iraq cannot be tolerated. More important, Washington needs Turkey as an ally in its war on terror.

The raids themselves went well beyond the small-scale military operations Turkey has been mounting for months. Crucially, it was the first time since before the 2003 invasion that the U.S. and Turkish militaries have established an effective tactical cooperation. After years of disappointment and tension, the Turks finally got some strategic help from Washington and real tactical assistance from the U.S. military. For one thing, America provided intelligence that enabled air strikes to hit alleged PKK targets, Turkey's ambassador in Washington, Nabi Sensoy, said Wednesday. (The White House acknowledges that it shares intelligence with Ankara but refused to comment on reports that it had helped Turkish authorities target the PKK.) The United States also opened up northern Iraq's air space—still under American control—to Turkish warplanes. The Turks, who went from being America's strongest supporters to among its fiercest critics in the region, felt that they and the U.S. were on the same side again. Gen. Yasar Buyukanit, chief of

Turkey's general staff, praised the cooperation, and the press hailed the restoration of the damaged ties with Washington. The popular daily Milliyet ran a front page editorial reminding readers how far U.S.-Turkish relations had come since their low point: an incident in April 2003 when troops of the U.S. 173rd Airborne Division captured 22 undercover Turkish Special Forces agents in the Iraqi city of Kirkuk and detained them in plastic hoods and handcuffs—a humiliation often revisited in the Turkish media.

According to assessments by the Turkish military cited in the Turkish press, the PKK's camps in the Kandil mountains in northern Iraq have been completely destroyed. There are no hard estimates of casualties on the PKK side as yet, though the Turkish media has treated the raids as a resounding victory and a revenge for PKK attacks inside Turkey, which left more than 80 Turkish soldiers dead this year alone. But the tactical success Turkey may have scored against the PKK pales in comparison with the major result of a restoration of the crippled U.S.-Turkish relationship. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, on a visit to Iraq this week, was outspoken in her support for the Turkish operation and notably cool toward Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani and the Iraqi Kurdish administration. Though the Kurds remain America's closest allies inside Iraq itself, they've worn Washington's patience thin. According to one Western diplomat not authorized to speak on the record, Barzani, the president of the semiautonomous Kurdish region, had been "told a thousand times" that the Iraqi Kurds must do something about the PKK or risk the Turks doing it for them. "In the end they did not do a lot, despite fair warning," says the diplomat.

The question is, how long will the entente last. The risk is that the United States will tilt back toward Barzani (who refused to meet with Rice this week) if Turkey's operations are stepped up. The United States insists, Rice said this week, that Turkey should "refrain from taking action that would destabilize" Iraq. Decoded, that means that Washington does not want constant Turkish incursions that go deeper into the heartland of northern Iraq. Turkish Prime Minister Abdullah Gul and President Erdogan have said repeatedly that their military's only target is the PKK, not civilians or Iraqi Kurdish

security forces. In Turkey there have been calls this week from the ultranationalist MHP party and some retired generals, as well as some members of the CHP opposition, to hit not only the PKK but all forces who "harbor or support them," such as the Barzani administration. Senior government advisers tell NEWSWEEK, however, that Turkey will "limit its strikes and operations" and will refrain from sending any signals to the Iraqi Kurds that might suggest that Ankara's aims go beyond neutralizing the PKK. Ankara is acutely aware that serious numbers of civilian casualties would quickly erode a carefully constructed diplomatic edifice of international backing for Turkey's raids—not just U.S. support but "understanding" from the European Union and sympathy from most of the Islamic world—except from Iraq itself, which condemned the raids.

The problem of unrest among Turkey's 14 million-strong Kurdish minority isn't going to be solved, however, by hitting the PKK alone. Prominent terrorism expert Ercan Ciltioglu of Bahcesehir University says the threat of terrorism "cannot be removed by just killing some terrorists or bombing their shelters." He argues for a comprehensive plan, not only military but also political, economic, social and cultural. This also seems to be the basis of the government's new Kurdish strategy. Erdogan has suggested that he may offer a limited amnesty to encourage PKK members to "return home." In Turkey's largely Kurdish southeast special teams of local civilian administrators and security officers have been assigned to visit the families of PKK members to tell them to convince their children to abandon the struggle. The government is also talking up new programs for the economic and social recovery of the southeast, in addition to the "return home" campaign, which aims to help ex-PKK members find jobs—though Ankara has ruled out any kind of dialogue with the PKK leadership.

Erdogan has emerged from the crisis more popular than ever—not least because he has kept his promise to use force to put an end to PKK attacks. His relations with the military, which have been strained for years because of Erdogan's Islamist past, are now better than they have ever been. Erdogan's challenge now is to bring about a political solution as neat and victorious as his military one.

Turkey's cross-border raid mars Rice's upbeat visit

► 300 troops in assault on Kurdish north Iraq

► US Secretary of State urges co-operation

Deborah Haynes Baghdad

Hundreds of Turkish soldiers marched into northern Iraq yesterday in a provocative cross-border raid that stoked fears of violent clashes with Kurdish militants. The largest incursion by Turkish troops since the US invasion of Iraq came on the day that Condoleezza Rice, the US Secretary of State, staged a surprise visit to Iraq.

The timing of the operation fuelled speculation that the US military was sharing intelligence with Turkey to help to curtail the activities of Kurdish separatists. Publicly, Dr Rice urged Turkish and Iraqi leaders to co-operate in dealing with the militants.

Turkish forces withdrew again within 24 hours, according to the regional Iraqi Kurdish Government, but the operation still prompted condemnation from Baghdad.

Dr Rice said that Washington, Ankara and Baghdad shared a "common interest" in stopping the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, but gave warning against any action that would harm civilians or stability in the largely autonomous Kurdish north, one of Iraq's rare success stories. The Secretary of State also used her trip to Iraq to highlight a drop in violence in recent months. Underlying the fragility of the relative calm, however, a suicide bomber killed 14 people in a Shia village north of Baghdad.

Yesterday's incursion came after Turkey launched its largest aerial assault against the PKK on Sunday. The bombings left a civilian woman and five rebels dead and prompted more than 1,800 people to flee. The rebels have threatened to retaliate.

"We have made clear to the Turkish Government that we continue to be concerned about anything that could lead to innocent civilian casualties or to the destabilisation of the north," Dr Rice told a joint news conference in Baghdad with Hoshiyar Zebari, the Iraqi Foreign Minister, who is a Kurd.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish Prime Minister, said that his country had no intention of violating Iraq's territorial integrity or harming civilians, "but the PKK terrorist organisation's camps there are terrorist camps, they are our enemy".

"They threaten our national unity and we are using our rights stemming from international laws to defend ourselves against this threat," he said.

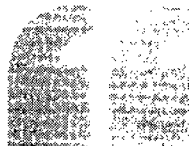
Mr Zebari said that the Iraqi and regional Kurdish authorities were monitoring the movement of the Turkish troops very closely. "We believe any unilateral action to destabilise the situation will harm Iraq's interests and Turkish interests," he added.

At about 3am yesterday, 300 Turkish troops ventured into Iraq, pushing up to two miles into a deserted, mountainous frontier area, which is also close to the Iranian border. While causing alarm among the Kurdish authorities, the operation did not represent a large-scale incursion.

In the mid-1990s Turkey sent about 50,000 troops across the border to fight Kurdish rebels, who have led a bloody campaign against the Turkish military for greater rights for Kurds in the south of Turkey. In recent months Turkey has again massed tens of thousands of soldiers on its border, believing that rebels use camps in Iraq from which to launch attacks.

The US, which has the unenviable task of balancing support for the Turkish Government and the Iraqi Kurds, has said that it received warning about Sunday's airstrikes, while Iraq was kept in the dark.

Underlining Kurdish displeasure at what he saw as Washington's implicit



We are concerned about anything that could lead to innocent civilian casualties
Condoleezza Rice

support for the Turkish offensive, Masoud Barzani, president of the Iraq northern region, refused to meet Dr Rice while she was in Baghdad.

News of the raid broke as Dr Rice touched down in the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, close to the border with Iraq's northern Kurdish region. She met local leaders before flying to Baghdad to speak to Mr Zebari and Nouri al-Maliki, the Iraqi Prime Minister.

"The surge that the President ordered as well as the efforts of the Iraqi security forces and the efforts of the concerned citizens... have improved the security situation and they have given a kind of window in which political reconciliation needs to take place," she said.

In one sign of improved security, Dr Rice lunched at the central Baghdad home of Jalal Talabani, the President, in what US troops call the "Red Zone" — all of Baghdad outside the "green zone" government and diplomatic compound. The suicide bombing in the al-Abbara village, 40 miles (65km) north of Baghdad, served as a grim reminder of the threat of violence. A further 16 people were killed in other bombings and shootings across Iraq.

Dr Rice's choice of visiting Kirkuk first highlighted another area of concern. Wrangling over whether Kirkuk should be incorporated into the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq has deepened divisions in the city, which has a majority Kurdish and minority Sunni Arab population. A referendum on its status, due by mid-December, has yet to take place, but many Kurds regard Kirkuk as theirs.

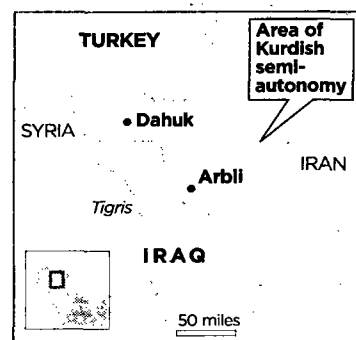
Kurdish ownership would strengthen Iraqi Kurdistan but neighbouring countries with Kurdish minorities, such as Turkey, fear that an emboldened Kurdish north in Iraq would trigger rebellion within their own borders.

Border crossings

Sept 29 13 Turkish troops killed in ambush in Sirnak province
Oct 7 PKK kills 13 Turkish soldiers in southeast Turkey
Oct 21 Eight soldiers captured and 12 killed by PKK; 32 rebels killed
Oct 24 Turkish media report that PKK is bombed by Turkish jets
Oct 28 Turkey kills 15 rebels

Nov 6 Turkish soldier killed by PKK in southeast Turkey
Nov 13 Turkey bombs Iraqi villages. No casualties reported
Dec 1 Turkish Army reports "heavy losses" on 60 PKK guerrillas in Iraq
Dec 16 50 Turkish planes bomb rebel targets in northern Iraq

Source: Times archive



Rice travels to Iraq after Turkish attack

She warns against destabilizing region

By Graham Bowley

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made an unannounced visit to Iraq on Tuesday, flying first to the northern oil-rich city of Kirkuk and then on to Baghdad to meet with Iraqi leaders.

The visit, her first since September, came two days after dozens of Turkish warplanes and artillery struck Kurdish militants in northern Iraq, with at least tacit approval from the United States, and coincided with new Kurdish accusations of a Turkish incursion.

Rice did not directly comment on the new accusations, reported on Kurdish television and Web sites, but at a news conference with her in Baghdad, the Iraqi foreign minister, Hoshiyar Zebari, said there had been a "limited incursion" high into a mountainous, unoccupied area in Iraq. There was no confirmation from Turkey.

But any incursion may have been brief. Reuters quoted Kurdish officials on Tuesday as saying that the Turkish troops had withdrawn, less than 24 hours after the incursion began.

"The Turkish force that entered today is no longer there," said Fouad Hussein, chief of staff for the Kurdish leader Masoud Barzani, according to Reuters.

Rice said the United States, Turkey and Iraq had a "common interest" in stopping the activities of the Kurdish militants, but said that no one should do anything that threatened to destabilize the north and that the United States had repeatedly made this clear to Turkey.

Over the years, Turkey has staged brief, small-scale incursions into Iraq to chase Kurdish militants, and keeps a small contingent of special forces troops at an outpost there. The U.S. military has been supplying the Turkish military with intelligence on the rebels, and has acknowledged using spy planes over rebel territory. But the Turkish Army has not made any major incursions since the American invasion in 2003.

The Bush administration considers the Kurdish rebel group, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, a terrorist organization. The PKK wants an autonomous Kurdish area in eastern Turkey and has repeatedly attacked the Turkish military, and sometimes the civilian population, since the 1980s.

But in considering how to deal with the PKK, the United States, which badly wants to avert a new front in the war in Iraq, finds itself forced to choose between two trusted allies: Turkey, a NATO member whose territory is the transit area for most of its air cargo to Iraq, and the Kurds, who are important U.S. partners in Iraq.

Rice's visit to Kirkuk underlined its importance as one of the most poten-

tially explosive places in Iraq. Its fate is seen as a crucial issue by all sides in the debate about whether Iraq will eventually be partitioned among Kurds, Sunni Arabs and Shiite Arabs.

"It is an important province for the future of Iraq, for a democratic Iraq, an Iraq that can be for all people," Rice said at the start of a meeting with provincial leaders in Kirkuk, The Associated Press reported.

Dec. 31 is the constitutional deadline for a controversial referendum to de-

cide whether Kirkuk should become the fourth province in the semiautonomous Kurdish regional government.

Rice's visit was her first since September, when she accompanied President George W. Bush and Defense Secretary Robert Gates on a surprise trip. At the time, they emphasized security gains, sectarian reconciliation and the possibility of a troop withdrawal.

Kirkuk is a city made unstable by the fusion of oil, politics and ethnic tensions. The Kurds want a referendum soon, because they think they will win. But the Arabs and Turkmen want to delay a referendum, and are wary that proceeds from oil-rich Kirkuk could be used to fund Kurdish separatism.

In Baghdad, Rice was to meet Vice President Jalal Talibani and other leaders, The AP said. A meeting with Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki was also scheduled.

Turkey's empty gesture

Turkey did the wrong thing for the wrong reasons Sunday when it sent more than 50 of its air force jets to bomb sites in northern Iraq. The goal was to kill fighters of the PKK, Kurdish rebels who have been mounting guerrilla attacks in southeastern Turkey. The bombing and shelling killed at least two civilians and five PKK members, while setting Iraqi Kurdish farms and villages on fire. But as a strategic move, Turkey's raid was worse than useless.

PKK forces are ensconced in caves high in the inaccessible Kandil mountain range, so there was little chance Turkey's raid would accomplish more than it did. Indeed, the tactical reason for making such an empty gesture was that, with snow now falling in the mountains, a ground invasion of the sort Turkey had been threatening would have been more costly and even less effective.

But that hardly justifies the bombing. The Turkish military asserted its nationalist bravado at the price of violating the sovereignty of a neighbor, implicating the United States in that transgression and incurring a condemnation from the European Union.

Iraq's Kurdish foreign minister, Hoshiyar Zebari, exercised exemplary restraint when he said Iraq had expected Turkey to consult with it before taking such an action. The fact that Iraqi Kurdish civilians were killed suggested to Zebari that the strike "was based maybe on misinformation."

This was not only a discreet way

of intimating that the Turks were careless about killing Kurdish villagers in Iraq; it was also a diplomatic allusion to the suspected source of that misinformation — the United States.

Last month, after Turkey threatened to send ground troops into Iraq, the Bush administration said it would give Turkey intelligence on the PKK. So it was no surprise that Turkey's military chief, General Yasar Buyukanit, announced Monday that "America gave intelligence." To make sure nobody misunderstood, he added, "But more importantly, America last night opened the [Iraqi] airspace to us. By opening the airspace, America gave its approval to this operation."

There could hardly be a more incoherent twist to President George W. Bush's Iraq policy. Bush has made preserving Iraq's borders a primary objective. Yet the administration colluded in Turkey's violation of Iraqi sovereignty — even as Washington is warning Iran to stop sending agents and weapons into Iraq, and is pressing Syria and Saudi Arabia to crack down on foreign jihadists crossing into Iraq.

Bush ought to urge Turkey to make the PKK superfluous by granting full cultural and linguistic rights to the Kurds and developing the impoverished Kurdish region of southeast Turkey. Turkey's bombing of northern Iraq harms its chances of admission to the European Union. And it makes the United States look simultaneously incompetent and hypocritical.

— The Boston Globe

December 19, 2007

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
THE WORLD'S DAILY NEWSPAPER

December 19th 2007

The
Economist

Turkey and Iraq

Raids across the border

Was there a deal between Turkey and America?

ANKARA

AS IF Iraq did not have enough problems of its own. On December 16th Turkish aircraft bombed what they said were Kurdish rebel positions deep inside northern Iraq. It was one of the biggest cross-border air strikes in recent years and was followed by an incursion by about 300 Turkish troops. They were said to be lightly armed, and advanced only 3km (1.9 miles) into Iraq. But the two actions mark a big escalation of the traditional hostilities.

The Turks' targets were Kurdish fighters of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), who have used bases inside the semi-autonomous Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq to launch raids into Turkey. Although Iraq's American occupiers have worked hard in recent months to prevent such a raid, Turkey's most senior general said that the Americans had not only agreed to the air strikes but had also provided

the necessary intelligence.

If this is true, it may be the result of a delicate balancing act. The Kurdish enclave in the north is the most successful part of post-Saddam Iraq. The Americans do not want it to be destabilised. But they also want to salvage relations with Turkey, a vital NATO ally whose people have become strongly anti-American since America invaded Iraq in 2003.

Many Iraqi Kurds do not believe Turkey's claim that it is motivated only by the raids of PKK fighters. They fear that Turkey's real aim is to prevent the Kurdish areas of Iraq from gaining full independence, which would stoke up an appetite for secession among Turkey's own Kurdish population. The head of Iraq's Kurdish regional government refused to meet the visiting American secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, as "a sign of protest" against American acceptance of the Turk-

ish raids.

It may well be that America and Turkey have struck a deal. In exchange for American support for the limited Turkish raids, and a promise to order the Iraqi Kurds to take action against the PKK, Turkey's prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is thought to have made his own promises to George Bush. These include recognising the Kurds' regional government in Iraq and introducing a more liberal amnesty for PKK fighters.

A previous amnesty that pardoned only those who ratted on their comrades failed. Now the government may pardon all PKK fighters who have not been involved in violence. After more than two decades of war against the rebels, Turkey knows that military measures alone cannot fix its Kurdish problem.



Iraq: Kirkuk Referendum Delayed By Six Months

December 21, 2007

By Kathleen Ridolfo [RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY]

Iraq's Kurdish officials reluctantly accepted a UN proposal calling for a six-month extension to implement Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution in mid-December, despite warnings from Kurdish lawmakers that failure to implement the article would be considered a direct violation of their rights under the constitution.

Article 140 refers to the normalization of Kirkuk, a highly contested multiethnic governorate with a capital city of the same name that contains vast oil reserves. Under the Arabization campaign launched in the 1980s, Saddam Hussein displaced thousands of Kurds from Kirkuk and relocated Shi'ite Arab families to the area in an effort to change the demographic landscape of the historically Kurdish-majority governorate.

Since the overthrow of the regime, the Kurdistan regional government has pushed for the return of Kirkuk and the incorporation of the governorate into the Kurdish region. The transitional administrative law, issued by the Coalition Provisional Authority in 2004, which served as the precursor to the Iraqi constitution, called for a normalization process to be carried out in Kirkuk, allowing Kurds displaced by Hussein to return to Kirkuk and repatriating Arabs back to their hometowns in the south, with compensation. Kirkuk is also home to a large indigenous Turkoman population, whose leaders claim has no desire to join the Kurdish region.

Under Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution ratified in late 2005, the Iraqi government must complete the normalization process, hold a census to determine the breakdown of the population according to ethnicity, and hold a referendum on the status of Kirkuk "a date not to exceed the 31st of December 2007."

The new extension allows the Higher Committee for the Implementation of Article 140 and the Iraqi Independent Electoral Commission much-needed time to prepare for a referendum in the governorate of Kirkuk that will determine whether the governorate will join the Kurdish autonomous region.

UN Special Representative to Iraq Steffan de Mistura appealed to the Iraqi parliament to accept the delay on December 17, saying

the extension would not affect the content of Article 140. "Your reaction should be dictated by reason and not by passion. If not, everyone will suffer the consequences of it," de Mistura told parliamentarians.

Kurds Miffed By Delays

Many senior Kurdish officials voiced public support for the extension, saying it was not a reason for concern. Regional Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani told reporters in Al-Najaf on December 17 following a meeting with Shi'ite Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani that the extension was a "positive step." Barzani's comments followed a week-long visit to Baghdad that included meetings with senior Iraqi officials including Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi on a host of issues, including the issue of Kirkuk.

Iraq's two leading Kurdish parties have invested substantial time and money over the past two years to facilitate the demographic correction, building houses and paying Kurds to move to Kirkuk. The six-month delay will only aid that process thereby contributing to the Kurdish demographic majority, a point not lost on Kirkuk's ethnic Turkoman and Arab minorities.

But some Kurdish leaders contend that the government seeks to renege on the constitutional provision. Kamal Kirkukly, deputy speaker of the Kurdish regional parliament expressed frustration over the six-month extension telling the Kurdish newspaper "Jamawar" that Baghdad obstructed the implementation of Article 140. "My own personal belief is that any delay or extension would not aim at finding a right time for its implementation but to find more excuses and obstacles to prevent implementation forever," Kikukly said in the interview published on December 17. "An extension by six months, ten months, or 100 months will

not change this reality," Kirkukly claimed.

Continuing, he argued: "We firmly believe that real obstacles were made to prevent the [Higher Committee for the Implementation of Article 140] from completing its work. It was possible to hold a Kirkuk referendum on time. From 2003 to 2005, it was possible to hold two elections and one referendum [on the constitution] in Iraq. Why was it not possible to hold a referendum [on Kirkuk] from 2003 to 2007, which was limited to only a few specific places in Iraq and not the whole of Iraq," he asked.

Representatives of the sizable Turkoman and Shi'ite Arab population in the governorate have said their constituencies have no desire to join the Kurdish region. Many Turkoman and Arabs accused the Kurdish parties of threat and intimidation. The Governorate Council, which ceased to function two years ago, only began to resolve its issues in recent weeks, after the Arab members of the council agreed to end their boycott and return to work on December 4. Turkoman representatives are continuing their boycott.

Turkoman politician Hasan Turhan told the Kurdish website "Rozhnama" in an interview published December 5 that the Kurdish parties have worked to sideline and alienate Turkomans in Kirkuk and other areas of Iraq. Turhan, who is a member of the Turkoman Justice Party and the Iraqi Turkoman Front, holds one of the Turkomans boycotted governorate council seats. He opposes joining the Kurdish autonomous region and says he and his supporters prefer Kirkuk be turned into an independent region jointly administered by Kurdish and Turkoman leaders. He contended that many Kurds in Kirkuk also support the establishment of an independent region for the governorate.

Turkoman Front leader Ahmet Muratly, the front's representative to Turkey told Anatolia news agency in comments published on December 19 that the delay will only seek to benefit the Kurds. "Kurdish groups have driven Kirkuk into a deadlock with the mistakes they made," he said referring to the political tensions plaguing the city. Muratly contended that the Kurds altered the demographic landscape by bringing 650,000 Kurds to Kirkuk from the Kurdish region and from neighboring countries.

Sending A Message To Kurds?

If Kurdish officials felt snubbed by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's visit to Kirkuk this week, they tried not to show it. Kurdish media outlets ran reports indicating regional president Mas'ud Barzani refused to meet with Rice because the U.S. had allegedly given Turkey the green light to launch airstrikes on Turkish-Kurdish separatists in the mountains of northern Iraq,

which Barzani said led to the death of civilians.

Rice met with local officials during her brief trip to the capital city, but did not hold separate meeting with the KRG, leading some observers to speculate she was sending a message to the Kurds over their designs for Kirkuk. Rice reportedly told local leaders in a closed meeting that the United States supports the UN proposal for a six-month extension and called on local leaders to find a political solution to Kirkuk, Governorate Council member Ahmad al-Askari told the website PUK media. "It is an important province for the future of Iraq, for a democratic Iraq, an Iraq that can be for all people," AP quoted Rice as saying ahead of the meeting.

In a press conference alongside de Mistura on December 18, Rice told reporters that the UN is well-placed "to provide the kind of technical expertise and technical efforts that are needed to help [the people of Kirkuk] move forward." Rice said she was pleased with the UN decision "to help the people [of Kirkuk] to resolve some of the differences that they have there, to look at the questions of the - a way forward so that all Iraqis in the Kirkuk province can feel that they have a future in the new Iraq."

Kurds Need To Assuage Fears

While UN, U.S. and Iraqi leaders have contended the delay in implementing Article 140 is solely due to technical reasons, there is no question that many fear ethnic tensions in Kirkuk could erupt into extreme violence over implementation of the article. Shi'ite and Sunni Arabs across the country fear the KRG could one day seize Kirkuk's vast oil reserves - which under the constitution are the property of the central government - and declare independence from the rest of Iraq. Ongoing disputes between the KRG and Iraqi Oil Minister Husayn al-Shahristani over Kurdish rights to drill inside the Kurdish region only compound that fear.

Turkey, which supports Kirkuk's ethnic Turkoman population, also fears Kurds would use Kirkuk's wealth to declare independence from Iraq. Moreover, Turks fear, the establishment of a Kurdish state, would likely trigger political instability in Turkey's Kurdish-populated south, which has long-rallied for autonomy from Ankara.

If the UN is to guide Iraq's contesting parties to a resolution, it must push for greater dialogue among the parties. But perhaps more important, it must seek a resolution to outstanding issues such as the draft oil law, which delineates the rights and obligations of the parties in the sharing of Iraq's natural resources.

THE DAILY STAR

December 22, 2007

A rare event in Kirkuk: ethnic compromise

By David Ignatius Daily Star staff - Lebanon

With its volatile mix of Kurds, Turkmen and Arabs, Kirkuk is often described as a sectarian time bomb. But for now, the bomb is ticking a little more slowly thanks to that rare Iraqi event - a compromise. Iraq has had too few of these political accommodations during its downward spiral over most of the past four years. But the Kirkuk deal announced last Tuesday illustrates that there can be virtuous cycles too, even in a country as bitterly divided as is Iraq. The success of the US troop surge seems to be bolstering, ever so slightly, the advocates of conciliation and weakening the partisans of

sectarian war.

Kirkuk was facing a potentially disastrous December 31 deadline for a referendum on its political future. The Kurds, who claim a majority of the population in the province, wanted the vote, and with it control of Kirkuk's huge oil reserves. The Turkmen and their patrons in Ankara threatened a full-scale Turkish Army invasion if the Kurds took power - and rattled sabers this week with air raids and military attacks across the border against Kurdish rebels. The Arabs, also wary of being displaced by Kurds, were boycotting the provincial council.

It was a classic Iraqi formula

for sectarian disaster. Worse, the Turkish raids raised the threat of a wider regional war.

But the Kirkuk bomb was defused, at least temporarily, thanks to two factors that Iraq desperately needs - internal compromise among its warring ethnic forces and international support from the United Nations. The compromise plan, hammered out by US diplomats working with the new UN representative in Iraq, Staffan de Mistura, calls for a six-month delay of the referendum while the UN assesses the situation. It's a face-saving deal that allows everyone to step back from the brink. And

it's the most important UN intervention in Iraq since a 2003 car bomb destroyed the organization's headquarters in Baghdad.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made an unscheduled stop in Kirkuk on Tuesday to bless the deal and meet with the provincial council that includes all of the battling factions. She told them to fight against Iraq's history of ethnic differences, and cited her own experience as an African-American child of slavery. She then flew on to Baghdad to convey a similar message about reconciliation to Iraq's battling Sunni, Shiite and

Kurdish national politicians. Ryan Crocker, the American ambassador to Iraq, warns against premature enthusiasm. With the wary skepticism that led President George W. Bush to dub him in jest "Mr. Sunshine" during a recent teleconference, Crocker said in an interview Tuesday: "We have some very positive developments, but it is all fragile and could snap back."

General David Petraeus, the commander of US forces in Iraq, in a separate interview expressed a similar guarded optimism: "You don't go here from bad to good. You go from bad to less bad. Progress accumulates."

Is political reconciliation possible in Iraq on the national level? The answer still isn't clear, despite the success of the surge in reducing the level of violence. Baghdad, seen from the distant lens of a Black Hawk helicopter, certainly looks calmer today than it did six months ago: You see a tidier, more orderly city, with more people in their homes and more traffic on the streets.

The recent progress in Iraq has resulted from bottom-up efforts to build trust, neighborhood by neighborhood. That's true in Kirkuk where a US Provincial Reconstruction Team has been working for months to prepare the ground for this week's agreement to delay the

referendum. Major Sean Wilson, a spokesman for the joint civilian-military team, says it held about 200 meetings with local tribal leaders and provincial politicians to broker a deal. The Arabs, who had been boycotting the provincial council, agreed to come back after one of their group was named deputy governor. Bolstering the process was a tribal group of 6,500 known as "Concerned Local Citizens," which mirrors similar efforts in Anbar Province.

Wilson, who is on his third tour in Iraq, says these small steps toward reconciliation reassure him that the Iraq effort isn't a waste of lives and money. "We want to make sure our sacri-

fices are worth something," he says.

Crocker and other US officials don't talk about reconciliation as an end state, but as a process. As security improves, they say, so do the local economy and the government's ability to provide services. They hope to see an upward spiral, with increasing returns to stability and order. Just as no Iraqi wanted to be the last to abandon what appeared to be a sinking ship, neither will they want to be the last to clamber back aboard.

Syndicate columnist David Ignatius is published regularly by THE DAILY STAR.

TODAYS ZAMAN

December 24, 2007

Barzani: Attack on Kandil equivalent to attack on Arbil

Irqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani slammed Turkey over recent attacks on the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), saying the cross-border offensives were targeted at the Kurds in northern Iraq as a whole.

Aerial strikes on PKK targets in northern Iraq, meanwhile, reportedly continued yesterday. Jabbar Yawar, a spokesman for the Kurdish administration in northern Iraq, told the Anatolia news agency that there were attacks by Turkish fighter jets near the Kandil Mountains yesterday afternoon, although no immediate confirmation has come from the Turkish military.

Barzani's harsh comments came on Saturday, the same day the Turkish military said that warplanes bombed PKK targets in northern Iraq in the third confirmed cross-border offensive by Turkish forces in less than a week. Barzani was on a visit to the area, hit by aerial strikes last weekend and reportedly cut short his visit due to the bombardment. "You are not alone, this is a problem related to the Kurdish people," Barzani, the head of the largely autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq, was quoted by the Peyamner Web site, affiliated with his Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), as telling residents of villages near the Kandil Mountains.

"These daily strikes are unacceptable. ... Their goal is not only the PKK but the whole idea of an autonomous Kurdish region," he told a group of families, in comments broadcast on his party's Kurdistan TV station. The bombing, lasting for almost half an hour on Saturday afternoon, was followed by shelling from inside Turkish borders, the military said in

a statement on its Web site. It did not say which areas were shelled, but security forces in northern Iraq said the bombs fell about 120 kilometers northwest of Dohuk. There were no casualties reported, Yawar said.

Saturday's raid follows air attacks on Dec. 16 in the Kandil Mountains near the border with Iran, where Ankara says some 3,500 PKK members are holed up, using the area as a springboard for attacks on Turkey. Two days later, hundreds of Turkish soldiers crossed the border as they spotted a group of terrorists trying to infiltrate Turkey. The administration in Iraq's north said the soldiers left Iraq after 15 hours. The General Staff said in a statement that hundreds of terrorists were killed in the Dec. 16 attack, though it was not possible to provide the exact number of PKK casualties due to difficulties of assessing the group's losses in the mountain caves.

The statement also vowed to continue military operations on both sides of the Turkish-Iraqi border "no matter what the conditions are."

The PKK, listed as a terrorist organization by a large majority of the international community, uses bases in northern Iraq to launch cross-border strikes. Ankara has said it can no longer tolerate the attacks on its troops and, in October, Turkey's Parliament authorized the country's military to strike back at the PKK inside Iraq.

"Bombardment of villages near the Kandil Mountains is no different than bombardment of Arbil, Sulaimaniya or the entire Kurdistan region," Barzani told the residents on Saturday, according to Peyam-



ner.

The United States allowed Turkish fighter jets to use Iraqi airspace and provided intelligence on the PKK for the Dec. 16 attack, angering Iraqi Kurdish leaders, who say the strikes were an assault on Iraqi sovereignty. Ankara has accused Iraqi Kurds, who run an autonomous administration in the north of the country, of tolerating and even supporting the PKK. "The Turkish government committed a cruel crime against the people of Iraqi Kurdistan when they hit Kurdish villages on the border. It is a cruel crime against unarmed citizens," Barzani said following the Dec. 16 attack. "I want to remind everybody that the blood of the people of Kurdistan is not cheap."

Later in the week, Barzani on Tuesday refused to meet with visiting US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice because of Washington's tolerance of Turkish military attacks. "The United States supervises [Iraq's] airspace, so it is not possible that a violation of this airspace occurs without the knowledge or approval of the Americans," Nechirvan Barzani, the prime minister of the regional Kurdish government.

La Turquie bombarde le Kurdistan irakien

LE FIGARO
17 décembre 2007

PROCHE-ORIENT

C'est la première fois qu'une incursion turque sur le territoire irakien est menée par l'aviation d'Ankara depuis octobre.



Istanbul

LE CHEF D'ÉTAT-MAJOR de l'armée turque, Yasar Buyukanit, a affirmé hier avoir reçu l'aval implicite des États-Unis pour lancer en

Irak des raids aériens contre les rebelles kurdes du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan). Des avions de chasse turcs ont en effet bombardé les zones frontalières du nord de l'Irak, dans la nuit de samedi à dimanche et auraient touché plusieurs camps du PKK, selon le communiqué de l'état-major turc. C'est la première fois qu'une telle incursion est menée depuis octobre et le vote par le Parlement turc d'une motion autorisant les troupes à pénétrer en territoire irakien pour faire la chasse aux « terroristes ». Le 1^{er} décembre, les forces turques avaient déjà bombardé le sol irakien, mais depuis leur territoire. Cette fois, entre vingt et cinquante avions, selon les sources, ont franchi la frontière et pilonné des zones montagneuses et quelques villages du Kurdistan irakien. L'artillerie a ensuite pris le relais. « Les opérations ont uniquement visé le groupe

terroriste », assure le communiqué officiel des forces armées.

Selon les autorités kurdes d'Irak, plusieurs villages ont été touchés et une femme a été tuée, ce qu'a démenti le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères, Ali Babacan, en route pour Paris. Cinq autres personnes au moins auraient été blessées. « Des familles ont fui ces villages et se sont réfugiées dans des localités voisines », a expliqué Jabbar Yawa, porte-parole des pechmergas, l'armée du Kurdistan autonome. Des ponts reliant les différents villages, des maisons et même deux écoles auraient également été détruits. Via l'agence prokurde Firat, le PKK a assuré n'avoir subi aucune perte.

Le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, s'est félicité, dimanche, de cette opération nocturne « réussie », selon lui. « Cette lutte sera poursuivie dans le pays et

hors du pays avec détermination », a-t-il souligné. Le porte-parole du

gouvernement, Cemil Çiçek, a laissé entendre que d'autres opérations seraient menées prochainement. Le commandement du PKK a longtemps été établi dans les monts Qandil, forteresse naturelle qui sert de base arrière aux rebelles. Mais avec les menaces répétées d'opération transfrontalière depuis le printemps, il semblerait que les cadres de l'organisation se soient repliés en Iran.

Les raids aériens de l'armée turque interviennent une semaine après que le premier ministre a annoncé qu'une loi d'amnistie pour les rebelles du PKK était à l'étude, afin de faire redescendre les combattants des montagnes. Un texte prévoit déjà une dispense de peine pour les repentis mais, très restrictif, il n'a quasiment eu aucune portée. Une amnistie totale fait partie des revendications du PKK pour qu'il dépose les armes.

LAURE MARCHAND

Nouvelle incursion turque en Irak

Après deux mois de pressions et de menaces, l'armée turque est finalement passée à l'action en Irak du nord, dans la nuit de lundi à mardi. Environ

300 membres des commandos turcs ont franchi de quelques kilomètres la frontière pour attaquer des bases des rebelles kurdes du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) qui mènent la lutte armée contre Ankara depuis 1984.

Deux jours auparavant, l'aviation turque avait déjà effectué des frappes sur les montagnes de Qandil, traditionnelle base arrière d'une gnérilla qui compte quelque 3500 combattants. Plus d'une centaine de tonnes de bombes auraient été larguées, selon des sources turques, et à en croire l'agence prokurde Firat, les frappes auraient tué une demi-douzaine de combattants du PKK et blessé des dizaines de civils. Selon le quotidien turc *Hurriyet*, l'incursion terrestre des soldats turcs visait à intercepter les groupes de rebelles se repliant après les raids de dimanche.

Ceux-ci auraient notamment visé Murat Karayilan, actuel

chef du PKK en Irak du nord et partisan de la ligne la plus intransigeante au sein de l'organisation. Un PKK en crise depuis l'arrestation en 1999 de son leader charismatique Abdullah Öcalan, condamné à la prison à vie et considéré comme une organisation terroriste par les États-Unis et l'Union européenne.

« Les États-Unis ont fourni des ren-

Le chef d'état-major de l'armée turque affirme que grâce à la coopération américaine « les camps du PKK et leurs actions sont sous surveillance constante ».

seignements et ils nous ont ouvert l'espace aérien du nord de l'Irak », avait déclaré lundi, le général Yasar Büyükanit, le chef d'état-major de l'armée turque. Il affirme que, désormais, grâce à la coopération de Washington et aux satellites américains, « les camps du PKK et leur action sont sous surveillance constante ».

En réaction aux infiltrations du PKK, Ankara avait massé 100 000 hommes sur la frontière en octobre, et menaçait d'une intervention massive dans la région autonome kurde irakienne, jusque-là épargnée par le chaos.

Ce bras de fer avec les autorités kurdes locales et leur protecteur américain en Irak a finalement débouché sur un accord,

relançant la « coopération antiterroriste » avec Washington. L'incursion d'hier s'est déroulée alors même que la secrétaire d'État américaine Condoleezza

Rice était à Bagdad. Elle a souligné que les États-Unis, l'Irak et la Turquie ont « un intérêt commun à stopper les activités du PKK ». Mais elle a aussi précisé « avoir exprimé au gouvernement turc ses inquiétudes quant à des pertes civiles ou sur une déstabilisation du nord de l'Irak ».

← MARC SEMO



19 DÉCEMBRE 2007

La Turquie se félicite du soutien américain contre le PKK

L'aviation turque a profité de renseignements américains lors des frappes effectuées contre des sites de la guérilla kurde dans le nord de l'Irak

ISTAMBOUL
De notre correspondante

L'armée turque est finalement passée à l'action. Deux mois après avoir reçu l'aval du Parlement d'Ankara pour mener des opérations contre la guérilla kurde du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), les forces armées ont franchi la frontière irakienne à deux reprises.

Dans la nuit de samedi à dimanche, l'aviation a visé ce qu'elle désigne comme «le quartier général» du PKK, dans les monts Kandil, à une centaine de kilomètres en territoire irakien. Durant quatre heures, plusieurs dizaines d'avions de chasse ont pilonné cette zone très escarpée, située à plus de 3000 mètres d'altitude. Selon l'agence Firat, proche du PKK, une femme et cinq membres du parti kurde seraient morts dans ces pilonnages et deux autres civils auraient été blessés. L'armée turque démentait lundi ces pertes civiles, assurant ne pas avoir visé de zones d'habitation.

« Ce qui s'est passé est comparable à une incursion de l'aviation mexicaine dans l'État du Colorado. »

Condoleezza Rice soutient les efforts de l'ONU à Kirkouk

La secrétaire d'État américaine Condoleezza Rice a plaidé hier en faveur des efforts de réconciliation dans la région pétrolière disputée de Kirkouk lors d'une visite surprise en Irak. Elle a notamment rencontré les membres du conseil provincial de la ville, située à 250 km au nord de Bagdad, où siègent des représentants des communautés de la région, Kurdes, Arabes, Turcomans, et chrétiens. Sa brève visite est apparue comme un soutien au nouvel émissaire de l'ONU en Irak, Staffan de Mistura, qui a obtenu un report de six mois d'un référendum prévu avant la fin de l'année pour décider d'un éventuel rattachement de la ville à la province du Kurdistan irakien.

Dans la nuit de lundi à mardi, c'est l'armée de terre qui a passé la frontière, de manière limitée. Selon des responsables d'Irak du Nord, 300 soldats équipés d'armes légères ont pénétré durant quelques heures de deux à trois kilomètres à l'intérieur de l'Irak. Selon un militaire turc cité par Reuters, des affrontements auraient eu lieu avec deux groupes du PKK.

Ces deux incursions ont été très critiquées par le pouvoir kurde qui gouverne le nord de l'Irak. «La Turquie a commis un crime (...) que nous n'accepterons pas», a déclaré Massoud Barzani, président de la région. Quant au PKK, il s'en est pris à la Turquie mais aussi à l'Iran, qui a pilonné également lundi des régions frontalières, au gouvernement de Bagdad et à l'administration américaine, accusée d'avoir soutenu Ankara. L'organisation, classée terroriste par les États-Unis et l'Union européenne, a appelé «le peuple kurde à user de son droit de représailles». «Loin de nous soumettre, nous répondrons par une résistance encore

plus forte», ajoute le communiqué.

À Ankara, en revanche, l'humeur était hier à la satisfaction. Le président de la République Abdullah Gül a qualifié ces opérations de «réussite» et rappelé qu'elles ne visaient aucunement le peuple irakien mais le PKK. «La communauté internationale nous soutient et trouve notre action justifiée», a de son côté estimé le premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan, faisant allusion à l'absence de condamnations fortes sur ce dossier - l'Union européenne s'est, de fait, contentée d'appeler la Turquie à la «retenue».

Le chef d'état-major, le général Buyukanit, a quant à lui promis de «faire plier» le PKK. «Que cela soit l'hiver, qu'il neige ou non, qu'ils se cachent dans des grottes, nous les trouverons et les frapperons», a-t-il martelé.

En passant à l'action en plein hiver, l'armée turque a sans doute marqué un point contre le PKK, habitué aux trêves hivernales. Les 24 précédentes incursions en Irak réalisées depuis les années 1990 avaient toutes été menées au printemps. C'est un «tournant», analyse l'éditorialiste Fikret Bila, dans le quotidien libéral *Milliyet*, qui insiste sur l'effet psychologique obtenu. «Dans l'opinion publique turque avait été créée une légende des monts Kandil, inatteignables, intouchables, commente-t-il. Or, les forces armées turques ont frappé ces monts Kandil. Le message adressé au PKK est qu'il n'est plus en sécurité, quels que soient le lieu et les saisons.»

L'autre sujet de satisfaction pour les Turcs est la collaboration, «enfin» effective, des forces américaines. En novembre, le président George W. Bush avait promis à Recep Tayyip Erdogan de partager des renseignements, y compris en temps réel. L'opération de dimanche en est la première concrétisation.

«Oui, les Américains nous ont fourni des renseignements, a confirmé le général Buyukanit. Mais le plus important, c'est qu'ils nous ont ouvert l'espace aérien irakien.» Information confirmée du bout des lèvres lundi par Washington. «Il est impossible de penser que cette opération n'a pas eu l'aval des États-Unis», constate Murat Yetkin, du journal *Radikal*. Ce qui s'est passé est comparable à une incursion de l'aviation mexicaine dans l'État du Colorado.»

Soucieuse de garder le soutien de ses alliés kurdes d'Irak, la secrétaire d'État américaine Condoleezza Rice a effectué une visite surprise hier dans la ville pétrolière de Kirkouk. Elle a rappelé que les États-Unis étaient un «bon partenaire» pour Kirkouk et le nord de l'Irak. Massoud Barzani ne semble pas du même avis. En signe de protestation, il a refusé de la rencontrer.

DELPHINE NERBOLLIER

L'ANALYSE DE JACQUES HUBERT-RODIER

Le boomerang kurde

Quatre-vingt-cinq ans après la fin de l'Empire ottoman, la « question kurde » ressurgit au centre des préoccupations du Moyen-Orient, créant des tensions entre les États-Unis et leur allié turc, et menaçant d'ouvrir un nouveau front au nord de l'Irak.

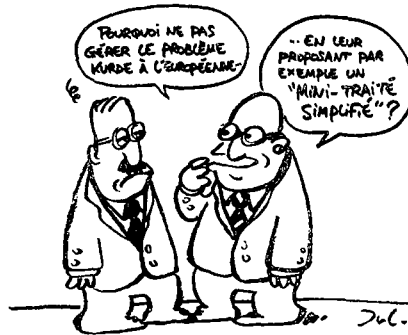
Après avoir mené pendant plusieurs semaines des incursions en territoire irakien et déployé quelque 100.000 soldats le long de la frontière, l'armée turque a lancé dimanche une spectaculaire offensive aérienne jusqu'à 90 kilomètres à l'intérieur de l'Irak contre des bases de rebelles qui se servent du nord de l'Irak pour lancer des opérations meurtrières de guérilla contre la Turquie. Mardi, quelque 300 soldats turcs ont pénétré à l'intérieur de l'Irak. Ces raids, qui ont reçu un feu vert tacite des États-Unis, interviennent à un moment crucial : grâce notamment à l'arrivée de renforts militaires américains, la situation en Irak s'est stabilisée dans les autres régions, au centre et au sud. Une stabilisation qui demeure encore très fragile.

Paradoxalement, pourtant, le retour de la « question kurde » est l'un des effets « collatéraux » de l'invasion américaine de l'Irak en 2003 qui a ravivé les tensions communautaires et ethniques dans toute la région.

L'un des risques serait une proclamation d'un État kurde indépendant dans le nord de l'Irak qui pourrait avoir un effet en chaîne en encourageant des revendications similaires dans les autres pays où sont installés des Kurdes. Ce qui serait, dans les conditions actuelles, « suicidaire », selon nombre de spécialistes. Car cette perspective est intolérable aussi bien pour la Turquie que pour l'Iran et présente une menace pour l'intégrité de l'Irak.

La situation demeure explosive à Kirkouk où les violences ethniques essentiellement entre Kurdes et Arabes sunnites se poursuivent en cette fin d'année. Les Kurdes irakiens revendiquent comme partie intégrante de leur région la riche ville pétrolière du nord de l'Irak où existent aussi une communauté turkmène qu'Ankara veut protéger et une communauté arabe, installée par Saddam Hussein. Dans une course contre la montre, l'ONU se livre à de complexes pressions pour tenter de repousser un référendum, prévu par la nouvelle Constitution, sur le statut de Kirkouk. Cette situation pourrait être un résumé de ce que la région connaîtrait si les passions anciennes se réveillaient. Car la chute des grands empires a laissé des blessures.

Aujourd'hui, contrairement aux promesses faites après la Première Guerre



mondiale, les Kurdes se considèrent toujours comme « une nation sans Etat ». Une nation forte de 30 à 35 millions de personnes, selon des estimations très variables, réparties sur quatre pays : en Turquie (de 15 à 20 millions environ), en Iran (8 millions), en Irak (5,5 millions), en Syrie (1,5 million). Le « peuple kurde, estime ainsi Kendal Nezan, président de l'Institut kurde de Paris, dans un article (1) pour son organisation, est victime de sa géographie, de l'histoire et aussi sans doute du manque de clairvoyance de ses propres dirigeants ». Pour lui, c'est « sans doute la population qui a payé le plus lourd tribut, qui a souffert le plus du remodelage de la carte du Proche-Orient ».

Plus de quatre ans après la chute de Saddam Hussein, ce remodelage fait toujours ressentir ses effets. Les Américains ont cru qu'ils pourraient reconstruire l'Irak en s'appuyant sur les victimes de l'ancienne dictature, chiites et kurdes, « sans voir que ce type de reconstruction à la libanaise génère des exclus », en l'occurrence la minorité arabe sunnite, affirme ainsi Pierre-Jean Luizard, du CNRS et spécialiste de l'Islam et de l'Irak dans la revue « Pour l'intelligence du monde » (2).

Or ce risque d'« implosion » d'un pays dont l'unité avait été maintenue jusqu'en 2003 par « l'institutionnalisation de la domination des sunnites » sur le reste de la population, selon les mots du chercheur, a fait renaître la tentation d'indépendance dans le Kurdistan irakien, déjà protégé par l'Amérique après la première guerre du Golfe de 1991.

Cette renaissance d'un sentiment national dans le Kurdistan irakien s'est répandue au-delà de la frontière en Turquie.

C'est un autre paradoxe de l'expédition américaine en Irak, venue par le président George W. Bush comme la poursuite de la « guerre contre le terrorisme », d'avoir fait renaître le PKK, le Parti des travailleurs kurdes, considéré par l'Amérique et l'Union européenne comme une organisa-

tion terroriste. On avait très largement donné cette organisation comme moribonde après l'arrestation de son leader Abdullah Öcalan en 1999.

Aux yeux des Kurdes irakiens, une communauté dont est issu l'actuel président de l'Irak, Jalal Talabani, les Kurdes turcs sont des « frères » et Bagdad refuse de démanteler leurs bases en Irak. L'Amérique est restée sourde aux demandes de la Turquie de frapper ces bases et n'a donné que tacitement un feu vert à son allié pour lancer son offensive aérienne.

Pour Ankara, cette renaissance intervient, comme le soulignait récemment Dorothee Schmid, chercheuse à l'Institut français des relations internationales (Ifri) (3), à un mauvais moment. Celui où la Turquie entame avec Bruxelles des négociations sur de « nouveaux chapitres » d'adhésion à l'Union européenne. Cette crise avec l'Irak, souligne-t-elle, ne peut que renforcer le camp de ceux qui s'opposent à une entrée de la Turquie dans l'Union. « Regardez ce qui se passe aux frontières de la Turquie, pourront-ils faire valoir », ajoute-t-elle.

Mais il y a d'autres conséquences internes à la Turquie. Pour l'armée turque, en perte de vitesse face au pouvoir civil et qui redoute d'être diluée dans la société, selon la chercheuse, c'est un moyen d'agiter à nouveau la menace selon laquelle « le démembrement de la Turquie est toujours à l'ordre du jour ».

Les zones montagneuses à la frontière de l'Irak ne sont en outre pas les seules à risque. Une très forte communauté kurde vit aujourd'hui à Istanbul et dans sa région. Une petite partie de cette communauté ne sera-t-elle pas sensible à l'appel du PKK ? Evidemment la « question kurde » ne se résume pas au PKK. Mais, notait Dorothee Schmid, la vingtaine de députés kurdes élus comme indépendants au Parlement turc n'a pas souhaité se désolidariser du PKK et n'a pas condamné leurs dernières actions.

Certes, comme veut le croire la majorité des spécialistes de la région, la Turquie n'envahira vraisemblablement pas le nord de l'Irak, mais elle devrait poursuivre ses incursions. Certes, encore, l'Amérique fera tous ses efforts pour ne pas envenimer la situation avec son allié turc. Mais ils sont tous deux sur la corde raide. La résurgence du PKK est aussi une occasion pour l'Iran de tenter de faire un front commun antiterroriste avec la Turquie et sortir un peu de son isolement international. Le Moyen-Orient est bien toujours un grand puzzle. Et la question kurde un véritable boomerang de l'Histoire.

JACQUES HUBERT-RODIER est éditorialiste de politique internationale aux « Echos ». jhubertrodier@lesechos.fr

(1) www.institutkurde.org
 (2) La revue pour l'intelligence du monde, bimestriel n° 9 - juillet-août 2007.
 (3) www.ifri.org



19 décembre 2007

Rice plaide pour la réconciliation à Kirkouk

La secrétaire d'Etat américaine Condoleezza Rice a plaidé mardi en faveur des efforts de réconciliation dans la région pétrolière disputée de Kirkouk lors d'une visite surprise en Irak.

Son séjour est intervenu alors que l'armée turque a lancé une opération terrestre contre des rebelles du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), dans l'extrême nord de l'Irak. Mme Rice est arrivée à la mi-journée à Bagdad après une courte visite à Kirkouk, métropole du nord du pays revendiquée par les Kurdes mais dont l'avenir doit être décidé par référendum.

Mme Rice a rencontré les membres du Conseil provincial de la ville située à 250 km au nord de Bagdad, où siègent des représentants des diverses communautés de la région, des Kurdes, des Arabes, des Turcomans, et des chrétiens. Elle a souligné "l'importance des conseils provinciaux pour l'avenir de l'Irak, un Irak démocratique, un Irak pour tous les Irakiens".

"Un progrès considérable"

"Vous avez un bon partenaire dans les Etats-Unis et nous pensons rester partenaire sur une longue durée", a-t-elle ajouté. Selon son conseiller pour l'Irak, David Satterfield, elle a souhaité par cette visite saluer le ralliement des élus sunnites qui ont mis fin récemment à un long boycottage des travaux de cette instance. Bien que les élus turcomans continuent de boycotter ce Conseil, l'administration américaine voit dans le ralliement des sunnites un "progrès considérable", a commenté M. Satterfield.

Report du référendum

Mme Rice souhaitait également apporter son soutien aux initiatives du nouvel émissaire de l'ONU en Irak, Staffan de Mistura, qui a obtenu un report de six mois d'un référendum prévu avant la fin de l'année pour décider d'un éventuel rattachement de la ville à la province du Kurdistan irakien. M. de Mistura, arrivé récemment en Irak, "a conclu il y a quelques jours un accord entre la mission de l'ONU en Irak et toutes les parties pour progresser vers l'application de l'article 140" de la Constitution irakienne, a souligné M. Satterfield.

Les Etats-Unis réjouis

L'article stipule qu'un référendum devait avoir lieu avant le 31 décembre 2007 pour décider si cette région riche en pétrole devait passer sous l'autorité du gouvernement du Kurdistan irakien autonome. Les Etats-Unis "se réjouissent" de cette nouvelle implication de l'ONU en Irak qui était restée très limitée depuis l'attentat d'août 2003 où était mort son représentant, Sergio Vieira de Mello, a noté M. Satterfield. Le Premier ministre de la région autonome du Kurdistan, Nechirvan Barzani, a annoncé lundi que son gouvernement avait accepté un report de six mois proposé par la mission de l'ONU en Irak (UNAMI) pour la tenue de ce référendum.

"Entamer la révision des frontières"

L'ONU souhaite mettre ce délai à profit pour entamer le processus délicat de



révision des frontières régionales, dessinées par l'ancien régime au détriment des minorités ethniques. Kirkouk et sa province sont habitées par des Kurdes, des Arabes et de Turcomans, dans des proportions mal connues. Une politique d'arabisation de Saddam Hussein a forcé à l'exil des dizaines de milliers de Kurdes et a installé à leur place des populations venues d'autres régions de l'Irak.

Aujourd'hui, le retour des communautés chassées et le départ des familles qui ont pris leur place créent une situation dangereusement volatile. Les Kurdes notamment ont fait de la tenue d'une consultation une condition claire de leur soutien au gouvernement de Bagdad dominé par les chiites. Après sa courte visite à Kirkouk, Mme Rice est arrivée à Bagdad où elle a aussitôt quitté la "zone verte" ultra-protégée où se trouve l'ambassade américaine, pour rencontrer le président irakien Jalal Talabani, à sa résidence.

19 décembre 2007



Le président kurde refuse de voir Rice

Le président du Kurdistan irakien, Massoud Barzani, a refusé mardi de se rendre à Bagdad pour rencontrer la secrétaire d'Etat américaine Condoleezza Rice en raison de la "position américaine" sur les opérations turques en Irak, a affirmé le Premier ministre de la région kurde.

"Il avait été décidé que Massoud Barzani se rende à Bagdad pour participer à une réunion avec Condoleezza Rice et des responsables irakiens, mais il n'ira pas en signe de protestation contre la position américaine sur les récents bombardements" turcs, a déclaré le Premier ministre de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien, Nechirvan Barzani, lors d'une conférence de presse. "Il est inadmissible que les Etats-Unis, chargés de la surveillance de notre espace aérien, autorisent la Turquie à bombarder nos villages", a-t-il poursuivi.

Il était impossible dans l'immédiat d'interroger des responsables américains à ce sujet. Le chef d'état-major turc, Yasar Büyükanit, a affirmé que les bombardements aériens turcs de dimanche contre des positions rebelles kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak avaient reçu l'accord tacite des Américains qui, selon lui, ont "ouvert l'espace aérien" et "fourni des renseignements". Le département d'Etat a refusé de commenter cette information.

Ces bombardements ont été suivis mardi, selon les autorités kurdes, par une incursion de quelque 300 soldats turcs jusqu'à trois kilomètres à l'intérieur du territoire irakien. Ankara n'a pas démenti cette information qui n'avait été commentée jusqu'à maintenant par Mme Rice.

"Nous espérons qu'un terme sera mis à cette incursion qui est une violation de la souveraineté de l'Irak", a déclaré le chef

du gouvernement autonome kurde. Il



s'agit de la première incursion terrestre de l'armée turque, depuis le début de la crise en octobre, dans le Kurdistan irakien (nord), d'où opèrent des combattants rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Le Pentagone a été informé à l'avance du raid aérien turc en Irak

AFP

WASHINGTON, 19 déc 2007 (AFP) - - La Turquie a prévenu les Etats-Unis qu'elle allait lancer un raid aérien dimanche dans le nord de l'Irak contre des positions de rebelles séparatistes kurdes, a indiqué mercredi le porte-parole du Pentagone, Geoff Morrell, en qualifiant cette "coordination" d'"adéquante".

"Nous avons reçu une notification avant les bombardements", a-t-il déclaré lors d'une conférence de presse, confirmant pour la première fois que le Pentagone était informé des plans turcs.

"Cela nous a été communiqué via le centre de coordination d'Ankara, qui a été ouvert il y a quelques mois, et au sein duquel du personnel turc et du personnel militaire américain travaillent ensemble pour partager du renseignement", a-t-il détaillé, tout en refusant de dire si les Etats-Unis avaient fourni des informations sur les cibles visées par Ankara dimanche.

"Cette coordination était adéquate, nous ne nous plaignons pas", a-t-il conclu.

Le chef d'état-major turc Yasar Buyukanit avait indiqué plus tôt cette semaine que Washington avait donné son accord tacite aux bombardements aériens et d'artillerie turcs dimanche contre des villages irakiens frontaliers. Une centaine de tonnes de bombes ont été larguées sur les positions du PKK, selon une source militaire turque.

Un bilan invérifiable de l'agence pro-PKK Firat a fait état de cinq combattants et deux civils tués dans ces bombardements.

"Nous continuons naturellement à nous préoccuper de la perte potentielle de vies innocentes pendant ces opérations militaires, et de l'influence déstabilisatrice qu'elles pourraient potentiellement avoir sur l'Irak", a souligné M. Morrell, mais d'un autre côté "les Turcs, au vu de la menace terroriste du PKK, ont certains droits en matière d'auto-défense", a-t-il estimé.

AFP

La Turquie frappe de nouveau le PKK dans le nord de l'Irak

ANKARA, 22 déc 2007 (AFP) - - La Turquie a mené une nouvelle offensive aérienne samedi contre les positions du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan en Irak, affirmant avoir infligé de lourdes pertes aux rebelles séparatistes retranchés dans le nord de ce pays.

"Des appareils de l'aviation turque ont frappé entre 13H25 (11H25 GMT) et 14H00 (12H00 GMT) des positions de l'organisation terroriste" PKK, souligne un communiqué de l'état-major publié sur le site internet de l'armée.

Les chasseurs turcs sont rentrés sains et saufs à leurs bases, selon l'armée qui ne précise pas la position géographique des cibles attaquées.

L'artillerie turque a ensuite pilonné entre 16H55 (14H55 GMT) et 17H10 (15H10 GMT) des positions du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak, précise l'armée qui fait état "de centaines de terroristes" tués au cours des frappes de ces dernières semaines.

Un porte-parole des forces de sécurité du Kurdistan irakien (peshmergas), Jabbar Yawar, a confirmé ces frappes, menées après une incursion des chasseurs turcs dans la région montagneuse d'Amadiyah, proche de la frontière turque.

"Dans l'après-midi, des avions de combat turcs ont pénétré dans l'espace aérien du nord de l'Irak dans la région d'Amadiyah. Vers 16H00, ils ont bombardé des villages kurdes d'Irak", a déclaré le porte-parole à l'AFP.

Il a ajouté que l'ampleur des dégâts n'était pas connue, précisant que ces régions "largement désertes et situées le long de la frontière avec la Turquie".

Le communiqué de l'armée turque souligne que le bilan des attaques turques sera annoncé dans le courant de la semaine prochaine, ajoutant que les opérations contre les rebelles kurdes se poursuivront malgré les conditions hivernales régnant dans cette région montagneuse.

"Nous ferons comprendre combien les opérations (militaires) visant l'organi-

sation terroriste sont efficaces", affirme l'armée, ajoutant que le PKK "n'a plus aucune chance de réussite" contre la Turquie.

L'aviation turque a bombardé le 16 décembre le massif de Qandil, une région boisée et très escarpée du Kurdistan irakien située à la limite de la Turquie et de l'Iran.

Cette région abrite le quartier général des quelque 3.500 rebelles du PKK qui utilisent la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien comme base arrière pour leurs actions en Turquie.

Une incursion terrestre turque limitée a été menée le lendemain contre les rebelles dans le nord de l'Irak.

Le PKK est considéré comme un groupe terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne.

Washington a fourni des renseignements à Ankara sur le PKK dans la montagne irakienne, avait indiqué après la première offensive aérienne le chef de l'armée turque, le général Yasar Büyükanit.

Accusant les Kurdes d'Irak, alliés des Américains, de soutenir le PKK, la Turquie a menacé depuis le début de cette année de lancer une opération militaire dans le nord de l'Irak pour en déloger les rebelles qui se servent de cette région comme d'une base arrière pour leurs actions dans le sud-est de la Turquie, une région peuplée majoritairement de Kurdes.

La Turquie, qui dispose de la deuxième armée de l'Otan en effectifs (515.000 hommes), après les Etats-Unis, a massé 100.000 hommes à la frontière irakienne, longue de 380 kilomètres.

Le 21 octobre, quelques jours après le feu vert du Parlement turc pour une opération transfrontalière en Irak, des rebelles venant du Kurdistan irakien avaient tué 12 soldats lors d'une attaque près de la frontière irakienne.

AFP

Raids contre le PKK en Irak: Bush assure Ankara de son soutien

ANKARA, 24 déc 2007 (AFP) - Le président américain George W. Bush a assuré lundi la Turquie de la poursuite de la coopération des Etats-Unis pour la lutte contre les séparatistes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) réfugiés dans le nord de l'Irak, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Le président américain a exprimé ce soutien lors d'un entretien téléphonique avec le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan au lendemain d'une nouvelle opération de l'armée turque contre les rebelles kurdes retranchés dans le nord de l'Irak, a précisé l'agence.

Les deux pays ont décidé de poursuivre le partage de renseignements sur les rebelles suivant un mécanisme mis en place après une rencontre Bush-Erdogan à la Maison Blanche le 5 novembre et qui a permis à l'armée turque de mener plusieurs opérations transfrontalières en Irak ces dernières semaines, selon l'agence.

MM. Bush et Erdogan ont de nouveau qualifié le PKK d'"ennemi commun" lors de leur conversation, réalisée à l'initiative du chef du gouvernement turc. Ce

dernier a souligné que les opérations turques visaient uniquement les rebelles.

L'aviation turque a pilonné dimanche des positions des rebelles dans l'extrême nord-est de l'Irak, mais sans faire de morts ni de dégâts, a affirmé Jabbar Yawar, le porte-parole des forces de sécurité kurdes (peshmergas) d'Irak.

L'armée turque n'a pas confirmé cette dernière opération.

L'aviation turque a en revanche bombardé le 16 décembre Qandil, une région très escarpée du Kurdistan irakien qui abrite le quartier général des quelque 3.500 rebelles qui utilisent la région comme base arrière pour leurs actions en Turquie.

Une incursion terrestre limitée a été menée le lendemain contre les rebelles dans le nord de l'Irak et le 22 décembre un nouveau raid aérien a visé le PKK dans cette région.

Le PKK, qui a engagé en 1984 une rébellion armée contre le pouvoir central turc, est considéré comme un groupe terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne.

Iraq force builds calm and worry

U.S.-paid Sunni 'Awakening' holds seeds of possible conflict

By Alissa J. Rubin and Damien Cave

BAGHDAD: The thin teenage boy rushed up to the patrol of U.S. soldiers walking through Dora, a shrapnel-scarred neighborhood of the Iraqi capital, and lifted his shirt to show them a mass of red welts across his back.

He said he was a member of a local Sunni "Awakening" group, paid by the U.S. military to patrol the district, but he said it was another Awakening group that had beaten him. "They took me while I was working," he said, "and broke my badge and said, 'You are from Al Qaeda.'"

The soldiers were unsure what to do. The Awakening groups in their area of southern Baghdad could not seem to get along: They fought over turf and, it turned out in this case, one group had warned the other that its members should not pay rent to Shiite "dogs."

The Awakening movement, a predominantly Sunni Arab force recruited to fight Sunni Islamic extremist groups like Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, has become a great success story after its spread from Sunni tribes in Anbar Province to become an ad hoc armed force of 65,000 to 80,000 across the country in less than a year.

A linchpin of the U.S. strategy for pacifying Iraq, the movement has been widely credited with turning around the areas where the Sunni insurgency has been based. But the beating that day was a stark example of how rivalries and sectarianism are still undermining

U.S. plans. And in particular, the Awakening's rapid expansion — the Americans say the force could reach 100,000 — is creating new concerns.

How, when thousands are joining each month, can spies and extremists be reliably weeded out? How can the members' loyalty be maintained, given their tribal and sectarian ties, and in many cases their insurgent pasts? And crucially, how can the movement be sustained once the United States turns over control to a Shiite-dominated government that has been wary of and sometimes hostile toward the groups?

Despite the successes of the movement, it is an experiment in counter-insurgency warfare that could contain the seeds of a civil war in which, if the worst fears come true, the United States would have helped organize some of the Sunni forces arrayed against the central government on which so many American lives and dollars have been spent.

In interviews with Awakening groups in 10 locations — four interviewed during a week in Anbar, and six in and around Baghdad interviewed over several days — it was evident that they were improving security in their areas. But it was also clear that there was little loyalty, in either direction, between Sunni groups and governing Shiites.

The United States is haunted by the possibility that Iraq could go the way of Afghanistan, where Americans bought the loyalty of tribal leaders only to have some of them gravitate back to the Taliban when the money stopped.

The movement in Iraq began in the summer of 2005, when the Abu Mahals, a tribe of smugglers by the Syrian border, were being pushed out of their area by a competing tribe that had struck a deal with Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia. Some of the tribe's men had been insurgents, killers of U.S. marines, but the border was an out-of-control no man's land.

So when the tribe proposed an alliance, the Americans decided to give it a try. Arms and training flowed to the tribe, the extremists were pushed back, and the Awakening was born. Nearly two years later, after several important tribes around Ramadi joined, the movement in Anbar has grown to adolescence, acting at once capable and delinquent. New offices are opening all over the province, marking their presence with yellow satin flags, armed guards and sheiks aiming to start a national political party.

Attacks in Anbar are at roughly a tenth of what they were last year, according to military figures. And in cities like Ramadi that were once largely beyond U.S. control, construction clatter and the slosh of wet concrete has replaced the snap of gunfire.

As the movement has spread eastward through the province, two responses have emerged: pride in the hard-fought peace and a sometimes violent scramble for rewards, credit and power.

The Americans, meanwhile, are handing out hundreds of million of dollars in aid and reconstruction funds — \$223 million to Ramadi and its surrounding areas alone since February. As a result, a

dizzying number of sheiks have stepped forward in recent months claiming to be important leaders who fought Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia and to deserve money, water plants, new schools and hundreds of jobs for their relatives.

Just to keep track, many U.S. company commanders now travel with thick packets of pictures identifying what one American marine described as Anbar's competing teams: "fake sheiks, little sheiks and big sheiks."

Stephen Farrell contributed reporting from Baghdad, Saab al-Bor and Iskandariya.



Joao Silva for The New York Times

Members of a Sunni Awakening group guarding an electrical substation in Baghdad.

REUTERS

No casualties in Turkish attacks, Kurdish PKK says

ARBIL, Iraq, December 24, 2007 (Reuters)

Kurdish separatist guerrillas in northern Iraq said on Monday they had suffered no casualties from Turkish airstrikes and cross-border incursions in December.

The Turkish military said earlier this month its attacks had inflicted heavy casualties on the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which uses Iraq's remote, mountainous north as a base for attacks in Turkey where it seeks an independent homeland.

Senior PKK official Abdul Rahman Chaderchi told Reuters the Turkish attacks had, however, killed five fighters of the anti-Iranian Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK), an offshoot of the PKK.

An Iraqi Kurdish official said Turkish warplanes had bombed areas in the semi-autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq on Sunday for the second

straight day and the third time in December. Turkish troops have also conducted at least two small-scale cross-border raids so far this month.

Chaderchi said the PJAK fighters were killed on Dec. 16, but gave no details.

Ankara says it has the right to use force to combat the PKK, which has been pressing its campaign since 1984. Over 30,000 people have been killed in fighting.

The United States, which lists the PKK as a terrorist group, says it shares common interests with Turkey in stopping PKK activities in Iraq but fears a further escalation in tension could destabilise Iraq's more stable north. (Reporting by Shamal Aqrabi, writing by Alaa Shahine; editing by Ralph Boulton)

BBC NEWS 25 December 2007

Iraq Kurds warn Turkey over raids

The president of the Kurdish region in northern Iraq has warned Turkey to halt its strikes against rebel Kurdish positions in the border area.

Massoud Barzani said he "vehemently condemned" the bombardments, which he said had killed innocent people.

His remarks came as US President George W Bush and Turkey's PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan discussed the unrest by phone.

Turkish jets have carried out three strikes on Kurdish targets and one ground foray over the past eight days.

Turkey blames rebels from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) for launching attacks on Turkey from bases in Iraq.

Ankara approved cross-border raids on PKK bases in October, saying the Iraqi government and its US backers were not doing enough to halt attacks.

Formal complaint

"The bombing targeted safe and secure areas and innocent people," Mr Barzani told a news conference in the northern city of Suleimaniya.

"Several people were either killed or wounded. We held consultations with [Iraqi] President Jalal Talabani and we will continue our consultations with other concerned parties to put an end to these aggressions and put an end to the shelling of villages."

Mr Talabani - also a Kurd - was standing beside Mr Barzani as he delivered the condemnation.

He said his government had lodged a formal complaint with

Turkey - but that he did not want to worsen tensions over the issue.

Turkey's ambassador to Iraq has been summoned to the foreign ministry to hear a formal complaint, reports the BBC's Humphrey Hawkesley in Baghdad.

Up to 10 people are reported to have been killed in the strikes - it is not known whether they are rebels or civilians.

As many as 2,000 people have fled the areas under attack.

US support

In a telephone conversation with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday, US President George W Bush reiterated his backing for Turkey's operations against PKK rebels, said a White House spokesman.

They discussed "the importance of the



United States, Turkey and Iraq working together to confront the PKK", said national security spokesman Gordon Johndroe.

Last month at a meeting in the White House, Mr Bush told Mr Erdogan the US would share its intelligence to help Turkey fight the rebels based in northern Iraq.

A co-ordination centre has now been set up in the Turkish capital, Ankara.

Washington has previously urged the Turks to show restraint in their policies, fearing large-scale incursions across the border could destabilise the entire region.

The PKK - which is designated a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the US, and the EU - is thought to have about 3,000 rebels based in Iraq.

For decades, it has been fighting for a Kurdish homeland separate from Turkey.



TODAYS ZAMAN

26 December 2007 M. Alihan Hasanoğlu Selahaddin

Iraqi Kurds complain to the United States over Turkish attacks in N. Iraq

Iraqi Kurds have complained about Turkish military operations in northern Iraq against the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), urging the US to put a stop to the operations.

Since Dec. 16 the Turkish military has carried out three aerial strikes and one ground incursion, involving hundreds of troops, against PKK targets in northern Iraq. The operations took place with US airspace clearance and US-provided intelligence. But the US support for the Turkish operations in northern Iraq have strained the Iraqi Kurds' relations with Washington.

Iraqi Kurdish leaders Jalal Talabani, who is also currently the president of Iraq, and Massoud Barzani met yesterday with US Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker in the northern Iraqi city of Selahaddin, conveying their uneasiness about the ongoing Turkish military operations to the top US diplomat in Iraq. "The United States is aware of the operations. We are saying that these operations are unacceptable," Molla Bahdiyar, a spokesman for Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), said after the meeting. "We want the Turkish military operations to stop."

Iraqi Kurds claim that the Turkish strikes

have caused civilian casualties, a charge Turkey categorically denies. In a speech on Tuesday, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said those who claim that civilians are being killed in the cross-border operations are "lying."

"Turkish warplanes are dropping bombs on our region. We don't accept the operations taking place in civilian areas," Bahdiyar said, calling for a political solution to the crisis.

Talabani and Barzani also discussed the status of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk with the US ambassador. A referendum on the fate of the disputed city, originally slated for the end of this year, had to be postponed after Iraqi authorities failed to meet a series of pre-referendum conditions, including a mandatory population census. Barzani said earlier this week that the delay of the referendum would be for six months. Bahdiyar said after yesterday's



meeting with Crocker that the Iraqi Kurdish administration would agree to the six-month delay provided that clear guarantees are inserted in the Iraqi Constitution stipulating that the referendum will be held.

Los Angeles Times

December 27, 2007 By Tina Susman and Asso Ahmed

Kurds delay vote on fate of Kirkuk as Iraq goals slip

The referendum on whether the oil-rich city should join semiautonomous Kurdistan is put off for six months.

BAGHDAD Kurdish lawmakers agreed Wednesday to a six-month delay in a referendum on whether the oil-rich city of Kirkuk should join the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan or remain under Iraqi central government control.

The delay had been expected because of problems in arranging logistics for the vote, which was supposed to have been held by the end of the year. A census to determine who would be eligible to vote, for instance, has not been done. But by putting off the issue, the lawmakers highlighted what has become a constant in Iraq: the inability of leaders to settle disputes whose resolution are considered key to ending ethnic and sectarian strife.

Another major issue, the rewriting of the Iraqi Constitution, is also unlikely to be completed by a Dec. 31 deadline. The head of the Iraqi parliament's constitutional review committee, Humam Hamoudi, said Wednesday that he would request a three-month delay. That would mark the fourth time the target date for revision of the document, approved in a referendum in 2005, has been put off as lawmakers haggle over such issues as provincial powers and religious and cultural freedoms.

The delay in the constitutional revision could hinder progress on other issues that the United States has cited as keys to Iraqi national reconciliation. Those include legislation to manage

Iraq's oil industry and the scheduling of provincial elections to ensure better distribution of power among Shiite Muslims and Sunnis across the country. Both issues are tied to constitutional revisions that would spell out the powers of regional governments to manage oil and other resources, and establish what power provinces will have to manage their own affairs. U.S. officials worry that without political progress, recent security gains will not be sustained.

Of the 111 lawmakers in the Kurdistan regional parliament, 94 voted in favor of postponing the Kirkuk referendum. The decision came at the advice of Staffan de

Mistura, the United Nations' special representative for Iraq. While the delay had been seen by many as inevitable, legislators accepted it grudgingly. Sardar Harki, a member of parliament in Irbil, the Kurdistan capital, said the Iraqi government as well as Kurdistan leaders "should exert more efforts ... to get this issue over and done with." A parliament member who opposed the delay, Ghafour Makhmouri, said he does not trust the Iraqi government to organize the referendum "in six months, nor in the future." Makhmouri called on the Kurdistan regional government to draft a bill that would allow it to claim Kirkuk and other areas seized during Saddam Hussein's anti-Kurdish campaigns.

The referendum would allow Kirkuk residents to decide whether they want to remain part of Iraq

or join the Kurdistan region. The oil-rich city was subject to upheaval under Hussein as he drove out Kurds and other minorities and replaced them with Arabs. Since Hussein's ouster in 2003, Kurds have tried to reclaim Kirkuk. Starting in October, the Iraqi government began giving Arab families who moved to Kirkuk under Hussein compensation of about \$16,000 to leave again.

Kurdish officials say nearly 60,000 Arabs have left the region and they are confident that a referendum on Kirkuk joining Kurdistan would pass. But non-Kurds oppose the referendum, saying it would put Kirkuk's oil into Kurdish hands and make non-Kurds in the region second-class citizens.

Meanwhile, in one sign of political progress, Iraq's Cabinet approved the draft of a general amnesty bill for detainees being held in Iraqi prisons. But the measure, which could help reconcile Iraq's warring sects and factions, will not be brought to parliament for debate until March at the earliest, said Sami al-Askari, an adviser to Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

Also Wednesday, two U.S. soldiers were shot to death in northern Nineveh province, the U.S. military announced. It said three additional soldiers were wounded in the attack Wednesday. At least 3,900 U.S. troops have died in Iraq since the start of the war in 2003, according to an Associated Press count.

The Huffington Post December 26, 2007

Exclusive -- Bill Clinton: We Need To Stay in Iraq to Protect the Kurds From The Turks

This is America's nightmare.

Just before Christmas, Turkish warplanes (F-16s made in the USA) and helicopter gunships bombed 200 Kurdish targets in northern Iraq, killing 150 people, after dozens of Turkish soldiers were blown up by a large contingent of Kurdish terrorists.

There are reports that some 60,000 Turkish troops are massing on the border for a land invasion of "Kurdistan". The bombings continue today.

It is a thorny dilemma, emblematic of what is so schizophrenic up about our policy in the Middle East. In the 1980s, the US gave Saddam chemical weapons to gas the Kurds. Then we gave the Kurds arms and money to rise up against Saddam; now the Bush administration is giving the Turks military intelligence, money and arms to blast the Kurds.

Ironically, the Turks and the Kurds are the only people in the Middle East who seem to be able to tolerate Americans and now they are in a slowly escalating war with each other.

Bill Clinton, in prescient talks to 50 wealthy supporters at a fundraiser last summer, off limits to the press, said:

"The two wrinkles in her policy that some of the purists won't like, but I think she is absolutely right, are that she would leave some troops in the Kurdish area in the north because they have reconciled with each other and they enjoy relative peace and security...And if we leave them...not only might they be gone into a long civil war...the Turks might be tempted to attack them because they don't like the fact that the PKK guerrillas sometimes come across into northern Iraq and hide after staging attacks in Turkey."

"We don't want that," the former President went on to say.

Last June, in answering questions at a leadership conference, Hillary Clinton made headlines in the largest newspaper in Turkey with her mildest of answers about the Kurds, calling them close US allies. None of this was reported in the US press.

But Bill Clinton, in his "off the record" remarks, carried Hillary's statement much further and will cause much consternation in Turkish ruling circles.

The Turks, our most loyal Muslim allies (most of the arms and weapons that the US needed for our invasion and occupation in Iraq came overland through

Turkey) have been worried about this flip-flopping American policy for some time.

Opposition to an independent Kurdish state has been a longtime linchpin of American policy in the region, going back to the Clinton era, because of fears that it would threaten Turkey, a major regional ally, which has a large Kurdish minority of more than 10 million who seek independence. In March of 1995, 35,000 Turkish troops invaded northern Iraq using the US imposed "No Fly Zone" as protection for its own jet fighters, a move which annihilated dozens of Kurdish villages and killed tens of thousands of Kurds.

Not surprisingly, Turkey used Pentagon supplied weapons to attack the Kurds in this latest foray and the Kurdish rebels used US bombs and other US weapons to blow up the Turkish military convoy. America is supplying arms to two "friendly nations" at the same time to fight each other!

This is nothing new. America in recent decades has a zany history of arming third world countries and then of sitting back and watching their arms be used against each other and us. Let us not forget that the Taliban weapons used against American troops were largely manufactured in the United States to help defeat the Soviet occupation. Many of Saddam's weapons were originally supplied by the US to help Iraq in its war against Iran. George Bush is in a tricky position. According to a headline in the Washington Post, the US, "HELPS TURKEY HIT KURDS IN IRAQ" by providing real time intelligence to the Turkish military. Previously, the US warned Turkey not to invade Iraq, as this would interfere with our invasion of Iraq.

Meanwhile, the Kurds - with large oil reserves now pledged to US companies - have a history of divided loyalty. One large faction was allied and close with Saddam Hussein; another sizably large group was allied with Iran and still another group was allied with the Kurdistan Workers' Party. During the invasion, the US could not figure out which group to back and, ironically, ended up supporting the Iranian faction to rebel against Hussein. Naturally, as the Arab proverb says, "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." But the conundrum is: which of my friends do I support if they start fighting each other and will I lose my one friend if I support my other friend? It's awfully messy out there. And watch the price of oil skyrocket.



United Press International

December 26, 2007

Interview: Iraqi Kurds' man at the U.N.

By BEN LANDOUPU Energy Editor

WASHINGTON, Dec. 26 (UPI) -- There is one Iraq, but there are also two: the northern, potentially oil-rich region controlled by Iraq's Kurds, and the rest of Iraq. That, says the Kurdish liaison to U.N. efforts in Iraqi Kurdistan, is how the international community should view it.

"We say Iraq could not be treated as one simple state," said Dindar Zebari, the Kurdistan Regional Government's chief coordinator for U.N. activities. "The Republic of Iraq is not only the ministers in Baghdad. We have ministers in Irbil" -- the regional capital -- "which are sovereign, independent in terms of their policies and in terms of their areas of support."

Zebari, in an interview with United Press International in the KRG's Washington office, explained the KRG's view of its status in Iraq, which he said is being largely supported by the United Nations. Baghdad, however, is a different story.

"The problem in Baghdad is the mentality that has to accept that Iraq is composed of different structures," he said.

The provincial and regional governments rely on funding and assistance, from security to the annual budget, from Baghdad, though the international community still plays the largest role in reconstruction, as well as providing something like a guiding arm for Baghdad's work.

Iraq's Kurds, whose three provinces they control make up Iraq's

only official region, are a special case. Abused, like many other Iraqis, by Saddam Hussein, they are against a centrally controlled government of Iraq (though just two main Kurdish factions dominate Kurdish politics). The semi-autonomy since 1991, under international protection following the war, has given them a head start. The economy is moving forward and the area is under the mostly successful protection of the Peshmerga, the Iraqi Kurds' officially sanctioned militia. Politics, though often controversial, have also made headway in the KRG.

Kurdish leaders have forced a bittersweet relationship with Baghdad. The Kurdish coalition of parliamentarians is needed for the ruling government to maintain its control. But the KRG has irked many allies and rivals by moving unilaterally to develop its potential bonanza of an oil sector instead of allowing the country's oil policy to be decided and administered from the center.

Oil sales make up nearly all of the federal budget, which places control over the oil a top power struggle priority.

While nearly all of Iraq's proven oil reserves are outside of the KRG's area, limited studies and geologic formation suggest enough that the regional oil minister says the KRG will produce a million barrels within five years.

That timeline could move up if the KRG annexes Kirkuk, the oil-

rich area just outside its official borders. Historically Kurdish, it was separated from Kurdish leadership by Saddam Hussein, and residents were displaced when the dictator moved in Arabs.

A deal was reached last week to delay by six months a referendum, scheduled by the 2005 Constitution to take place by this year's end, to allow voters of Kirkuk to decide the future of the area. The KRG hopes voters will decide to join their area. Kirkuk contains an estimated 12 percent of Iraq's proven reserves.

Recent meetings between national and regional leadership in Baghdad over the controversial KRG oil deals produced no agreements, however.

Last week KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani warned of "change" in the government if the KRG's demands are not met, The Telegraph reports.

When asked about the comments, Zebari said, "There is a clear article within the Constitution of Iraq that says very clearly that Iraqi Kurdistan people have full right to self determination. And on the basis of any disagreements in the future relationship with the central authority, the people of Iraqi Kurdistan have full right to self determination."

He said Iraq's Kurds are not looking to declare independence, believed to be the end goal of the tens of millions of Kurds spanning across Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Syria and Armenia.

"The policy of KRG is not for any division from Iraq. It's to sup-

port the unity of the country on the basis of democracy and full sharing of power," said Zebari, who was quick to correct a reference to him as the KRG's representative to the United Nations.

He said he's merely playing a role as an Iraqi Kurd, inside today's Iraq. Under his watch there are now 200 local staff working for the United Nations based in Irbil. And it's the KRG, not Iraq proper, that coordinates with the United Nations, though the KRG is part of an Iraqi delegation to the United Nations.

"The KRG, it is a functioning authority within the Republic of Iraq, which has been recognized by the law of the country," Zebari said, referring to the 2005 constitution. "It has its own budget, it has its own priorities and needs. Because we have passed through most of the emergency relief programs, while other parts of the country, like Najaf and Karbala and Baghdad even today, the priority is relief programs. But in the Kurdistan region, because of the prosperity and security and safety for the last 13 years, today what we need is more mid-term, long-term projects."

"Iraq today goes through a transitional period," Zebari said, detailing the Kurdish view of the needs of Iraq, which he says is not a one size fits all. "Transitional period needs all different sort of assistance: political assistance, reconstruction and humanitarian."



DECEMBER 26, 2007

Sunni militias 'aim to stem Iran'

By Ahmed Janabi

A principal founder of the US-funded tribal "Awakening Councils", or al-Sahwa, has said that parties loyal to Iran and Syria are targeting his group. Abu Azam rejected accusations that al-Sahwa, formally known as The Tribal Arming Programme, was aimed at undermining the Iraqi resistance. "Regional forces like Iran and Syria target our forces because they know if our forces

bring stability to Iraq, the US would turn its attention on them. And that is the last thing they want," Abu Azam said. Earlier this week two attacks on al-Sahwa killed and injured dozens in Baiji, 80km north of Baghdad, and Baquba. Abu Azam said that the main goal of al-Sahwa is to stem growing Iranian power in Iraq. "Our forces have

venge. This is the US gameplan. They do not want stability for Iraq for their own vested interests," he said.

Struggle for control The al-Sahwa units came into prominence at the end of 2005 when they were formed by local tribes to fight alleged al-Qaeda members and affiliated groups, and challenge them for control of western and northern Iraq. Following a series of successful al-Sahwa campaigns to control Ramadi, capital of al-Anbar province in western Iraq, the US military and tribal leaders entered into negotiations over funding, arming and training of the militias.

Each member of the al-Sahwa militias now receives a \$300 monthly wage.

There are divisions among Sunni leaders over the militias and fears that they could form the nucleus of a separate Sunni army that could perpetuate the territorial break up of the country.

Critics point to comments made by Shia leaders who want a separate region for the sect in the south and Kurdish leaders who have set their eyes on an autonomous region in the north.

Fadil al-Rubei, an Iraqi historian, says al-Sahwa might become the de facto army of the intended Sunni region in central Iraq, given the fact that the majority of Iraq's army and police are Shia and the Kurds have their own Peshmerga forces. Al-Rubei said: "I believe the US occupation has started the third phase of its strategy in Iraq. The first was to pit one sect against the other when it brought the Shia religious parties to power at the expense of the Sunnis and others." "The second phase was to aid the losing sect [Sunnis], to annoy yesterday's winner and sow discord among sects. This was demonstrated by major modifications to the de-Baathification law and the re-employment of many former second rung [Baath] officials." "The third phase is to strengthen the tribe against the sect. The creation of tribal militia has split the Sunnis. The Iraqi Islamic Party of Tariq al-Hashimi, Iraq's Sunni vice-president, backs the militias, while the Association of Muslim scholars, the highest Sunni authority in Iraq, is against them [the militias]. But Abu Azam dismissed fears over the breaking up of Iraq. He said: "We do not think the Iranian-supported Shia political parties want to split Iraq. It is not in their interest to see the country parcelled out. "Iraq's break up would have serious implications on Iran's national security. If a Shia Arab region is created, it would strengthen Arabs in Iran's al-Ahwaz region who have been struggling for their independence for decades. "In the north, the links between



achieved peace and stability in their areas by ejecting Iranian agents," he said. Amir al-Musawi, a former advisor to Iran's ministry of defence, dismissed the accusations against his country. "Iran expects such accusations at this stage. Next, when bombs go off in Shia areas, it will be projected as al-Sahwa taking re-

"We do not think the Iranian supported Shia political parties want to split Iraq. It is not in their interest to see the country parcelled out. Iraq's break up would have serious implications on Iran's national security"

Abu Azam, a principal founder of the US backed al Sahwa

Iraqi and Iranian Kurds is no secret; we do not think Iran would tolerate a strong Kurdish entity."

Sunni-Sunni rift Sunni political parties, including Al-Tawafuq (the Iraq Accord Front) - the biggest Sunni Arab bloc in parliament with 44 of the 275 seats, support the al-Sahwa militias but with reservations. Dhafir al-Ani, an MP from al-Tawafuq, said: "We are in support of these forces because they help to bring balance to the Iraqi political scene, which has been somehow monopolised by limited players belonging to one ideology."

"However, we have fears that the al-Sahwa issue could develop into a Sunni-Sunni clash, as some major Sunni parties

and authorities have serious reservations about its role."

Many are suspicious of al-Sahwa because of its US connection. The militias have been accused of weakening the Iraqi resistance by targeting and arresting its fighters. But Abu Azam says there is no contention between al-Sahwa and resistance groups. "I would like to emphasise that al-Sahwa is not a US organisation as some would like to describe it. Many resistance factions joined al-Sahwa and they are working to enforce the rule of law, Iraqi law not anyone else's law. "I led a one year of tough negotiations with the Americans to convince them of the al-Sahwa project. They have always rejected

the idea. They preferred bringing pressure on the Iraqi government to enroll more Sunnis into the army and police." Khalid al-Maeini, a senior researcher at the Iraqi Centre for Strategic Studies in Jordan, said: "The year 2008 will witness deep divisions among Iraqis, which will weaken the central government, [creating an] ideal environment for the breaking up of a country or the establishment of semi-independent regions." "Sunnis are already split over al-Sahwa and the Shia alliance will see fatal divisions over sharing the billions of dollars Shia pilgrims bring to the shrines in Najaf and Karbala every year, apart from controlling Basra's wealth and power."

TIME

December 27, 2007

Hitting the Kurds from All Sides

By Andrew Lee Butters/Beirut

In 1995, the Turkish army invaded northern Iraq, sending some 135,000 soldiers across the border to destroy the guerilla infrastructure of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) a militant group made up of Turkish Kurds that had found refuge in the lawless mountain region. Operation Steel, as it was called, killed over 500 militants, but still the PKK survived to fight another day. In early 1997, the Turks sent in another 30,000 soldiers — this time as part of Operation Hammer — to finish the job. They didn't. The Turks had to go in again later that year with Operation Dawn.

This month the Turks launched yet another operation against the PKK, and there is little to suggest that it will be any more effective than the others. So far 300 Turkish commandoes crossed briefly into Iraq, while Turkey has staged three air strikes, including one Wednesday. Turkey claims to have attacked some 200 PKK locations, and killed hundreds of militants. A PKK fighter told TIME that just five of the group's members had been killed. Whatever the true figure, the operation would seem to be a minor chapter in Turkey's seemingly never-ending civil war with radicals among its oppressed Kurdish minority population, who took up arms in the 1980's.

This time however there are some important differences. Turkey isn't invading the lawless hinterland of a pariah nation (Saddam's Iraq) but a region that not too long ago was considered the one relative success of the American project in Iraq. The United States — which controls Iraqi airspace — tried to forestall a Turkish invasion, but eventually caved into Turkish demands and agreed to a limited incursion. The fact that Turkey was ready to risk alienating its American ally for an operation with little chance of strategic success is a testament to the uproar by the Turkish public for action against the PKK. But it is also a troubling sign of the role that Turkey will play in Iraq as American power recedes.

Turkey has long been hostile to the emerging power of Iraq's Kurdish minority, located primarily in northern Iraq. Concerned that Kurds might take control of the oil rich Iraqi city of Kirkuk, Turkey inserted itself into Iraq's domestic political problems by dubiously claiming stewardship of Kirkuk's minority Turkoman population (with whom



ethnic Turks share a distant Central Asian past and little else.) More recently, Turkey has demanded that Iraq's Kurds rid northern Iraq of the PKK, a job that the government-sanctioned Kurdish peshmerga militias are unable to do. The peshmerga are currently overstretched in Baghdad and Mosul trying to keep Arab insurgents from entering Kurdistan. (Iraqi Kurds tried to expel the PKK in the 1990's, but, like the Turkish army, they failed.)

Now, Iraqi Kurdish leaders say that Turkey's unwillingness to open peace talks with the PKK, and its adherence to failed military policies, is a sign that Turkey is using the PKK as excuse to threaten Iraq's Kurds — and to scare them from even thinking about declaring an independent state. Whatever Turkey's intentions, the latest Turkish operation has reminded the Kurds of Iraq just how much their new-found safety and autonomy depends on American protection.

Kurdish leaders in Iraq have been relatively subdued since the Turkish operations began, acquiescing perhaps to the fickle will of their American masters. They know better than anyone that, without American protection, it's doubtful their hostile neighbors — not just Turkey, but also Iran and Syria, which have restive Kurdish minority populations of their own — would limit themselves to a few air strikes.

Dec. 28, 2007

AP Associated Press

Iraq warns S. Korea over Kurdish oil deal

Crude exports could be halted if pact with regional government stands

The Associated Press.

BAGHDAD - Iraq's oil ministry threatened to cut off crude exports to South Korea if it does not back out of an oil deal signed last month with the Kurdistan regional government.

Iraqi authorities have drafted numerous versions of legislation to regulate the country's oil industry and share the revenues among Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish communities. Those efforts have stalled in parliament, largely due to opposition from the

Kurds who want a greater say in managing oil fields in their self-ruled area of the north. A consortium led by the state-run Korea National Oil Corp. secured exploration rights in early November from the semiautonomous Kurdish regional government for an oil field in the northern province. The Korean consortium includes SK Energy, South Korea's biggest oil refiner, and GS Holdings Corp.

"The ministry has made it clear that no contracts should be signed until a new national oil law is passed," Assem Jiham, a ministry spokesman, said late Thursday. "There was a clear warning to these companies that they will be blacklisted and excluded from any future cooperation with the ministry."

He said there would be "no leniency" shown to any company that signs such contracts.

U.S., investments and violence According to KNOC, through November South Korea has imported 42 million barrels of oil from Iraq, nearly triple all its imports from the country last year. Iraq is the sixth-largest provider of oil to the country.

The Kurds have signed more than a dozen contracts with foreign oil companies, insisting Iraq's constitution gives them that authority. But the Iraqi Oil Ministry insists the contracts are illegal and has threatened to blacklist foreign firms who sign them.

U.S. officials view the oil law as a catalyst for investment and a means of tamping down sectarian violence. Most of Iraq's oil reserves are in the Kurdish north and the largely Shiite south. The provinces where most Sunnis live have few proven reserves, leading to suspicions they will be left out of oil profits.

Jiham did not say if a deadline had been set for KNOC to annul its exploration contract with the Kurds, but said that no exceptions will be made to the ban on contracts.

Earlier this week, Park Hyung-il, head of crude oil trading for SK Energy, said in a statement that he had been informed "that there may be some difficulties to renew the pending contract on crude oil with Iraq. However, it is too early to confirm details at this point."

Oh Ji-won, a spokeswoman with South Korea's Ministry of Commerce, said that the government was working through "diplomatic channels" on the issue.

Iraq is now exporting 1.9 billion barrels of oil a day, compared to 1.5 million a day earlier this year, according to U.S. statistics.

Kurdistan's parliament approves Kirkuk referendum delay

December 28, 2007



Kurdistan Regional Government

Erbil, Kurdistan - Iraq (KRG.org) -

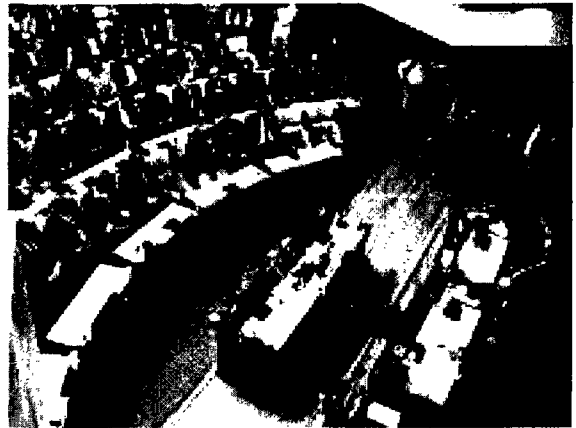
The Kurdistan National Assembly, the Kurdistan Region's parliament, on Wednesday approved the UN's suggestion to delay a referendum on the future of Kirkuk and other towns that were ethnically cleansed by previous Iraqi governments. Of the 111 lawmakers in the Kurdistan National Assembly, 94 voted in favour of postponing the referendum for six months.

Under Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution, the deadline for holding the vote is the end of 2007, but it has been delayed for technical reasons. Mr Nechirvan Barzani, Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), last week also said he favoured a six-month extension of the referendum.

Mr Staffan De Mistura, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq, earlier this month suggested to Kurdish lawmakers that they consider delaying the vote. He said, "An extension is not a postponement, but taking into consideration that the time to carry it out has expired, there is a need to prolong the period stipulated in the article."

The referendum will allow people in Kirkuk for the first time to decide their own fate. Tens of thousands of Kurdish and non-Arab inhabitants of Kirkuk, Sinjar, Khaneqin, and other towns were forcibly expelled by Saddam Hussein's government, and people from Southern Iraq were moved onto their lands. Provincial borders were also gerrymandered as part of Saddam's drive to Arabise parts of Kurdistan.

Under the Iraqi Constitution, a three-stage process should have been completed by the end of 2007: allow forcibly expelled people to return to their land, and offer Iraqis from the South who were settled on their properties compensation to return to their towns; conduct a census to determine voter eligibility; and, finally, hold a referendum for the people of Kirkuk and other



towns to decide whether they should be part of or outside the Kurdistan Region.

The High Committee for the Implementation of Article 140, which was set up by the Iraqi federal government to carry out the three stages, has been slow to deal with all the property claims and compensation packages and failed to carry out a census.

The KRG and the Iraqi federal government agreed that the UN could provide technical assistance to the High Committee for the Implementation of Article 140 to help it complete the process.

Many Kurds including lawmakers said they were frustrated by the delay to the referendum that was promised to the people of Kirkuk in the 2005 constitution. However, the KRG decided to accept the delay because it believes in a peaceful and legal solution to the problem and is counting on an end to the stalling of the process.

Turks again hit Kurds' hide-outs

Lawmakers renew call for solution

By Sebnem Arsu

ISTANBUL: Turkish warplanes attacked Kurdish rebel camps in northern Iraq on Wednesday, the Turkish military said, the second cross-border airstrike this week and the third in recent days.

The warplanes shelled eight locations in the Zap region of northern Iraq, across Turkey's southeastern border, the army said in a statement.

It gave no information on any casualties or injuries.

The airstrike was the latest in a number of recent ground and air attacks against the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party, known as the PKK. Turkish jets also attacked on Dec. 16 and Saturday, the Turkish military has said.

The latest raid came on the same day that Kurdish politicians in the Turkish Parliament renewed their calls for peaceful ways to resolve the conflict. Their party, the Democratic Society Party, known by its initials in Turkish, DTP, is the only Kurdish party in Parliament and was the only group to vote in October against a motion that authorized sending troops into northern Iraq to confront Kurdish rebels in hide-outs there.

Since then, the Turkish military has carried out assaults aimed at the PKK. The United States, which supports Turkey's right to self-defense against the Kurdish separatist group, has provided intelligence on the rebel movements.

The Turks claim that at least 150 PKK fighters were killed in the two earlier raids this month, at least one of which was backed up with shelling by ground forces.

However, Kurdish leaders say there were only a handful of casualties, and that these included several civilians.

Americans officials in Baghdad Wednesday declined to clarify the wide disparities in casualty counts.

Major General Kevin Bergner, an American military spokesman, said that efforts to get accurate information were being made. But, he added: "We don't have forces there that are the arbiters of the ground truth. The military unit conducting the operation is the

Turkish forces and they are in this case the arbiters of ground truth."

The United States is in a delicate situation. Turkey is a crucial American ally, but so are the Kurdish and Iraqi governments, which have objected to the Turkish attacks.

The PKK, which has sought an autonomous state in Turkey's predominantly Kurdish southeast since the 1980s, is considered a terror organization by both the United States and the European Union.

According to many Turkish media reports here, the locations attacked recently by the Turkish military were already empty after the PKK rebels retreated in recent months away from the border in anticipation of the raids.

"More than the mathematical results, the psychological results are important in this war of propaganda," Ali Nihat Ozcan, a political analyst based in Ankara, said. "There is an improvement in Turkish-American relations, which sends a strong message to the PKK and, on the other hand, pleases and relaxes the Turkish public opinion."

At least three Kurdish political parties have been closed by Turkey's Constitutional Court since the 1990s, mainly on charges of inciting ethnic separation in the country, which has around 15 million Kurds.

Earlier this year, the public prosecutor brought a motion before the Constitutional Court to close the DTP because of the DTP's refusal to denounce the PKK as a terrorist organization and because of alleged links of some members with the rebel group.

Nurettin Demirtas, the chairman of the DTP, was recently arrested and is being kept in military jail on charges of forging a medical report to avoid mandatory military service.

The PKK, which claims to have around 3,500 rebels active in the Iraqi mountains, has threatened retaliation against the Turkish military on some Kurdish Web sites.

In Istanbul, seven people were injured on Tuesday in a remote neighborhood when a bomb placed in a garbage bin exploded, Istanbul police said. No organization has yet claimed responsibility for the attack.

On Monday, 3.5 kilograms, about 8 pounds, of explosives were found in an abandoned bag in Sisli, a busy Istanbul district. The owner of the bag, a young

man, was caught by the police, but they gave no information about any links he might have had with any organization.

New Year celebrations in Taksim, the busy center of Istanbul, were canceled as a show of respect for military personnel taking part in the operations against the PKK, a city municipality statement said Wednesday.

Damien Cave contributed from Baghdad.

■ Watch group members killed

Four members of a local American-backed Awakening group in Diyala Province were killed Wednesday when a house they were raiding exploded, the police said, Damien Cave reported from Baghdad.

The blast, in an area just north of Baquba, the provincial capital, also wounded at least four people. It was one of several attacks this month against the volunteer neighborhood watch groups and their members, who are known also as Concerned Local Citizens. On Tuesday, several members of an Awakening group were killed by a suicide truck bomber near a checkpoint outside the Baiji oil refinery in northern Iraq.

The Awakening groups are predominantly Sunni, and have grown to number 72,000 volunteers in nearly 300 communities in Iraq. They have been credited for reducing violence in some of the country's most violent areas even as many Iraqis — mainly Shiites, but also some Sunnis — worry that the groups could destabilize Iraq because many of them include former insurgents who still battle each other for power and denounce the Shiite-led national government as an illegitimate pawn of Iran.

Both American and Iraqi officials have said in recent weeks that the groups eventually need to be disbanded so as not to compete with Iraq's army and the police. Under a proposal from the Americans, who still pay most members about \$300 a month to take part, some of the Awakening groups would be integrated into the security forces while a larger portion would get civilian jobs from the government or private industry.

The details of the jobs program are still being worked out.

TIME

Dec. 28, 2007

How to Talk Turkey in Baghdad

By Charles Crain/Baghdad

For close to two weeks, Turkey has been targeting the guerrillas of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) inside Iraqi territory. And they are not unhappy with the response of the Americans, who control the skies over Iraq. The Turkish President, according to Turkey's state-controlled media, has praised the United States for providing intelligence that was used by the Turkish military in its operations. America too has backed Turkey's right to go after the PKK, which it has long called a "terrorist organization."

But down in Baghdad, the Americans are not keen to associate themselves with the specifics of Turkey's campaign against the PKK. At a press conference Wednesday spokesmen for the U.S. military and the American embassy repeatedly said that questions about the raids should be

asked of the Turkish and Iraqi governments, not the U.S. military in Iraq. Maj. Gen. Kevin Berger said that American military cooperation with Turkey comes through the U.S.'s European Command; American forces in Iraq are under a separate regional chain of command. Philip Reeker, the U.S. embassy's spokesman, stressed that the raids were "Turkish decisions." He cast the U.S. in the role of observer, saying that it would "continue to watch this situation closely." Over the weekend, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker said that defanging the PKK should be done in "a way that does not create problems of instability inside Iraq."

The trickiness of the political climate was apparent earlier in the week, when Iraq's President, who is a Kurd, its Sunni Arab vice president and the leader of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) met in northern Iraq and de-

nounced the Turkish raids. "We condemn operations and they should be ended as soon as possible," said Massoud Barzani, the KRG head. But the condemnation was not as full-throated as it could have been. President Jalal Talibani stressed that Iraqis valued Turkey's friendship, and said that he hoped problems could be addressed through diplomacy.

While the United States walks its tightrope, the Kurds are walking theirs. They are not happy with Turkish incursions. But they are also well aware that shielding the PKK, and provoking Turkey, could risk the autonomy and relative peace Kurds now enjoy within Iraq. Like the Americans, Iraq's Kurdish leaders may simply hope that the Turks finish their raids as quickly — and with as little publicity — as possible.



Ovi magazine 29 December 2007

HELSINKI - FINLAND

by Thanos Kalamidas

Repeating history with innocent Kurds

There is something going on at the north borders of Iraq that seems like nobody gives the necessary weight. The victims at the moment are between the innocent and they count only to tens and the refugees to just a few hundred but the situation is escalating fast and soon it will look like an open wound in an area that has too many... some of them lethal.

At this very moment, it doesn't matter the excuses or how we like to call it, Turkey is invading Iraq killing innocents and driving others into refugee status and that's the reality. Turkey has a past of militaristic acts like that and has already created a status quo with the iridigence and sometimes support of the international community in other places. Turkey once more in her history commits an international crime and the rest of the world is just watching.

Before I start getting comments or mails - Greek talking, hates Turks and the rest that usually don't help the argument - I want to make something clear, I have nothing against the Turkish people, I have travelled a lot around Turkey and I think the Turkish people are equally victims of the military dictatorship that works behind the curtains for decades. Whether they like it or not, Greece and Turkey are neighbours and they are going to be next to one another for ever. Perhaps Greece would wish to neighbour Switzerland and Turkey would feel more comfortable neighbouring Saudi Arabia but ...this is the reality.

They are one next to the other and they have to learn live one next to the other; after all, prosperity comes with unity not in a conflict and the faster they both understand it the better it will be. At the same time Zimbabwe is not Greece's neighbour and I do often attack with my articles Zimbabwe's dictator Mugabe and I do the same with the Iranian dictators, with Pakistan's Musharaf and a number of others. This has nothing to do with neighbouring but with principals.

It has to do with democracy and the shadow dictators of Turkey that have ruled the poor country since the beginning of the 20th century behind or in the front of the curtains, the officers that keep the average Turk back in the dark ages, poisoning them with nationalism, their paramilitary fascist groups like the "gray wolves" will find me opposite till they vanish or I die. And this has nothing to do with me being Greek and them Turks, this has to do with principals if they can understand the word.

What is going on the northern borders of Iraq is devastating and despite all the warnings from the local authorities and the Iraqi politicians nobody seems to be willing to do anything. Turkey has a double target. One target is the Kurdish organization PKK and the other is the oil, using the excuse of a small minority of Turkish who live in the Kurdish area. I think the first target is there as a cover up for the second and they work on it slowly and methodically. It is too easy nowadays to call somebody terrorist but the question remains, who is terrorist and who is liberator?

Was Yasir Arafat a terrorist or a liberator? His organization was responsible for the massacre in the Munich Olympics; still nowadays the very same organization is the only credential negotiator for the Palestinian problem. Mr. Arafat was awarded the Peace Nobel Prize and was invited often in the White House. Still the very same man was informed and led series of terrorist hits all around the world including suicide bombers and skyjackings. Israel never stopped considering him a terrorist and wishing his

death. What's the difference with the Kurdish PKK leader Mr. Ocalan? How can the Turkish government excuse their agreement into a creation of a Palestinian state inside Israel and the demand of an Israeli withdraw while they reject exactly the same thing from the Kurds?

But as I said before the Turks do all that because they keep an eye on the northern Mosul oil fields, some of the richest in Iraq and with the Kurds in control. What will happen if the Americans keep their hidden agenda with the Kurds for their help in the war against Saddam and they help them to build a Kurdish state? A state that will be totally independent if not rich with the help of these oil fields, a state that can be the beginning of a new situation with the Kurds who live in Turkey and Iran. A state that will endanger the plans of the Turkish army in the area. The truth is that Erdogan, the Turkish PM tried, and he tried hard to modernize Turkey and move the army back to their barracks instead of the conspiring back rooms. But just like everybody before him he had to withdraw in front the army's plans for his survival and when it comes to Turkey we are not talking only for his political survival but for his physical survival also. So the PM and the government one more depend their survival on the wishes of the army and in extent they are just following their orders which in this case are, invade Iraq.

Iraq is defenceless and this is a fact and the Iraqi leaders know well that the Americans are not going to help so they try to survive the crisis with the minimum coast. The Turkish army didn't invade Iraq to hunt a



few hundreds of PKK members, they invaded Iraq to take over and promote their main plan and the timing is perfect with the situation internationally, in USA regarding Iraq and Iraq itself. They have done it before. They have illegally invaded Cyprus, an independent country and thirty years after they negotiate with the invaded like equals. And all that with the US blessing, why would it be different this time?

The Turkish army and their paramilitary allies inside the Turkish society have long worked their wind into the people's minds and they have brainwashed them to believe that the Kurds are evil. They have already started working their way into vanishing the language and the customs of the Kurdish population inside Turkey; hunting them now as terrorist abroad they might give them the same end they gave to the Armenians who lived ones in the Ottoman Empire.

But as I said in the beginning despite the Turkish army secret agenda, putting aside the controversy case of the Kurds and all the terrorist talk there is the reality of women getting killed in northern

Iraq from the Turkish army, there is the reality of hundreds of Kurdish families, women and children's that started moving from their houses to the south looking somewhere to survive the Turkish airplanes bombs and the Turkish army, and of course just like it happened thirty years ago in Cyprus, the world is ...just watching!

 THE AUSTRALIAN

December 29, 2007

Let's not acquiesce in undermining Iraqi Kurds

IN the past century, the principal victims of genocide or attempted genocide have been, or at least have prominently included, the Armenians, the Jews and the Kurds.

By Christopher Hitchens

During most of last October, events and politicians conspired to set these three peoples at one another's throats.

What is there to be learned from this fiasco for humanity?

To recapitulate, at the very suggestion that the US House of Representatives might finally pass a long-proposed resolution recognising the 1915 massacres in Armenia as a planned act of "race murder" (that was US ambassador Henry Morgenthau's term for it at a time when the word genocide had not yet been coined), the Turkish authorities redoubled their threat to invade the autonomous Kurdish-run provinces of northern Iraq. And many American Jews found themselves divided between their sympathy for the oppressed and the slaughtered and their commitment to the state interest of Israel, which maintains a strategic partnership with Turkey, and in particular with Turkey's highly politicised armed forces.

To illuminate this depressing picture, one might begin by offering a few distinctions. In 1991, in northern Iraq, where you could still see and smell the gassed and poisoned towns and villages of Kurdistan, I heard Jalal Talabani of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan say that Kurds ought to apologise to the Armenians for the role they had played as enforcers for the Ottomans during the time of the genocide. Talabani, who has often repeated that statement, is now President of Iraq.

(I would regard his unforced statement as evidence in itself, by the way, in that proud peoples do not generally offer to apologise for revolting crimes that they did not, in fact, commit.) So, of course, it was on him, both as an Iraqi and as a Kurd, that Turkish guns and missiles were trained

in October.

And here, a further distinction: many of us who are ardent supporters of Kurdish rights and aspirations have the gravest reservations about the so-called Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK. This is a Stalinist cult organisation, roughly akin to a Middle Eastern Shining Path group. (Its story, and the story of its bizarre leader Abdullah Ocalan, are well told in Aliza Marcus's new book *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurd-*

ish Fight for Independence.)

The attempt of this thuggish faction to exploit the new zone of freedom in Iraqi Kurdistan is highly irresponsible and plays directly into the hands of those forces in the Turkish military who want to resurrect Kemalist chauvinism as a weapon against Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Government, which it sees as soft on Kurdish demands.

There's a paradox here, in that the uniformed satraps who claim to defend Turkish secularism are often more reactionary than the recently re-elected and broadly Islamist Justice and Development Party. The generals vetoed a meeting earlier this year between Abdullah Gul - now President of Turkey and then foreign minister - and the Kurdish regional government in Iraq. This alone shows that they are using the border question and the PKK as a wedge issue for domestic politics.

This is enough complexity to be going on with, but the US Congress and the executive branch have been handling it with appalling amateurishness. The Armenian resolution (that has been put off until at least 2008 in the US house under pressure from Turkey and the Bush administration) is an old story. I can remember when it was sponsored by then senator Robert Dole and stonewalled by then president Bill Clinton. What a shame we didn't get it firmly on the record decades ago.

But now a house and a White House that can barely bring themselves to utter the word Kurdish are both acting as if nothing mattered except Turkish amour-propre. And, as a consequence, the US and its friends are being squeezed by Ankara instead of, to put it shortly, the other way around. This is disgracefully undignified.

In 2003, the Turkish authorities, who had been parasitic on US and NATO support for several decades, refused to allow US bases in Turkey to be employed for a northern front in the removal of Saddam Hussein unless their forces were allowed to follow into Iraqi Kurdistan. The Bush administration quite rightly refused this bargain.

The damage done by Turkey's subsequent fit of pique was enormous: nobody ever mentions it, but if the coalition had come at Baghdad from

two directions, a number of Sunni areas would have got the point (of irreversible regime change) a lot sooner than they did. The rogue PKK presence was not then a hot issue; Turkey simply wished to pre-empt the emergence of any form of Iraqi Kurdish self-government that could be an incitement or encouragement to the huge Kurdish minority in Turkey.

So, let us be clear on a few things. The European Union, to which Turkey has applied for membership with US support, has insisted on recognition of Kurdish language rights and political rights within Turkey. The US can hardly ask for less.

If the Turks wish to continue lying officially about what happened to the Armenians, then the US cannot be expected to oblige them by doing the same (and should certainly resent and repudiate any threats against itself or its allies that would ensue from the US Congress affirming the truth).

Then there remains the question of Cyprus, where Turkey maintains an occupation force that has repeatedly been condemned by a thesaurus of UN resolutions since 1974. It is not US conduct that should be modified by Turkey's arrogance; the US does a favour to the democratisation and modernisation of that country by insisting that it get its troops out of Cyprus, pull its forces back from the border with Iraq, face the historic truth about Armenia, and in other ways cease to act as if the Ottoman system were still in operation.

* IN Slate recently, I mentioned that security for (author, former Dutch MP and critic of Islam's treatment of women) Ayaan Hirsi Ali might have to be paid for partly by private subscription.

On the web link below are the details for all who may wish to contribute to this eminently deserving cause. This appeal is a test of our seriousness in the face of theocracy and its assassins.

Christopher Hitchens is a columnist for Vanity Fair and the author of God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything.

AFP

Plus de 150 rebelles kurdes tués en Irak le 16 décembre (armée turque)

ANKARA, 25 déc 2007 (AFP) - Entre 150 et 175 rebelles kurdes ont été tués le 16 décembre lors de frappes aériennes de l'aviation turque sur le nord de l'Irak, où l'armée turque mène depuis plusieurs semaines des opérations contre les rebelles séparatistes du PKK, a annoncé mardi l'état-major.

"Entre 150 et 175 terroristes ont été neutralisés" lors de ce raid, a affirmé l'état-major de l'armée turque dans un communiqué publié sur son site web.

"Ce chiffre ne tient pas compte des terroristes qui ont été éliminés lorsque leurs abris se sont effondrés sous l'effet des frappes", a ajouté l'état-major, précisant que le raid avait fait aussi de nombreux blessés dans les rangs du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

"De nombreux terroristes ont été transportés dans les hôpitaux d'Erbil, Raniyeh, Kaladiza et Choman, dans le nord de l'Irak", ajoute le communiqué.

Au Kurdistan irakien, un responsable kurde "proche du PKK", refusant d'être identifié, a démenti le bilan avancé par l'armée turque, affirmant que "cinq combattants ont perdu la vie dans les frappes du 16 décembre comme il avait été annoncé par le PKK après l'attaque".

L'armée turque a mené depuis le début du mois de décembre plusieurs opérations aériennes contre des positions dans le nord de l'Irak des rebelles du

PKK, qui utilisent la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien, frontalière de la Turquie, comme base arrière pour leurs actions en Turquie.

Ces raids font suite au feu vert donné par le Parlement turc à des opérations militaires contre le groupe séparatiste dans le nord de l'Irak.

Le 16 décembre, des raids avaient notamment frappé le massif de Qandil, une région montagneuse du Kurdistan irakien, où se trouve le quartier général des quelque 3.500 rebelles du PKK repliés dans le nord de l'Irak.

Une seconde série de raids, le 22 décembre, a visé "des caches et des batteries d'armes anti-aériennes", a précisé le communiqué de l'état-major.

Depuis, les services de sécurité dans le nord de l'Irak ont fait état de plusieurs autres raids, dont une brève frappe mardi, qui n'a pas été confirmée par l'armée turque.

Les frappes du 16 décembre, les plus intenses de cette série, soutenues par des tirs d'artillerie, ont détruit toutes leurs cibles, y compris seize bases de commandement, d'entraînement et de logistique, 82 caches pour les rebelles, dix batteries anti-aériennes ainsi que quatorze dépôts de munitions du PKK, a ajouté l'état-major.

AFP

Kirkouk: le Parlement du Kurdistan irakien accepte un report du referendum

ERBIL (Irak), 26 déc 2007 (AFP) -- Le Parlement de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien a accepté mercredi la proposition de l'ONU de reporter de six mois un referendum initialement prévu avant la fin de l'année sur la question controversée de la région pétrolière de Kirkouk, revendiquée par les Kurdes.

"Le Parlement du Kurdistan a accepté à la majorité la proposition du représentant spécial de l'ONU en Irak, Staffan de Mistura, de reporter de six mois le referendum sur Kirkouk", a annoncé le porte-parole du Parlement régional, Adnane al-Mufti.

Le gouvernement de la région autonome kurde avait déjà donné il y a une semaine son accord à cette proposition de l'ONU sur un des dossiers les plus épineux de l'Irak.

La constitution irakienne, dans son article 140, stipule qu'un referendum doit avoir lieu avant le 31 décembre 2007 pour décider si la région de Kirkouk (250 km au nord de Bagdad) doit passer sous l'autorité du gouvernement du Kurdis-

tan irakien.

Les six mois de délai doivent être mis à profit pour instaurer, sous le contrôle de l'ONU, dans la région de Kirkouk et ailleurs dans le pays, des mécanismes de réimplantation des populations déplacées dans le cadre de la manipulation des frontières provinciales par l'ancien régime.

Kirkouk et sa province sont habitées de Kurdes, d'Arabes et de Turcomans, dans des proportions mal connues. Une politique d'arabisation de Saddam Hussein a forcé à l'exil des dizaines de milliers de Kurdes, et a installé à leur place des populations venues d'autres régions de l'Irak.

Aujourd'hui, le retour des communautés chassées et le départ de familles qui avaient été installées dans la région créent une situation dangereusement instable.

Les Kurdes notamment ont fait de la tenue d'une consultation une condition claire de leur soutien au gouvernement de Bagdad dominé par les chiites, en place depuis la promulgation de la constitution en 2005.

AFP

Le baril de brut à 95 dollars à NY, après intervention de la Turquie en Irak

NEW YORK, 26 déc 2007 (AFP) - Les cours du baril de brut ont rouvert en hausse mercredi à New York suite à une intervention militaire turque contre les rebelles kurdes retranchés dans le nord de l'Irak, où transite le pétrole extrait des champs voisins de Kirkouk.

Vers 14H05 GMT sur le New York Mercantile Exchange (Nymex), le baril de "light sweet crude" pour livraison en février s'échangeait à 95,30 dollars, en hausse de 1,17 dollar par rapport à la clôture de lundi.

Le Nymex était fermé mardi, jour de Noël.

"Le marché est très nerveux après les attaques de l'armée turque contre le PKK (parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, ndlr) dans le nord de l'Irak", a expliqué William Edwards, analyste au cabinet éponyme. "Les facteurs géopolitiques restent omniprésents et vont continuer de pousser les prix", a-t-il ajouté.

L'armée turque a indiqué mercredi avoir lancé des opérations militaires contre les rebelles kurdes du PKK retranchés dans le nord de l'Irak.

Les raids de l'aviation turque en territoire irakien font craindre aux intervenants des perturbations de l'offre de brut, qui seraient malvenues dans le contexte actuel d'équilibre précaire entre l'approvisionnement et la demande alors que l'hémisphère nord entre dans l'hiver, période de forte consommation d'éner-

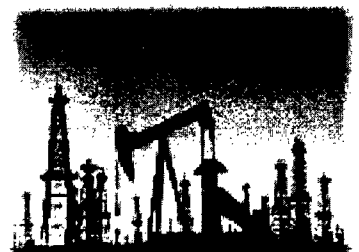
gie.

Le pétrole extrait des champs de Kirkouk, dans le nord de l'Irak, est exporté via un oléoduc qui rejoint le terminal turc de Ceyhan, sur la Méditerranée. Fréquemment attaqué, ce pipeline a très souvent fermé au cours des cinq dernières années.

En outre, l'Irak détient les troisièmes réserves pétrolières mondiales et a exporté 1,9 million de barils de brut par jour en septembre contre 1,69 million en août selon le département d'Etat américain.

Les tensions entre Ankara et le PKK avaient déjà favorisé en octobre la flambée des cours de l'or noir, leur permettant d'établir record sur record.

Sur le plan géopolitique toujours, l'explosion d'un oléoduc due à des actes de vandalisme au Nigeria, premier producteur de brut africain, constituait un autre facteur haussier, selon les analystes.



IRAK : L'aviation d'Ankara frappe les Kurdes.

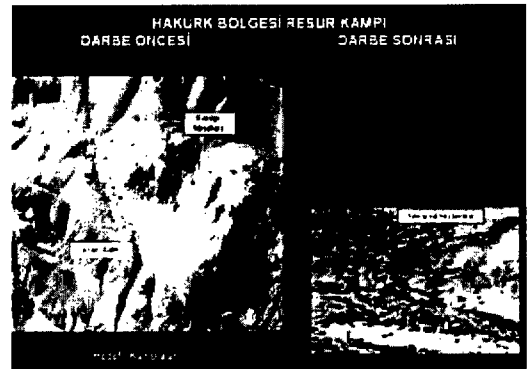
Les opérations de l'armée turque contre les sites du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak se multiplient. L'état-major a annoncé hier avoir pilonné huit refuges près de la frontière avec la Turquie, tuant six rebelles kurdes. Ces nouvelles pertes portent à onze le nombre de rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) tués en deux jours dans le massif montagneux de Küpeli, dans la province de Sirnak.

Selon un responsable des forces de sécurité dans le nord de l'Irak, les avions turcs ont frappé hier matin des villages inhabités dans le secteur de Nirvorokan, dans la province de Dohouk, à l'extrême nord du Kurdistan irakien. L'agence de presse proche du PKK, Firat News, a rapporté que plus de dix avions avaient participé au raid. L'opération a été lancée après «avoir établi qu'un groupe important de terroristes, depuis longtemps

sous surveillance, se préparait à passer l'hiver dans huit grottes et caches dans la région de Zap», affirment les militaires.

Confronté à une intensification des violences du PKK, le Gouvernement turc a obtenu en octobre du Parlement l'autorisation d'intervenir militairement dans le nord de l'Irak. Cette région fait office de base arrière pour les rebelles afin de mener des opérations dans le sud-est anatolien, où vivent une majorité de Kurdes.

Les opérations ont débuté le 16 décembre avec un raid aérien contre des bases rebelles dans le massif de Qandil - une région montagneuse du Kurdistan irakien où se trouve le quartier général des quelque 3500 rebelles du PKK - et le long de la frontière turque.



Au Kurdistan irakien, un responsable kurde «proche du PKK», refusant d'être identifié, a démenti ce bilan. Il a affirmé que cinq combattants avaient perdu la vie dans les frappes du 16 décembre. AT5/AFP/REUTERS

TURQUIE • Pourquoi avons-nous si peur des Kurdes ?

Alors que l'armée turque s'attaque désormais aux rebelles kurdes directement sur le sol irakien, un éditorialiste du quotidien Bugün regrette cette politique de la peur et propose de régler la question kurde par le développement économique.

C'est par hasard, en lisant une dépêche, que j'ai appris qu'un navire en provenance d'Egypte, avec à son bord du matériel destiné à la construction d'une raffinerie dans le nord de l'Irak, région autonome du Kurdistan irakien dirigée par Massoud Barzani, avait été bloqué dans le port turc de Mersin parce que le mot "Kurdistan" figurait en toutes lettres sur chacun des 35 containers où était stocké ce matériel. La douane du port de Mersin prétextant qu'il n'existait pas de pays portant le nom de "Kurdistan" a placé ce matériel en quarantaine, non sans avoir au préalable effacé à la peinture noire les mentions de "Kurdistan". Les autorités turques ont ensuite réclamé que ce chargement soit renvoyé en Egypte. Il y a peu, deux containers chinois, dont la destination finale était également le "Kurdistan" [irakien], avaient déjà été renvoyés pour les mêmes raisons vers leur point de départ.

Cette anecdote m'a fait quelque peu réfléchir. Et si, plutôt que "Kurdistan", l'inscription sur ces containers avait été "prétendument Kurdistan" [l'équivalent de l'anglais "so called", terme abondamment utilisé dans une certaine littérature politique turque comme, par exemple, dans le cas du "prétendu génocide arménien"], ces marchandises auraient-elles aussi été bloquées ? Il y a quelques années, l'un des plus grands quotidiens turcs avait titré en une sur la "prétendue question kurde". Voyez donc où nous a mené cette politique consistant à nier systématiquement la réalité. Les géné-

raux turcs, qui dans le passé se sont avérés de véritables champions de ce type d'exercice, n'en finissent plus aujourd'hui de faire leur autocritique et d'admettre qu'ils ont commis une erreur en niant la problématique kurde. La Turquie en est ainsi encore à devoir affronter cette "prétendue" problématique, qui a pris de telles proportions qu'on ne sait même plus lui trouver un début de solution. Dans ces conditions, y a-t-il un sens à répéter ce même type d'erreur en refusant et en niant la réalité de l'Etat fédéré kurde qui existe aujourd'hui dans le nord de l'Irak ?

Ce qui m'a le plus interloqué dans l'anecdote du bateau bloqué dans le port de Mersin, c'est l'usage de la peinture noire. Mais à quoi rime donc cette panique ! C'est à croire que si quelqu'un a le malheur de lire cette fameuse mention, ce Kurdistan tant craint risquerait de devenir soudainement réalité [au-delà des frontières irakiennes]. Mais pourquoi avons-nous donc peur ? Pourquoi l'attribution de certaines prérogatives aux pouvoirs locaux par l'Etat central irakien rendant plus efficaces les mécanismes de décision politique chez les Kurdes irakiens et annonçant même éventuellement pour plus tard la formation d'un Etat kurde indépendant dans cette région doit-elle être considérée comme si dangereuse pour la Turquie ? Pourquoi l'utilisation par les Kurdes irakiens des revenus du pétrole afin de permettre à leur pays d'atteindre un certain bien-être devrait-il constituer une menace pour nous ? En fait, nous

connaissons bien les réponses à ces questions.

En effet, ce dont nous avons peur, c'est que les Kurdes habitant du côté irakien de la frontière vivent de mieux en mieux, que nos Kurdes à nous les envie et qu'ils souhaitent in fine se séparer de la Turquie pour les rejoindre. Mais, bon sang, combien de siècles allons-nous vivre avec cette phobie ! Le maintien de l'unité du territoire turc ne dépend-il vraiment que du maintien dans la pauvreté et sous l'oppression des Kurdes vivant au-delà des frontières de la Turquie ? Plus les Kurdes d'Irak vivront dans la peur et dans la misère et plus notre unité territoriale et notre sécurité s'en trouveront assurées ?

On ne peut évidemment pas continuer à gérer notre pays avec une conception de la sécurité dépendant du malheur des autres. Pourra-t-on vivre ainsi en se disant à chaque instant avec angoisse : "Et s'ils parvenaient à se développer grâce au pétrole et que leur Etat devienne un pôle d'attraction pour nos Kurdes ?" Pourquoi ne nous mobiliserions-nous pas pour rendre meilleures les conditions de vie de nos Kurdes plutôt que de compter sur le sous-développement des Kurdes d'Irak ? Ne serait-ce pas plus humain ? Si compétition il doit y avoir, eh bien qu'elle soit orientée pour voir quels Kurdes seront les plus heureux et les plus prospères.

Gülay Gökürk

Bugün

Paranoïas séparatistes en Turquie

H *heureux celui qui se dit turc* », proclame le slogan national formulé par Mustafa Kemal. Mais qui peut réellement avoir accès à ce « bonheur » en Turquie ? D'après le discours officiel, tous ceux qui sont rassemblés sur ces terres, sans distinction de race ou de croyance. Dans les faits, les membres des minorités religieuses, et certaines catégories ethniques restent des citoyens de seconde zone. Le reliquat des populations chrétiennes (hellènes, arméniennes ou syriaques), les 15 millions de Kurdes mais aussi les 10 millions de musulmans alévis sont régulièrement stigmatisés. Une partie de la population continue à être perçue comme une menace contre l'unité nationale, quatre-vingt-quatre ans après la fondation de la République. Car dans la conscience collective, le « bonheur d'être turc » renvoie non pas à une idée territoriale, mais bien à une définition ethnique mâtinée de religieux.

Les brimades judiciaires à répétition, les agressions voire les meurtres commis contre les « ennemis de l'intérieur », les « non-Turcs », témoignent d'un climat tendu. Le prêtre italien Andrea Santoro puis le journaliste arménien Hrant Dink ont été assassinés. A Malatya, trois missionnaires évangélistes ont été égorgés. Plus récemment, le 16 décembre, un autre prêtre italien, le Père Adriano Francini, a été poignardé et grièvement blessé à Izmir. Par ailleurs, galvanisés par la mobilisation anti-PKK, des groupes d'extrême droite ont lancé des expéditions punitives ciblant les Kurdes, à Istanbul ou à Bursa. Une série de crimes racistes commis au nom du sang turc, par de jeunes ultranationalistes endoctrinés. Du déjà-vu dans l'histoire du pays. En 1955, par exemple, en pleine crise chypriote, la rumeur d'un attentat contre la maison natale d'Atatürk, à Salonique, déclencha les « pogroms du 6 septembre ». A Istanbul, les commerces tenus par les grecs-orthodoxes, mais aussi par les juifs et les Arméniens, furent saccagés par la foule.

C'est également sur la base de propos déformés que Hrant Dink fut pris pour cible : d'abord par la presse nationaliste, puis par la justice et enfin par un tueur de 17 ans, Ogun Samast. La suite est symptomatique : l'enquête n'a jamais permis de remonter la piste des commanditaires. Des complicités dans les hautes sphères de l'appareil étatique sont apparues en filigrane. Plus grave, Samast est devenu un héros populaire. Des stades de football ont scandé son nom. Des gendarmes chargés de son arrestation ont pris la pause avec lui, un drapeau turc entre les mains. Et le jour du procès, les prévenus sont arrivés au tribunal dans un véhicule militaire orné du slogan fétiche des néofascistes turcs : « *Ya sev ya terket !* », « *Tu l'aimes ou tu la quittes !* »

Cette violence raciste ressurgit à chaque fois que la Turquie est en proie à des crispations identitaires. En pleine croissance depuis 2001, l'économie locale a embrassé la mondialisation. En 2004, Ankara a entamé de longues et pénibles négociations d'adhésion à l'UE. Un changement soudain qui entraîne une perte de repères et une montée du

« souverainisme ».

Les kémalistes conservateurs, armée en tête, freinent des quatre fers devant les réformes démocratiques et l'introspection historique exigées par ce nouvel environnement. Dans l'imaginaire nationaliste, les puissances occidentales d'aujourd'hui sont les forces impérialistes d'hier. Ceux qui ont mis à genoux l'Empire ottoman conserveraient des desseins inavoués et comploteraient pour diviser la nation, avec l'aide des minorités. Les frontières de la Turquie seraient menacées par le séparatisme kurde, grec ou arménien. Le PKK, dont les bases au Kurdistan irakien sont pilonnées par l'armée turque, a pourtant abandonné toute ambition sécessionniste depuis 1999, et la Turquie est une puissance régionale affirmée, dont les frontières ne sont plus contestées. Mais la paranoïa sert de ciment. Le traumatisme reste profondément ancré dans la mémoire collective.

Analyse

Guillaume Perrier

Changer de paradigme

Le politologue Baskin Oran qualifie cette obsession de l'intégrité territoriale de « *syndrome de Sèvres* », du nom du traité de 1920, qui prévoyait le démembrement de l'empire. Il est d'ailleurs intéressant de voir l'amalgame qui se crée en période de crise : à Malatya, avant le procès des meurtriers, la presse locale a mené campagne contre les victimes, accusant les évangélistes de soutenir le terrorisme du PKK. La même accusation frappe régulièrement les Arméniens ou les « sionistes ».

Au-delà des meurtres spectaculaires, la violence contre les minorités prend des formes institutionnelles. Censées être « protégées » par le traité de Lausanne de 1923, les minorités « non musulmanes », sont, par exemple, limitées dans leur accès à la haute fonction publique. Des centaines de biens immobiliers appartenant aux fondations religieuses ont été légalement spoliés par l'Etat. Une loi mettant fin à cette situation est ardemment réclamée par l'UE, mais se heurte encore à la bureaucratie.

Pour les Kurdes, majoritairement sunnites, le différend porte sur les droits culturels, linguistiques et politiques. Les libertés des musulmans alévis figurent, elles aussi, sur la liste de Bruxelles. Les adeptes de cette branche mystique et libérale de l'islam se voient refuser le financement public des lieux de culte, les *cemevi*, alors que les mosquées et les imams sont pris en charge par l'Etat. Et les écoliers alévis doivent subir les cours obligatoires de religion, où seul l'islam sunnite est enseigné. Une anomalie condamnée par la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme.

Ces communautés minoritaires sont marginalisées par rapport à un noyau prétendument uniforme. Une « norme » quasi mythologique : turque, musulmane et sunnite. La Turquie est pourtant un creuset, une mosaïque de peuples réfugiés des Balkans, du Caucase ou d'Asie centrale, métissés fondus dans la collectivité. L'idéologie officielle s'est toujours employée à gommer les particularismes.

Cette assimilation ne touche pas que les Kurdes. Le comptage ethnique, qui était pratiqué pour chaque recensement, n'est plus rendu public depuis 1965. Et l'épuration culturelle concerne aussi bien les prénoms que la gastronomie, les noms des espèces animales ou l'architecture. Les programmes scolaires font la part belle à l'histoire des Huns, ancêtres des Turcs, au sens ethnique. Mais ne disent mot des cultures anatoliennes qui préexistaient. Ce que souhaitait Hrant Dink, comme son ami Baskin Oran, c'est que la Turquie change de paradigme et proclame « *heureux celui qui se dit de Turquie et non plus "turc"* ». ■

TURQUIE-IRAK LUTTE CONTRE LE PKK

Intensification des raids aériens turcs au Kurdistan irakien

L'AVIATION turque, qui est intervenue à plusieurs reprises depuis la mi-décembre dans le nord irakien, a poursuivi ses frappes, mercredi 26 décembre, contre les positions supposées de la rébellion kurde du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). La veille, l'armée turque avait affirmé avoir tué entre 150 et 175 rebelles, lors des frappes du 16 décembre sur Qandil, une région très montagneuse du Kurdistan irakien où le PKK s'est retranché.

« Ce chiffre ne tient pas compte des terroristes qui ont été éliminés lorsque leurs abris se sont effondrés sous l'effet des frappes », a ajouté l'état-major, précisant que le raid avait fait aussi de nombreux blessés dans les rangs de la rébellion. Quelque 200 cibles auraient également été détruites durant ce

raid, dont seize bases de commandement, d'entraînement et de logistique, dix batteries antiaériennes ainsi que quatorze dépôts de munitions.

L'armée turque a également confirmé avoir mené une opération terrestre de faible ampleur, le 18 décembre, sur quelques kilomètres de profondeur en territoire irakien ainsi que de nouvelles frappes aériennes, le 22 décembre, contre « des caches et des batteries d'armes antiaériennes ».

Côté kurde, ces chiffres n'ont été confirmés ni par le gouvernement autonome de la région du Kurdistan d'Irak ni par les rebelles qui ont démenti, via leur site Internet, « des propos mensongers » et la « propagande » turque. Un responsable kurde « pro-

che du PKK », cité mardi par l'Agence France-Presse, a déclaré, sous couvert d'anonymat, que « cinq combattants avaient perdu la vie ».

Le PKK est engagé depuis 1984 dans une lutte armée contre le pouvoir central d'Ankara pour obtenir l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie, une région majoritairement kurde. On estime que ces violences ont fait jusqu'à présent 37 000 morts. Considéré comme un groupe terroriste par les Etats-Unis, les Nations unies et l'Union européenne, le PKK avait proposé une trêve, en septembre 2006, refusée par Ankara qui avait déjà mené une série de bombardements limités, notamment dans la région de Qandil.

Le groupe a ensuite repris la lutte armée. Avec l'intensification des violences, le gouvernement turc a obtenu du Parlement, en novembre, l'autorisation d'intervenir militairement en Irak, faisant craindre une escalade de la violence. ■ - (AFP, Reuters.)

Le Monde
28 décembre 2007

TURQUIE-IRAK

Des agents israéliens aident l'armée turque dans ses opérations au Kurdistan irakien

DES AGENTS de la firme Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI, travaillant pour la défense israélienne), chargés de mettre en œuvre des drones (avions sans pilote), participent aux opérations militaires menées par la Turquie dans le nord de l'Irak, rapportent, jeudi 27 décembre, le *Turkish Daily News* et le quotidien israélien *Haaretz*.

Depuis la mi-décembre, l'aviation turque a multiplié les raids contre les positions des combattants kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), tuant entre 150 et 175 d'entre eux, selon l'armée turque. En lutte contre l'autorité centrale d'Ankara depuis 1984, le PKK s'est retranché dans les montagnes du Nord irakien.

La Turquie utilise, selon les quotidiens turc et israélien, des drones de type Heron Machatz-1, fabriqués par IAI. Ces appa-

reils volent à très haute altitude, quelles que soient les conditions météo. Ils peuvent filmer des cibles, transmettre des informations, mais aussi transporter des charges explosives. L'état-major turc s'est félicité, mercredi, de ce que « les succès de ces opérations indiquent que les conditions saisonnières, la visibilité et la nature du terrain ne peuvent pas être un obstacle pour les forces armées turques ».

En mai 2005, IAI avait annoncé la signature d'un contrat de 190 millions de dollars avec la Turquie pour l'achat de drones Heron. Un retard de livraison, prévue en octobre 2007, expliquerait la présence de personnels israéliens comme « solution provisoire ». IAI a accepté de louer des appareils, écrit *Haaretz*, mis en œuvre par des professionnels israéliens, pendant un an et pour 10 millions de dollars.

La Turquie, plus proche allié de l'Etat juif au sein du monde musulman, est un gros client d'Israël en matière d'armement. Jeudi, un officiel israélien cité par

l'agence Associated Press a par ailleurs annoncé la livraison imminente à la Turquie de 10 drones. « La nouvelle de l'implication d'agents israéliens dans l'offensive contre les Kurdes, note cependant *Haaretz*, risque de ne pas être bien accueillie par le gouvernement de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien. »

Israël, en aidant son allié turc dans l'attaque d'un territoire contrôlé par un autre allié régional, se retrouve dans une position ambiguë. Les dirigeants kurdes irakiens ont en effet bénéficié d'un soutien israélien, à plusieurs reprises, au cours de leur longue rébellion contre l'autorité de Bagdad. Depuis 2003, plusieurs médias ont fait état d'une coopération récente entre le gouvernement kurde irakien et l'armée israélienne, qui lui fournirait armes et entraînements. ■

CÉCILE HENNON

Le Monde
29 décembre 2007

The Old Turks' Revolt

When Radical Secularism Endangers Democracy

By Ömer Taspınar

Summary: The ruckus over the election of a religious conservative as Turkey's president has exposed the illiberal nature of Turkish secularism -- as well as the pragmatism of the country's reformed Islamists. Preserving democracy in Turkey by keeping the military out of politics will be a tall order, but the future of the Muslim world's most promising democratic experiment is at stake.

ÖMER TASPINAR is Professor of National Security Strategy at the U.S. National War College and a Fellow at the Brookings Institution. The views expressed here are his own.

Countries eyeing membership in the European Union do not usually come to the brink of a military coup. Yet that is precisely where Turkey found itself on April 27 of this year, after weeks of a pitched battle between the country's generals and the ruling Justice and Development Party (known as the AKP).

The AKP, a conservative populist movement with Islamic roots, had announced its decision to nominate Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül, a well-respected, jovial politician and the architect of the AKP's ambitious drive to get Turkey into the EU, to the largely ceremonial but prestigious post of president. The media and the business community welcomed the choice as a conciliatory sign; they were relieved that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the more mercurial and polarizing prime minister, would not be running. But the staunchly secularist military and the Republican People's Party (known as the CHP), a center-left opposition party, were not happy. To them, the presidency was the last bastion of secularism, and Gül, who once flirted with political Islam and whose wife wears a headscarf, posed an existential threat to the republic.

The CHP, along with other parties, boycotted the first round of the parliamentary election, held on April 27, and the vote proved inconclusive. There was little doubt that the AKP would eventually prevail, however, since in a third round, if it came to that, a simple majority would do. But that day, the CHP also challenged the whole process before the constitutional court, asking that the election be annulled on the dubious grounds that the legislature had lacked the necessary two-thirds quorum to vote. That night, all eyes were therefore on the court. And just as television pundits were debating how long it would take to issue a decision, sudden news from the military struck the country like lightning.

The generals had just staged the country's first "e-coup," as a dumbfounded Turkish press called it, by posting on the Turkish military's official Web site a warning that "if necessary, the Turkish Armed Forces will not hesitate to make their position and stance abundantly clear as the absolute defenders of secularism." Given Turkey's history -- the country has known four military interventions since 1960 -- the note was a thinly veiled threat that a more conventional coup might be in the offing.

The next day, the AKP condemned the military's attempt to influence the judiciary, but within 48 hours, the constitutional court decided that parliament did lack the quorum needed to hold elections for president. A coup was avoided, and a semblance of democracy maintained. With parliament now unable to select anyone at all, early general elections were called for July 22. Turkey was on edge during the following three months. Political polarization over the country's deeply rooted identity problems worsened amid concerns that the military might once again step in. Millions took to the streets in anti-AKP demonstrations, some orchestrated by retired generals. But Prime Minister Erdoğan refused to be intimidated. During his campaign, he appealed to the pragmatic and democratic instincts of the Turkish people, asking them to consider his political and economic record rather than the sinister scenarios of creeping Islamization put forward by his opponents. The AKP government had doubled the country's per capita income, significantly improved its democratic record, and begun accession negotiations with the EU -- even the most

zealous secularists would struggle to find an Islamist agenda behind all this.

Thus, the AKP's landslide victory in July -- it won 47 percent of the vote, compared with 34 percent in 2002, when it first came to power -- was less a victory for Islam over secularism than a victory for the new democratic, pro-market, and globally integrated Turkey over the old authoritarian, statist, and introverted one. As many Turkish journalists wrote in its wake, the July 22 election represented "the people's memorandum" -- a rebuke to the generals' online memorandum of April 27. The AKP crowned its victory by electing Gül to the presidency in August. Since then, Gül has sought to ease the fears of his critics by declaring that he will abide by the secular principles of the republic and continue to steer Turkey toward the EU. Yet the top brass refused to salute him during his first official engagement and stayed away from his oath-taking ceremony. The military's shadow still looms large over Turkish democracy.

To be sure, alarmism about Islamization will continue to dominate the narrative of secularists in Turkey and the narrative in some Western circles for some time. But much of this anxiety is misplaced, for it overlooks both the radical and illiberal nature of Turkish secularism and the pragmatism of Turkey's reformed Islamists. It also overlooks an ironic role reversal: just as the AKP and its supporters have become more pro-Western and pro-globalization, the military and the Kemalist establishment have become more insular and more nationalist, and resentful of the EU and the United States.

The real challenge for Turkey will be to maintain a working democracy by keeping the military out of politics. This is a tall order, but the future of the most promising democratic experiment in the Muslim world is at stake. Turkey has simply come too far in its democratic journey to be consumed by problems that hark back to its founding years and to revert to the old days of military intervention.

A TORN COUNTRY

Turkey remains, as the political scientist Samuel Huntington once put it, a "torn country." It straddles the geographic and cultural borders of Europe and Asia without fully belonging to the civilization of either continent. Its relations with Europe, especially, have been fraught. Long seen as a military and religious threat, the Ottoman Empire played a crucial role in consolidating Europe's Christian identity. But in the late nineteenth century, as the empire's grandeur declined, Istanbul launched one of the earliest westernization projects in history. Having suffered a series of humiliating defeats at the hands of European armies and having grudgingly recognized the superiority of Western military technique, the Ottoman military was the first institution to modernize. Its troops adopted European weapons, and its academies Western sciences and educational methods. Its top cadres became Europe's greatest emulators.

A more radical form of westernization came on the eve of World War I under the Young Turks and after the war under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (better known as Atatürk), the founder, in 1923, of the Turkish republic. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Kemalists, mostly military men who had been exposed to Western-style positivist education in Ottoman military academies, adopted a top-down project of radical modernization for the new Turkey. In an ambitious

drive to import European civilization wholesale, the republic disposed of the caliphate, the Arabic alphabet, Islamic education, and the Sufi brotherhoods. It adopted Western legal codes from Germany, Italy, and Switzerland, together with the Latin alphabet and the Western calendar, Western holidays, and Western measuring systems. The country's official history and language were reworked. A new education system glorified pre-Islamic Turkic civilizations at the expense of the country's more recent Ottoman past, and many Arabic and Persian words were purged to create an "authentically" Turkish vocabulary. In the name of secularism, even the Arabic azan, the Islamic call to prayer, was translated into modern Turkish. The traditional Ottoman headgear, known as a fez, was banned. Women were prohibited from wearing the Islamic veil in public. And Western clothing became the new compulsory dress code for men.

Despite such ambitious reforms, however, Kemalist secularism barely infiltrated Turkish society at large. The rural and pious masses of Anatolia remained largely unaffected by the cultural reengineering taking place in Ankara; it was the military, the government bureaucracy, and the urban bourgeoisie who adapted most readily to Kemalism's thorough westernization. Winning hearts and minds in the countryside would have required the use of traditional and religious symbols, but those were anathema to the Turkish republic's founding fathers. In short order, the cultural gap between the Kemalist center and the Anatolian periphery had become insurmountable. As a CHP slogan from the 1920s put it, the Turkish government seemed to rule "For the People, Despite the People."

A CIVILIZING MISSION

Partly as a result, Kemalism promoted two ideologies that continue to divide Turkish society today. The first was radical secularism. The Kemalists' "civilizing mission," as it might be called, was strongly influenced by the French Revolution, its Jacobin leanings, and especially the French anticlerical tradition of *laïcité*, a particularly aggressive form of state-enforced secularism. In both France and Turkey, religion became a symbol of counterrevolution and opposition to the republic. Militantly committed to assuming progressive roles against reactionary enemies, the proponents of both French *laïcité* and its Kemalist equivalent, *laiklik*, were keen on taking religion out of the public sphere. For them, *laiklik* was the dividing line between enlightened and obscurantist, progressive and conservative, modern and traditional.

Laiklik readily grafted itself onto a long-standing tradition of state hegemony over religion, a legacy of the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman sultans had often enacted laws outside the realm of Islamic sharia, based on political rather than religious principles. When Islam and the Ottoman Empire's *raison d'état* clashed, the sultans favored the state. Likewise, the Kemalists maintained firm control over Islam because they saw religion as a political threat and Islam, in particular, as a cause of social, cultural, political, and economic decline. Having realized, however, that eradicating Islam altogether was not a realistic option, they tried to promote a "civilized" version of it. Instead of formally separating state and religion (as France did in 1905), modern Turkey monopolized religious functions and incorporated religious personnel into the state bureaucracy. To this day, the government-controlled Directorate of Religious Affairs supervises and regulates Islam throughout

Turkey, appoints and pays the country's imams, and issues standardized sermons to be read out in thousands of mosques each Friday.

The second divisive ideology promoted by Kemalism was assimilationist nationalism. Modern Turkey pursued an active policy of assimilation of its Muslim minorities. "Turkishness" came to be defined as a common national, linguistic, and territorial identity. Taking France as its model again, the Kemalist regime rejected the concept of multiculturalism; no communal structure would stand between the republic and its citizens. Unlike the Ottoman elites, the Kemalists rejected multiethnic and multinational cosmopolitanism and banned Armenians, Greeks, and Jews from holding government jobs. Thus, ironically, the "secular" Turkish republic turned out to be less tolerant toward its non-Muslim minorities than the "Islamic" Ottoman Empire had been, partly because Turkishness was associated with being Muslim.

Predictably, assimilationist nationalism faced violent opposition from religious conservatives and ethnic Kurds, especially in the semiautonomous Kurdish provinces of southeastern Turkey, which had had little exposure to centralization even during Ottoman times. In fact, Kemalist supremacy was finally established only after the military suppressed more than a dozen Kurdish Islamic uprisings in the 1920s. These major rebellions traumatized the young republic's military leaders and created their suspicion of all things Kurdish and Islamic, which abides to this day. They also convinced the generals that from then on they would have to act as the custodians of secularism and nationalism.

RECURRENCES

After Atatürk's death, in 1938, İsmet İnönü, another military hero turned statesman, assumed the presidency. He kept Turkey out of World War II, but soon after the conflict ended, the Soviet Union's territorial ambitions became clear, and Turkey urgently wanted to join the free world. Before long, Turkey had become NATO's southern bulwark against the Soviet Union, and its credentials as an ally of the West were undisputed. In a Cold War world dominated by nuclear threats and a delicate balance of power, thorny questions concerning Turkey's military interventions, human rights standards, and Muslim identity were rarely raised. Turkey fell neatly into the bipolar configuration of the Cold War; realpolitik dictated its inclusion in "the West."

On the other hand, the Cold War also forced Turkey to enter the age of democracy. The prospect of joining NATO and qualifying for U.S. assistance under the Marshall Plan encouraged İnönü to hold multiparty elections. Furthermore, as communism emerged as the new major threat, Kemalist secularism and nationalism slowly lost their political relevance. So did Islam and Kurdish nationalism, the twin threats of the 1930s, at least on the surface. The new fault line dividing Turkey seemed to be ideological -- an opposition between the right and the left -- rather than religious or ethnic. Kurdish and Muslim dissent did not fully vanish, of course, but it was transformed. Kurdish discontent was redefined in terms of a class struggle, and it found a home in Turkey's fledgling socialist movement; political Islam joined forces with conservative anticommunist political parties.

Despite democratization, one thing hardly changed during the Cold War: Turkey remained politically unstable, and each time the Turkish General Staff thought the republic was in danger, it intervened, like a *deus ex machina*. It ousted civilian governments three times during the Cold War -- in 1960, 1971, and 1980 -- on each occasion staying in power only long enough to restore law and order. The 1960 coup ousted the Democrat Party, a conservative movement representing the Anatolian periphery that had easily won all the free elections held between 1950 and 1960. The deposed prime minister, Adnan Menderes, was sentenced to death for "subversion against the constitutional order."

The interventions of 1971 and 1980, for their part, had strong anti-leftist tendencies, and that of 1980, in particular, brutally crushed Kurdish and leftist dissent -- with counter-

productive results. Instances of torture and killings in the Diyarbakir military prison between 1980 and 1983 helped plant the seeds of Kurdish ethnic separatism in Turkey's southeastern region. In 1984, a formerly Maoist Kurdish movement with a strong regional following, the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), launched a separatist terrorist insurgency. The military junta's methods against the left between 1980 and 1983 proved equally ill advised. To depoliticize the left-leaning youth, the generals encouraged the practice of state-controlled Islam: they expanded the budget of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, increased the number of Islamic high schools throughout the country, and introduced compulsory courses on religion in primary and middle schools. And in an attempt to create a united Turkish-Islamic front against communism, they tried to win over Muslim constituencies by granting them more rights; for instance, they struck a law prohibiting graduates of Islamic high schools from studying subjects other than theology at universities. But by doing so, the military inadvertently boosted the number of youths sympathetic to political Islam -- and these young Islamists began to express their views openly when the Cold War ended. The Turkish military had twice shot itself in the foot.

By the 1990s, it seemed as if the Turkish republic was back in the 1920s and 1930s, once again facing the twin challenges that had defined its founding years, political Islam and Kurdish dissent. And despite a radically different international context, Ankara's response took a classic Kemalist form: an authoritarian determination to reject any cultural or political compromise. The result was the lost decade of the 1990s -- a decade of war with Kurdish separatists, polarization between secularists and Islamists, economic turmoil, and systemic corruption.

The Kurdish crisis was particularly badly timed: it came just as Turkey needed to demonstrate its democratic credentials to the EU, which had seemed skeptical since Turkey first applied for membership, in 1963. The Turkish military's conflict with the Kurds cost the country dearly. Between 1984 and 1999, the internal struggle killed 40,000 people and consumed, in military expenditures alone, an estimated \$120 billion. It seemed to quash all hope that the country might democratize soon. Also, to Ankara's dismay, the EU saw the conflict as the legitimate rebellion of an ethnic group whose cultural and political rights were being denied by an authoritarian regime.

THE ISLAMIC REVIVAL

In the meantime, the influence of the pro-Islamist Welfare Party rose, worsening the Kemalists' sense of insecurity. In 1994, at the height of both an acute financial crisis and the military struggle against Kurdish separatists, the Welfare Party shocked the secularist establishment by winning local elections nationwide and capturing control of Turkey's two largest metropolitan areas, Istanbul and Ankara: the capital would now be run by an Islamist mayor. Just a year later, another Welfare Party victory, this time in parliamentary elections, put an Islamist-led coalition in charge of the entire country.

The secularist establishment began to worry that the new Islamist-led government would adopt an overtly Islamic agenda and authoritarian manners. They feared it would suppress the secularist opposition, lift the headscarf ban, and challenge Turkey's alliances with Western states. In fact, the Welfare Party and Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan hardly broke from mainstream Turkish political practices. The party did try to plant its sympathizers in the ministries it controlled, but so had many previous governments. Still, the secularist press rang the alarm, warning of an imminent Islamist revolution. On February 28, 1997, the military -- in a concerted effort with civil-society organizations and the secularist press -- forced Erbakan and his party out of power.

This bloodless coup had major, if unintended, consequences. It paved the way for serious soul-searching among Turkey's Islamists, eventually causing a generational and ideological rift within their movement. The Welfare Party's pragmatic young leaders, such as Erdogan and Gül, recognized the red lines of Turkish secularism. (Erdogan, then the mayor of Istanbul, learned the lesson the hard way: he spent four months in jail in 1999 for

reciting a poem with Islamic undertones.) And the secularist backlash against the Welfare Party further convinced moderate Islamist politicians of the benefits of liberal democracy. After having participated in democratic politics for over three decades, they had already learned to temper their views in order to gain electoral legitimacy; by the late 1990s, political Islam was well integrated into the mainstream political system. When, in 2001, Erdogan created the AKP from the ashes of the recently dissolved Welfare Party, it was as a moderate conservative party.

Meanwhile, capitalism and private-sector-driven economic development helped a new religiously conservative base to emerge. The gradual political, social, and economic opening of Turkey under Prime Minister Turgut Özal during the 1980s had created an entrepreneurial Muslim bourgeoisie in the heartland of Anatolia. These middle-class Muslims were globally integrated in terms of business but socially and culturally more insular than the elites in Istanbul and Ankara. In time, these small and medium-sized business groups -- the "Anatolian tigers," as political economists called them -- created their own financial networks and challenged the supremacy of the large industrial conglomerates based in Istanbul. By the turn of the millennium, the support of these businesspeople ended up proving crucial in helping the AKP shed its Islamist past and rebrand itself as a pro-market and pro-Western conservative democratic party.

At roughly the same time, EU leaders finally certified Turkey's "full eligibility" for EU membership, giving the AKP yet another boost. Turkey's candidacy was on track, and Erdogan, who understood that political liberalization would consolidate the AKP's power base, wisely placed the EU's guidelines for democratization at the top of the AKP's agenda. In so doing, he achieved two crucial objectives. First, he earned the support of Turkey's business community, liberal intellectuals, and pragmatic middle class. Second, and perhaps more important, he won political legitimacy in the eyes of the staunchly secularist military; the EU, after all, had been the ultimate prize in Atatürk's vision of a truly westernized Turkey. By distancing itself from political Islam and embracing democratic and liberal positions -- as well as condemning corruption -- the AKP also appealed to Turkey's impoverished underclass. The strategy paid off: in 2002, the party won the parliamentary elections.

The AKP government soon passed an impressive series of reforms to harmonize Turkey's judicial system, civil-military relations, and human rights practices with European norms. Thanks to its formidable grass-roots network, the AKP was able to provide much-needed social and economic services: it made health care and housing credits more accessible, distributed food, increased grants for students, improved the infrastructure of poorer urban districts, and made the promotion of minority rights for Kurds and non-Muslims a priority. Its efforts were not confined to democratization. Following guidelines from the International Monetary Fund's stabilization program, the party also managed to get the Turkish economy back on track after the economic crisis of 2001. Between 2002 and 2007, the Turkish economy grew by an average of 7.5 percent. Lower inflation and lower interest rates led to a major increase in domestic consumption, and thanks to a disciplined privatization program, the Turkish economy began to attract unprecedented amounts of foreign direct investment. The average per capita income nearly doubled, from \$2,800 in 2001 to around \$5,000 in 2007, exceeding those of some new EU members.

THE HIDDEN AGENDA

Yet even as the AKP moved closer to a more liberal order, the Kemalist segments of Turkish society grew increasingly suspicious that it had a hidden agenda. They feared that the AKP was exploiting the EU membership process to diminish the military's political role and eventually do away with Turkey's Kemalist legacy. They balked, for instance, at AKP measures to increase the ratio of civilians to military officers on the National Security Council, elect a civilian to head the NSC's secretariat, remove military representatives on the boards of the Council of

Higher Education and the Radio and Television High Council, and grant Kurds broadcasting and cultural rights.

Another major bone of contention was Prime Minister Erdogan's willingness to compromise on the question of Cyprus. The AKP strongly supported a UN plan to reunify the island; the military adamantly opposed it. Since the deadlock over Cyprus was an important obstacle to Turkey's EU membership prospects, the issue polarized Turkish politics, creating pro-EU and anti-EU camps. The independent magazine Nokta recently revealed that a military coup over the issue of Cyprus was barely averted in 2004, due to divisions among the Turkish General Staff's top brass. In retrospect, the AKP seems to have been extremely lucky that the chief of the Turkish General Staff between 2002 and 2006 was Hilmi Özkök, a general deeply committed to civilian supremacy over the military; he is said to have restrained hard-liners in his camp.

Today, even the most ardent secularists within the military know they cannot successfully stage a coup against the AKP on the grounds that it has become too pro-Western; thus, their rallying cry has become the party's alleged agenda to slowly Islamize Turkey. The AKP has never hidden its desire to lift the ban on wearing headscarves in universities and end discriminatory measures against graduates of Islamic high schools (such as special criteria for their university entry examinations). And with more than 50 percent of Turkish women covering their heads, the party could easily get more confrontational without alienating too much of the electorate. But the AKP's leaders prefer to promote reform by building a national consensus around these issues rather than by challenging the secularist establishment head-on. Nevertheless, the secularists remain wary. They often point out Erdogan's brief attempt to criminalize adultery in 2004, his appointment of religious conservatives to bureaucratic positions, or attempts by the AKP to persuade certain municipalities to discourage the sale of alcohol.

The secularists and the Turkish military certainly have the right to be vigilant about Islamization. They may legitimately feel uneasy now that the AKP dominates the presidency as well as the legislative and executive branches. But one hopes that the July 22 elections have also made them understand that they will not strengthen their case by derailing the democratic process or bending constitutional law. The major increase in the AKP's popularity since 2002 confirmed that although Turks continue to respect the military, they prefer to see the generals in the military barracks rather than hovering by the ballot boxes.

It is now up to the generals to show maturity and restraint. Some hard-liners within the military may believe that it is the Kemalist tradition of strict secularism that has moderated Turkish Islam. And perhaps it has, to some extent. But they should remember that democracy and capitalism have done more to tame political Islam. And they should be mindful that radical secularism could eventually breed radical Islam. That Turkey has so far avoided such a predicament is no reason for pushing the limits of secularism. The experience of the Arab world clearly shows that authoritarianism only fuels extremism; in the absence of democracy, mosques become the only outlet for dissent, and Islam the only voice of resistance against tyranny. If the Turkish military goes too far in trying to repress moderate Islam, it will risk spawning a more radical version.

THE OCCIDENT EXPRESS

Under normal circumstances, one factor that might appease the secularist paranoia in Turkey would be the European leanings of the AKP, which has done much more than any other Turkish government to improve Turkey's chances of joining the EU. Lately, however, Turkey's European journey has looked increasingly problematic. Full-membership negotiations between Ankara and Brussels started in December 2005 but have been partially suspended recently because of the unresolved Cyprus issue. Pessimism prevails in both Turkey and Europe. The EU is suffering from enlargement fatigue, and since the French and the Dutch rejected the EU draft constitution in 2005, it is now much harder for European politicians to ignore public opinion. The German chancellor, Angela Merkel, and the new French president, Nicolas Sarkozy,

are reluctant to offer Turkey full membership. Partly as a result, according to polls, only 40 percent of Turks are now enthusiastic about accession, down from 75 percent in 2005. Although a majority of Turks still want to see their country become a proud member of the EU, an even larger majority believe the EU will never fully embrace Turkey, mainly because of its Muslim identity.

As the Turkish public grows frustrated with the EU's leaders, so it does with its own. The AKP's Muslim constituency was shocked by the European Court of Human Rights' 2005 decision to uphold a ban on Islamic headscarves in Turkish universities, on the grounds that it was necessary to "preserve the secular character of educational institutions." They had supported the EU process in the hope that, as the AKP promised, it would promote religious freedom in Turkey. Furthermore, the failure of the AKP's Cyprus policy to end the economic and political isolation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which is recognized only by Turkey, has left the party open to the charge that it has sold out Turkish interests to please the EU.

Thanks to the July election, Turkey's quest for EU membership will remain on track. Having suffered the most from the illiberal tendencies of the Turkish political system, the former Islamists continue to see the EU as their best hope for moving the country toward democracy and economic prosperity. But there are limits to what the AKP's pro-EU stance can accomplish, particularly at a time when the EU is sending Turkey mixed signals. The rising tide of Turkish nationalism, which brought the far-right Nationalist Movement Party back into parliament with 14 percent of the vote and gave the Euroskeptical CHP 20 percent, will also make it difficult for the AKP to create a national consensus on the EU.

Turkey's relations with the United States are faring no better, despite 50 years of a successful strategic partnership. The Turkish parliament's refusal to allow U.S. forces to use Turkish territory to launch an invasion of Iraq in March 2003 shocked Washington. And now the Turks deeply resent the effect that the war in Iraq has had on Kurdish separatism. Turkey's long-standing fear that independence-minded Kurdish nationalists would dominate northern Iraq -- thereby setting a dangerous example for Turkey's own 15 million Kurds -- has become a reality. Since the PKK has found a new safe haven in Iraq and resumed its attack on Turkish territories over the last two years, Turkish resentment of the United States is at an all-time high. The Bush administration's post-9/11 counterterrorist rhetoric has unwittingly added to the tensions: Washington's insistence that the advent of a moderate form of Islam in Turkey could be a model for the Middle East has been music to the ears of the AKP but an insult to the Kemalist secularists.

These external tensions also matter because they are heightening differences between the AKP and the secularist establishment in curious ways. The pressing domestic problem facing Turkey today is not Islamization, as both the Kemalist establishment and some anti-Islamic Western groups fear, but a growing nationalist frustration with Europe and the United States. An interesting paradox is emerging. The conservative AKP government, despite being a party with Islamic roots, has done much more than the previous secular governments to improve Turkey's chances of joining the EU. But even as these former Islamists have become enthusiastically pro-Western and pro-globalization, the Kemalist establishment is increasingly turning inward. In fact, today, retired generals are leading Turkey's neo-nationalist, anti-NATO, and anti-Western revival partly by advocating a pro-Russian and pro-Asian foreign policy orientation as an alternative. Herein lies Turkey's "Kemalist paradox": an ideology designed to westernize the country is now increasingly turning anti-EU and anti-American because the Kemalists consider the EU and Washington to be the main supporters of Kurdish nationalism -- in their eyes, an existential threat to the republic.

TAKING THE RIGHT SIDE

However Turkey's domestic politics evolve, they are likely to be shaped at least in part by Turkey's relations with the West; thus, the United States has an important role

to play. In the past, Washington tacitly approved military coups in Turkey, especially anti-leftist putsches during the Cold War. Given the recent realignment of the Turkish political spectrum, one might have expected Washington to support the pro-Western and pro-democracy AKP against the military's e-coup of April 27. But unlike the EU, which immediately condemned the military's interference, Washington initially refused "to take sides," as Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried put it. Despite the Bush administration's continued lip service to the "freedom and democracy" agenda, State Department officials initially went so far as to defend the Turkish military's "constitutional duties" to protect secularism. It was only five days after the e-coup, when Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice finally declared the United States' support for democracy in Turkey, that Washington's position fell in line with the EU's.

This high-wire act was probably the result of Washington's fear that a real coup might be in the making; unwilling to risk its relationship with the generals, Washington hedged. Another motivation for accommodating the Turkish General Staff may have been to keep Turkish forces out of Iraqi Kurdistan, currently the only stable part of Iraq. Washington deemed maintaining good communication channels with the Turkish generals to be in the United States' national interest, even if doing so inevitably came at the expense of Turkish democracy.

This is an unprincipled and misguided approach. Unambiguous support for Turkey's democratic process against any military intervention would serve U.S. interests much better. After all, there is little chance that a nationalist, Kemalist military junta would listen to U.S. concerns about the Kurdish question and northern Iraq. Moreover, Washington would be hard-pressed to find on Turkey's current political scene a better ally than the AKP to push for domestic democratic reforms and a pro-Western foreign policy. And having recently won overwhelming support from Turkey's Kurdish population, the AKP is likely to make new overtures to mainstream Kurds while fighting separatist terrorism. This would be a welcome development since it could catalyze a positive chain reaction: granting amnesty to Kurdish militants willing to lay down their arms, for example, could improve Turkey's democratic image in Europe.

The United States and the EU, for their part, should do much more to help Turkish democracy. Washington could start by addressing the PKK question more effectively, which would help prevent the militarization of Turkish domestic and foreign policy. Even a symbolic crackdown on PKK camps in northern Iraq would go a long way toward improving U.S.-Turkish relations. Alternatively, Washington could ask its Kurdish friends in Iraq to address the PKK question more effectively themselves, as a goodwill gesture to their Turkish neighbor. And the EU should show more flexibility on the Cyprus question in order to keep Turkey on track to reform. Opening trade relations with the Turkish part of Cyprus, for instance, could end the current deadlock in EU-Turkish relations.

The stakes are high. Not only is Turkey the most advanced democracy in the Muslim world, but it also shares borders with Iran, Iraq, and Syria. It abuts Armenia and Georgia in the Caucasus and serves as an energy corridor through which the vast oil and gas reserves of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia pass to the West. A democratic and Western-oriented Turkey under the AKP's leadership would act as a stabilizing influence on Iraq, remain a valuable actor in Afghanistan, and set an example for the rest of the Muslim world. A resentful, authoritarian, and nationalist Turkey would be the opposite in every respect. More broadly, the success of Turkey's experiment in synthesizing Islam, secularism, and liberal democracy would be a rebuke to the "clash of civilizations" argument.

The July 22 election was a victory for Turkish democracy and a step in the right direction. It is now up to the AKP to show that it deserved such massive support -- and to the United States and Europe to help Turkey's positive transformation along.