

Germany, other Nato members, stop arms sales to Turkey over Syria operation



Smoke billows following Turkish bombardment on Syria's northeastern town of Ras al-Ain in the Hasakeh province along the Turkish border on 9 October 2019.

Germany said Saturday it will halt sales of weapons to Turkey over its widely criticized operation against Kurdish militias in northern Syria. Germany, along with many of its allies, has condemned the offensive that Ankara says is targeting the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia – a force that has played a key role against the Islamic State group in Syria.

“In the context of the Turkish military offensive in northeastern Syria, the government will not issue any new permits for any military equipment that could be used in Syria by Turkey,” German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas was quoted as telling the Sunday edition of Bild.

Last year, Germany exported arms totaling almost 243 million euros to Turkey, also a NATO member, representing almost a third of its total weapons sales of 771 million euros.

And in the first four months of this year, sales to Turkey, its biggest customer in the transatlantic military alliance, reached 184 million euros.

Turkey defends its actions

Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu defended his country's actions in Syria after the German announcement.

“(The offensive) is a vital issue for us and a question of national security, a matter of survival. No matter what anyone is doing, whether it is an arms embargo or something else, it only strengthens us,” he told Deutsche Welle.

“Even if our allies support the terrorist organization (the YPG), even if we are alone, even if an embargo is imposed, whatever they do, our struggle is directed against the terrorist organization.”

France: condemnation but no stop to arms sales

France, too, condemned the Turkish operation, but unlike Germany, Norway, Finland, and the Netherlands it did not announce that it would stop arms sales to Turkey.

“The Turkish intrusion and offensive of the past two days are extremely serious,” French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said at a press conference on Thursday.

“It’s extremely serious and we totally condemn it,” he said, warning that the Turkish action may lead to a resurgence of the Islamic State armed group.

According to a 2019 report by the French Ministry of Defence on arms sales, France sold 595,5 million euros worth of (unspecified) arms to Turkey between 2009 and 2018; 198,2 million euros were spent in 2017 and 45,1 million euros in 2018.

Source:

<http://en.rfi.fr/middle-east/20191012-germany-other-nato-members-stop-arms-sales-turkey-syria-operation>

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