

Is Turkey Russia's secret weapon inside NATO?

Turkey wants to “avoid being on Russia's target list later”

The authoritarian, Islamist leader of the Republic of Turkey delivered a shot in the arm to embattled Russian tyrant Vladimir Putin this week, by threatening to block the accession of Finland and Sweden to the NATO military alliance.

Some observers believe Russian influence with Ankara could be one of the factors behind Recep Tayyip Erdogan's declaration regarding the two Nordic nations, and not just Turkish complaints against them being a kind of haven for Kurdish refugees, which it views as terrorists.

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine Turkey has not sanctioned Russia, unlike most NATO members who have. It has reportedly become a safe haven for Russian oligarch money and it has already thumbed its nose up to the U.S. when it purchased Russia S-400 air missile defense system which led to U.S. sanctions in 2020.

RUSSIAN S-400 DEFENSE SYSTEMS ARRIVE IN TURKEY AFTER U.S. WARNS OF SANCTIONS

U.S. officials raised alarm bells that the S-400 deal with Russia could endanger NATO security and jeopardize American-Turkey intelligence sharing.

Marshall Billingslea, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and a former assistant Secretary General of NATO, told Fox News Digital, “It is important to understand that Turkey is playing the same game today that it is always has played in the region with respect to Turkey taking stances that benefits its own interests and run counter to NATO's.”

He continued that Ankara is an “independent actor and took stances that had benefits for the Russians,” Billingslea said. He cited one telling example when Russia invaded Georgia in 2008 and Turkey closed access to the Black Sea. The closure prevented U.S. naval vessels from aiding Georgia.

However, Turkey's independence of action also means it delivered drones to

Ukraine, the NATO expert noted. The Turks work “to benefit their interests,” he said.

Theodore Karasik, a fellow on Russian and Middle Eastern Affairs at the Jamestown Foundation in Washington, told Fox News Digital that Turkey wants to “avoid being on Russia’s target list later.”

Erdogan recently announced the return of Syrian refugees living in Turkey back to their country, and Russia’s cooperation is necessary for this due to its strong presence in the Syrian Arab Republic, noted Karasik.

PUTIN LAYS OUT HIS DEMANDS FOR CEASEFIRE IN CALL WITH TURKEY’S PRESIDENT

The Turkish and Russian “struggle over shipping issues” could be an additional worry for Erdogan, said Karasik. If the Western powers sanction Russian vessels, Ankara could be confronted with demands to close the vital Dardanelles shipping route to Russia’s maritime industry,” he continued.

Karasik added that Erdogan is “using the Finnish and Swedish applications to garner favors from other countries so Turkey benefits in the end.”

Erdogan’s efforts to destabilize the NATO alliance gained traction after a segment of the Turkish military launched an unsuccessful coup against him in 2016.

TURKEY SENTENCES FORMER SOLDIERS TO LIFE OVER FAILED COUP ATTEMPT AGAINST ERDOGAN

Brig.-Gen. (ret.) Mehmet Yalinalp, who was dismissed from the military following the failed coup while he was serving as the head of NATO’s air command strategy in Germany, whose email was recently quoted in a book, titled “Erdogan Rising: A Warning To Europe,” by Hannah Lucinda-Smith, where he noted the change of views on NATO: “As the historical purge of thousands of military personnel takes a faster speed, I and my Turkish colleagues observe a considerable rise of ultra-nationalist, anti-western sentiments within our military and throughout our state departments.”

Yalinalp noted that new Turkish military personnel in NATO “have a radical mindset, some question the values of NATO and even hate Western organizations, while holding pro-Russia/China/Iran sentiments.”

Burak Bekdil is prominent Turkish political columnist who wrote for Hurriyet Daily News for 29 years, and is now a fellow for the Middle East Forum, told Fox News Digital : “I called Erdogan Putin’s man in NATO though there are nuances to my more ideological assessment. Erdogan feels at home comfort when he deals with authoritarian leaders like himself, instead of liberal democrats who remind him of Turkey’s widening democratic deficit.”

Bekdil, who was fired from Hurriyet Daily News in 2017, for writing critical articles about Turkey on a US news site, added that” There is also a transactional Erdogan who is programmed to use the West and its institutions, including NATO, where it’s useful and confronting them when that is useful. Despite the transaction-himself, Erdogan has been Putin’s man in NATO, too, for ideological reasons as well: His ideological raison d’etre is pillared on a rigid anti-West thinking.”

TURKEY RISKS ‘HISTORIC’ SWEDEN, FINLAND NATO BID BY PRIORITIZING POLITICAL AGENDA

Some commentators say enough is enough and Turkey should be kicked out of NATO. Daniel Pipes, the president of the Middle East Forum in Philadelphia, said recently, “I don’t think Turkey belongs in NATO. I’ve been saying this for a decade.

“It is time to expel Turkey from NATO. Let it go to Russia, let it go to China. Good riddance,” Pipes declared.

Source:

<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/turkey-russias-secret-weapon-inside-nato>

[Disclaimer]