

Turkey weighs sanctions against Kurds

by UPI

ANKARA, Turkey -- Turkish officials said Friday they were "determined to take all necessary steps" to end the threat from Kurdish militias based in northern Iraq. Turkish President Abdullah Gul told an assembly in Ankara that "we are totally determined to take all necessary steps to end this threat," noting a Turkish ground offensive remained an option if diplomatic efforts fail. Turkey is threatening the Iraqi government with harsh economic sanctions against the relatively stable autonomous region of Kurdistan in northern Iraq if the Iraqi government fails to reign in guerilla activity of fighters loyal to the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, a group labeled a terrorist organization by the U.S. State Department. Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan responded to statements from U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice saying that it wasn't Washington's place to determine whether Turkey would launch military operations into northern Iraq, al-Sumaria reported. Thousands of PKK guerrillas operate in northern Iraq, while Turkey has massed more than 60,000 troops along its border. The BBC reported, however, that Ankara may be interested in talks with the Kurdish groups. Turkey's National Security Council said economic sanctions may be imposed against Iraqi Kurdistan, which relies heavily on Turkey for its viability. Today's Zaman identifies energy and food may be the focal point of any economic sanctions, and notes Turkey may convene soon to discuss the details.

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