

Turkey claims 20 Kurdish rebels killed

by UPI

ANKARA, Turkey -- The Turkish military said Monday its troops had killed 20 Kurdish separatist rebels operating from bases in northern Iraq. In what Euronews.net described as a "major military operation," thousands of ground and air troops near the eastern city of Tunceli conducted a sweep as 100,000 other troops were stationed along the border. The military made the announcement as the country observed its National Day dating back to 1923 when the republic was proclaimed. Turkey has the second largest armed forces in NATO and the ninth largest in the world. The Kurdish militants are seeking to carve out an independent state from northwestern Iraq and southern Turkey, and have been staging attacks on the Turkish military as far as 30 miles inside the border in recent weeks. International calls have gone out to the government of President Abdullah Gul to show restraint in sending troops into Iraq, but the report said that in a telephone conversation with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Gul said "all diplomatic channels are pretty much exhausted."

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