

Turkey on offensive with rebel Kurds

by UPI

ANKARA, Turkey -- The Turkish military began an offensive against separatist Kurds in the southeast Tuesday, with air assaults on suspected guerrilla hide-outs. Witnesses told Alalam Satellite TV they saw helicopters firing rockets and bombing suspected positions in the province of Sirnak held by the guerrillas of the Kurdistan Workers Party, a group that wants an independent state carved from parts of Turkey and neighboring Iraq. The group is known by its Kurdish language initials of PKK and is listed as a terror organization by the U.S. State Department. CNN Turk reported two Turkish soldiers were killed in exchanges Tuesday. The country has some 100,000 troops massed near the Iraqi border, raising international concerns of them crossing the border, the report said. Military officials in Ankara said they are targeting as many as 3,000 PKK rebels who are based in northern Iraq. Turkish officials said talks Monday between Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan and U.S. President George Bush will be crucial in determining whether Turkey carries out a major offensive into northern Iraq.

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