

With Friends Like This: Key U.S. Ally Threatens American Troops

For decades, Turkey has been a strong and reliable military ally as the U.S. first squared off with the Soviet Union, and later Russia, and in more recent years in its engagements against al-Qaeda and ISIS.

But ever since Recep Tayyip Erdogan became that nation's president, the relationship between his country and ours has quickly eroded. It sank to a new low Wednesday over U.S. involvement in Syria, where American military advisers are working with Kurdish People's Protection Units in their fight against Bashar al-Assad.

Turkey has its own internal fight with the Kurds, and despite being a NATO ally, senior presidential aide Ilnur Cevik said U.S. forces who are teamed up with those rebel units could come under fire. The thinly veiled threat was, of course, framed in the context of being an "accidental" attack.

The Kurdish rebels, also known as the YPG, make up about half of the 50,000-strong army that will soon engage in a final battle for control of Raqqa, which ISIS considers its capital city. But Turkey considers the YPG to be a "terrorist organization."

Erdogan is well known to harbor a desire to see a restored Ottoman Empire, which once extended from modern-day Turkey throughout the Middle East and across Northern Africa. He also has worked a stronger relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, much to the chagrin of the U.S. government.

Following his statement, Cevik attempted to walk his comments back slightly with a tweet in which he said Turkey would never

intentionally target its allies. But the entire issue once again brings into question Turkey's commitment to NATO, and whether or not the U.S. should consider breaking ties with the country that is strategically important in confronting both Russia and Middle East terrorism. {eo}