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US to Send Special Operations Forces to Syria

By Jason Ditz
October 30, 2015

Having announced their intentions to formally enter ground combat in both Iraq and Syria earlier this week, the Pentagon is now announcing the first deployment of special forces to the territory controlled by the Kurdish YPG, with a goal of aiding the Kurds and fighting ISIS.

The early deployment is expected to be small, with officials saying “less than 50” fighters will be involved. Such a small number is going to inevitably draw some comparisons to the tiny US-trained rebel factions from this summer, who were quickly wiped out after being sent to Syria. This, however, is likely just the first of many troops to follow.

Officials say that in addition to this deployment in Syria, they also intend to set up a Special Forces task base in Iraq (presumably in addition to the one already operating in secret in Irbil) and send more warplanes to the Incirlik Air Base in Turkey.

Turkey’s reaction could be a problem here, however, with the ruling Erdogan government openly attacking YPG targets in Syria, and condemning the US for previous aid for the ground in its battles against ISIS. The addition of actual US ground troops embedded with the YPG will complicate the Turkish attacks, but doubtless also fuel their outrage further.

Though officially the “first” US combat casualty was last week in Iraq, officials have privately indicated that several other wounded soldiers, whose names, and details are all heavily classified,

were involved in similar special forces combat for months in the lead up to this week's announcements. This will, however, be the first time US troops are confirmed to be deployed to Syria for more than just a cross-border raid.