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Assad Grants Autonomy to Kurdish Region, Prompting Threats from Turkey

By [John Glaser](#)

July 26, 2012

Syrian President Bashar Assad, amid growing unrest, has [granted control of parts of northern Syria over to militant Kurds](#), long branded as terrorists by Turkey, in a provocation that could lead the conflict to break out internationally.



Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan had earlier said that Turkey [would not accept](#) an autonomous Kurdish area in Syria, fearing separatist Kurds in Turkey would use it as a safe-haven to launch cross-border attacks.

Late on Thursday Turkey mobilized and [deployed tanks and missile batteries on the Syrian border](#) near the Kurdish region, with Erdogan commenting if the Kurds control these areas, “then intervening would be our most natural right.”

Kurdish control of these border areas are an apparent consequence of the chaos of Syria’s internal conflict, in which the US and its allies are sending aid, intelligence, and weapons to the Syrian rebels, despite numerous crimes and ties to terrorist groups.

Turkish military intervention against the Assad regime came close to being a reality back a few months ago when Syria downed a Turkish fighter jet that went into Syrian airspace. Turkey has shown little hesitation to attack its neighbors if they feel their Kurdish threat demands it, as cross-border attacks into Iraq’s Kurdish region in recent months has shown.

If Turkey, a NATO member, involves itself in the Syrian conflict in a direct and belligerent way, it could have far reaching consequences, with possible implications of a US intervention.