

RELEASE IN FULL

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Subject: Turkish warplanes bomb Kurdish militants in Iraq (Reuters)

DIYARBAKIR (Reuters) - Turkish war planes bombed Kurdish guerrilla positions in Iraq on Sunday, while in southeast Turkey insurgents killed two soldiers and two village militia members in separate weekend attacks.

Fighters of the main Kurdish separatist militant group, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), operate from camps in the Qandil mountains in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq.

The Turkish air strikes hit targets in the Soran district, according to a report on the website of a Kurdish party led by Iraqi President Jalal Talabani. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan website had no details of casualties or damage.

Air strikes in recent weeks have fuelled tensions between Turkey and Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region.

Between 145 to 160 militants were killed in air and artillery strikes on PKK bases in northern Iraq in August, Turkey's armed forces said.

On Saturday, Turkey's southeastern neighbour Iran said its troops had killed or wounded 30 members of the PJAK (Party of Free Life of Kurdistan), an offshoot of the PKK.

The PKK has said it believes Turkey and Iran are coordinating attacks in the region and says it will join forces with the PJAK in response.

The PKK took up arms against the Turkish state in 1984 and is now listed as a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the United States and the European Union. More than 40,000 people have died in the separatist insurgency.

The recent wave of cross-border air strikes came after PKK fighters killed more than 40 Turkish security personnel in July.

Two militiamen were shot dead on Sunday, according to security officials. They had been on patrol in the mountainous southeastern province of Hakkari, which borders Iraq.

Village militia are often recruited from shepherds to guard remote settlements from the PKK.

Four labourers were wounded in a grenade blast while working on a construction site next to a police station in Hakkari.

Two soldiers were shot dead on Saturday in Tunceli, another southeastern province where PKK guerrillas have been active in recent months. The soldiers were hit while patrolling in the rural Geyiksuyu area, state-run Anatolian news agency reported, quoting a statement by the provincial governor's office.

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