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## Turkey's losses reach \$300 bln over Kurdish conflict

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Turkey has sustained about \$300 billion in losses from the 24-year long confrontation with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a Turkish government spokesman said on Friday.

"The total losses since 1984 from the PKK terrorists in Turkey are around \$300 billion. Had this country used those funds for other purposes, it would now rank as the world's seventh largest power," Cemil Cicek said.

He said the PKK, outlawed in Turkey and labeled by the U.S., NATO and the EU as a terrorist organization, cannot exist without outside support.

"The PKK is a tool and pawn of international terrorism," he said, adding that Ankara "has received no support from abroad" in its fight against the separatists.

He also said a possible cross-border operation against Kurdish militants based in the north of Iraq would be directed solely against the PKK.

In mid-October, Turkey's parliament sanctioned military cross-border operations against PKK separatists following an earlier government request and despite opposition from Washington and Baghdad.

Last week, national media quoted Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan as saying that the Turkish Army would launch a cross-border operation against Kurdish militants in northern Iraq before poor weather sets in.

However, the president of Iraq said earlier that the crisis on the Iraqi-Turkish border "is effectively over."

In an interview with the Cairo-based Al-Ahram weekly newspaper, Jalal Talabani said that an Iraqi delegation at a recent conference in Istanbul had managed to convince the Turkish leadership that Baghdad was "fighting against the Kurdistan Workers Party" based in northern Iraq.

The PKK has been fighting for autonomy status in southeast Turkey for nearly 25 years. The conflict has so far claimed about 40,000 lives.

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