



Turkey: Militant UAS Attack Hits Airport Runway

According to open source reporting, on 19 May 2021, Turkish forces reportedly shot down two weaponized unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) during an attempted attack against the Turkish Air Force Base collocated with Diyarbakir Airport (ICAO: LTCC) in southeastern Turkey. The civil side of the airport primarily hosts Turkish domestic flights; however, there is at least one foreign carrier international flight per week to/from Germany. There has been no claim of responsibility for the attack. Turkey's Interior Minister indicated two "model aircraft" had been neutralized during an attempted attack against the Turkish Air Force Base, with no casualties. Local press reported a crater was observed on an airport runway but did not specify the root cause of the crater nor any other damage.

Previous instances of a weaponized UAS being employed against deployed Turkish military elements or in Turkey.

- On 20 August 2020, Turkish forces in Seladize, Duhok Governorate, Iraq, shot down multiple weaponized UAS during an attempted attack. The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) claimed responsibility for the attack(s) in a social media video. Images of the alleged PKK UAS showed likely modifications enabling the UAS to drop munitions while in flight.
- On 1 January 2019, Turkish security forces reportedly used counter-UAS (C-UAS) weapons to intercept three explosives-laden UAS during attempted attacks against sites in southern Turkey, according to local press reporting. The Turkish government attributed the January 2019 attempted UAS attacks to the PKK, but the PKK did not claim responsibility.
- On 10 November 2018, Turkish forces recovered two weaponized Mini-Talon UAS after attempted attacks in southern Turkey. Those UAS had a range of 54-67nm (100-125km), placing possible launch points within not only Turkey but also Iraq or Syria.

On 14 May 2021, Turkey's Ministry of National Defense indicated Turkish forces conducting counter-terrorism operations in the Metina region in northern Iraq cleared a PKK-controlled cave complex, seizing a weapons cache. The weapons cache included one 9P58 gripstock for a Strela-2M (SA-7) man-portable air defense system (MANPADS) and one X-UAV Talon UAS. The MANPADS component seizure (SA-7 gripstock) does not, in the FAA's view, change the known risks for civil aviation, as the PKK were already known to possess MANPADS. In December 2019, Turkish forces raided PKK hide sites in northern Iraq and recovered 9K38 Igla (SA-18) MANPADS components. Some MANPADS are capable of reaching up to 25,000 feet in altitude.

Outlook:

There is no indication the PKK intends to target civilian aviation deliberately. However, possible PKK efforts to engage Turkish military aircraft could pose an inadvertent risk to civil aircraft in the region due to the potential for misidentification.

The evolution of weaponized UAS tactics and capabilities among militant groups in the region is an ongoing concern, particularly for aircraft operating at low altitudes and on the ground. In the event of an attack, civil aviation facilities collocated with Turkish military forces or facilities could be exposed to inadvertent risk and collateral damage from errant UAS or debris. The continued use of MANPADS by non-state actors in the region has enabled the PKK and other groups to engage – and, in some cases,

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shoot down – slow-flying aircraft operating at low altitudes, such as helicopters. The PKK likely has access to MANPADS components; however, even older, less-advanced MANPADS may retain sufficient operability to pose a threat to aircraft at low altitudes based on previous PKK engagements of Turkish military helicopters.

The FAA maintains no advisories or prohibitions for the Ankara (LTAA) Flight Information Region (FIR), in which Diyarbakir Airport (ICAO: LTCC) is located. The FAA does have an active all-altitude flight prohibition Notice-to-Airmen (NOTAM KICZ A0036/20) for the entire Baghdad FIR (ORBB), due to heightened militia activities and increased tensions in Iraq, which present an inadvertent risk to U.S. civil aviation operations due to the potential for miscalculation or misidentification. This NOTAM is in addition to Special Federal Aviation Regulation (SFAR) 77, which prohibits U.S. civil aviation operations at altitudes below flight level (FL) 320 in the entire Baghdad FIR (ORBB). Diyarbakir Airport is also within the geographical boundaries of FAA NOTAM KICZ A0009/18, which advises U.S. civil aviation to exercise caution when operating within 200NM of the Damascus (OSTT) FIR due to heightened military activity in and around Syria, which may include GPS interference, communications jamming, and errant long-range surface-to-air missiles (SAMs). Copies of all FAA-issued flight prohibition SFARs, flight prohibition NOTAMs, and advisory NOTAMs are available on FAA's Prohibitions, Restrictions and Notices website at: http://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/publications/us_restrictions/.

If there are any questions, please contact the FAA Threat Analysis Division (AXE-200) at 202-267-3203 or FAA-Watch@faa.gov.



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