



Turkish and Qatari Military Cooperation

OE Watch Commentary: In the past decade Turkey has tried to expand its military presence and strengthen its position in the Middle East. As part of this effort, Turkey has strengthened its relations with Qatar including military cooperation such as military hardware transactions, Qatar's investment in the Turkish defense industry and Turkey's establishment of a military base and military presence in Qatar. The accompanying article from *Al-Monitor*, a news website with analysts from the Middle East, highlights the magnitude of Turkey's military base in Qatar and discusses why Turkey is interested in establishing a durable military presence there.

As the article states, the "Qatar-Turkey Combined Joint Force Command has been active since October 2015." The upcoming expansion of the base will include air and naval elements and increase the number of Turkish military from 300 to 2,000. High level Turkish officials including the Turkish Minister of Defense and Vice President visited the base to inspect and oversee the "joint trainings and war games."



Main battle tank Altay of Otokar at the IDEF 2019 in Istanbul, Turkey.
Source: CeeGee via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TankAltayT1_\(1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TankAltayT1_(1).jpg), CC BY-SA 4.

The author discusses several developments that indicate the depth of Qatari and Turkish military cooperation since last year. First, at the beginning of 2018 the Turkish frigate *Gökçeada* sailed to Qatar to inaugurate Qatari and Turkish joint naval training. In April 2018, "troops from both countries held live-fire field exercises" among other military activities. Second, this year, Qatari and Turkish special forces held counterterrorism drills and Turkish Gendarmerie Command officials trained Qatari internal security forces. As the author states, the ultimate objective of these exercises "prominently involving the naval and air forces and focusing on counterterrorism and internal security, is to enhance interoperability between the security forces of the two countries." Third, Turkey has become the major supplier of military hardware to Qatar as Qatari investment in Turkish defense industry companies has substantially increased. A major Turkish defense industry company, of which Qatar owns 49 percent, has engaged in joint ventures with the Qatari military. One of the products that has drawn attention was the production of Altay tank by BMC, "a joint venture between Turkish defense industry giants and the Qatari military" and 40 of them will be supplied to Qatar.

Several factors contributed to the expansion of cooperation between Turkey and Qatar. Turkey's cooperation with Qatar helps counterbalance its regional rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia. Qatar provides a market for Turkish defense industry products. For Qatar, cooperation with Turkey gives it assurances against the alliance of other Gulf countries supported by Saudi Arabia to isolate Qatar. (Also see: "Turkey Opens Military Base in Qatar," *OE Watch*, July 2016) **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

"...the Turkish contingent [in Qatar] will grow into a brigade task force of about 2,000 soldiers, including army, air force, navy and special forces elements..."

Source: Metin Gürcan, "Turkey's military base in Qatar to expand with air, naval elements," *Al-monitor.com*, 23 August 2019. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/08/turkey-qatar-military-cooperation-expand-with-air-naval.html>

The Qatar-Turkey Combined Joint Force Command has been active since October 2015 at the Tariq bin Ziyad military base outside Doha, comprising commando platoons, military engineering units, indirect fire support teams, and air force and naval liaison teams in what is basically a mechanized battalion battle group involving about 300 Turkish soldiers. From the outset, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani agreed on a rapid expansion of the base...

...the facility is on course to expand in October with the addition of an airbase and a military port. As a result, the Turkish contingent will grow into a brigade task force of about 2,000 soldiers, including army, air force, navy and special forces elements...

The Qatari base has been the focus of increased Turkish attention in recent months, as evidenced by a number of high-level visits, joint trainings and war games. Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar visited the base in December, inspecting the facility. A visit by Vice President Fuat Oktay followed in March.

Cooperation between the Turkish and Qatari militaries has notably intensified since last year. In February 2018, Turkey's Gokceada frigate visited the Doha port as Turkish and Qatari naval forces conducted the first in a series of joint trainings. In a string of drills in April, all of them in Qatar, troops from the two countries held live-fire field exercises, commandos had small-unit action trainings as part of border security exercises, and the air forces conducted Falcon-21 drills, with three Turkish F-16 jets flying in Qatari skies for the first time.

...Turkish and Qatari special forces have held joint counterterror drills, and the Turkish Gendarmerie Command has offered training to Qatari security forces in the field of internal security.

The ultimate objective of those exercises, involving prominently the naval and air forces and focusing on counterterrorism and internal security, is to enhance interoperability between the security forces of the two countries.

The defense industry is another area of expanding cooperation, with Turkey growing into a major supplier of military equipment for Qatar...

"In late 2018, Turkey's Defense Industries Management and BMC signed a multibillion-dollar contract for the serial production of the Altay main battle tank. Initially, 250 tanks are to be produced for Turkey and 40 for Qatar, with an advanced version to follow."

BMC is a joint venture between Turkish defense industry giants and the Qatari military.