

Explosion kills soldiers in Turkey (Turkey)

At least nine soldiers have been killed and two others injured in a landmine blast blamed on Kurdish separatists in southeastern Turkey, a military commander has said.

(28.04.2009)

The landmine, believed to have been planted by Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) fighters, exploded on Wednesday around 6:30am (0430 GMT) as a military vehicle was passing near the village of Abali in Diyarbakir province.

"A tank and an armoured personnel vehicle were patrolling for road security. An explosion happened after the tanks passed and nine died," said General Ilker while addressing a news conference in Ankara, the capital.

He did not blame any particular group for the attack.

The military launched ground and air operations against the separatists following the blast in the province of Diyarbakir.

In a separate incident, two suspected suicide bombers were arrested after one of them detonated a bomb at Bilkent Univeristy in Ankara. No one was wounded in the attack that targeted a former justice minister.

Decades-long war

Security forces are fighting PKK rebels in a 25-year separatist conflict that has killed 40,00 people and hurt stability in the region.

The PKK, listed as a "terrorist" organisation by the US and the European Union, launched a military campaign in 1984 to carve out an ethnic homeland in the predominantly Kurdish southeast Turkey.

In raids that threaten to inflame tensions in the southeast, the government recently launched a crackdown on Kurdish fighters and Kurdish politicians suspected of having links with the PKK.

Turkey has also improved co-operation with northern Iraqi authorities against PKK guerrillas based in Iraq from where they stage attacks into Turkish territory.

A poor showing by the ruling AK Party in the southeast in last month's municipal elections has also put renewed pressure on the government to address the root cause of the conflict.

Kurds have long complained of discrimination against them by the state and have called for political and cultural rights.

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[<<< zurück zu: News](#)
