Turkish F-35 Stealth Fighter Jets: A Grave Threat to Greece, Israel, the West

by Nils A. Haug

Gatestone Institute
July 31, 2026, at 5:00 am

- The main reason that the prospect of Turkey obtaining F-35 fighter jets is, so disturbing is that Turkey has revealed time and again its desire for Israel to be eliminated. In fact, now that Iran is on the ropes, Turkey has positioned itself as the *primary enemy* of Israel. Erdogan is trying to present himself as the leader of the Muslim world and the natural Caliph of a coming Ottoman Empire, revived by him.
- Trump seems drawn to strong, ruthless dictators – such as Russia's Vladimir Putin and Communist Chinese President Xi Jinping, as if acceptance by them assures him that he is as strong as they are.
- Similarly, he also seems drawn to jihadist leaders of countries such as Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Pakistan. They offer him money, gifts and business deals, and no doubt tell him what he likes to hear – but none of us would want to think that people are being friendly because they want something from us.
- Perhaps they genuinely do like Trump; he can be delightful. That does not necessarily mean, however, that they plan to give up their jihadist dreams of conquest and join the West, or that they entertain no plans, when the opportunity soon presents itself, to try to overthrow it.



The main reason that the prospect of Turkey obtaining F-35 fighter jets is so disturbing is that Turkey has revealed time and again its desire for Israel to be eliminated. In fact, now that Iran is on the ropes, Turkey has positioned itself as the *primary enemy* of Israel. Erdogan is trying to present himself as the leader of the Muslim world and the natural Caliph of a coming Ottoman Empire, revived by him. Pictured: A Turkish Air Force F-16 fighter jet performs aerial maneuvers during an airshow over the Turkish-occupied northern part of Cyprus' capital Nicosia, on November 15, 2021. (Photo by Birol Bebek/AFP via Getty Images)

Much has been written about the dangerous anti-Israel animosity spewing from Turkey's autocratic prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and his circle of ministers (see here, here and here).

On July 3, immediately prior to the important NATO summit in Ankara, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan made Turkey's view even more apparent when he said that Israel is a "burden that humanity can no longer bear". In Hitleresque fashion, he clearly implied that Israel and its population should no longer exist -- meaning eliminated.

In this mode, Turkey's Interior Minister Mustafa Çiftçi said he hopes to become governor of Jerusalem. Do you hear Israeli ministers talk about becoming governor of Istanbul?

Israel immediately condemned such revealing threats. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar called them "horrific language from history's worst eliminationist regimes" and noted that such "sickening words are textbook incitement to genocide."

Turkey's genocidal attempts to eradicate Armenians (1915-1917) and Pontic Greeks (1914-1923) are a matter of recorded history, despite vehement, disingenuous denials. Turkey also has a long history of persecuting Jews and other minorities, harkening back to Ottoman times.

Israel's great prime minister of years gone by, Menachem Begin, when still leader of the opposition, explained in 1963 the seriousness of such dangerous threats:

"If the enemy of the Jews says that he has in his heart, in his blood, the desire to destroy them — do not belittle, do not mock, do not doubt, but take his desire seriously, treat his words with all the seriousness inherent in them."

Upon hearing the possibility that US President Donald Trump might restore Turkey to the F-35 program — enabling it to obtain the world's finest stealth fighter-jets — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressed his justified concern:

"Turkey is a big country, but it is ruled by a man who openly calls for Israel's destruction... it occupies half of Cyprus, a NATO member state, threatens Greece, also a NATO member state, and speaks openly about conquering Jerusalem."

According to JNS:

"Erdoğan said U.S. President Donald Trump had made a 'promise' to sell F-35 fighter jets to his country as the two leaders met on Tuesday [July 7] ahead of the two-day NATO summit in Ankara."

The same day, Trump told the media that he would be lifting the sanctions against Turkey's defense industry that were imposed in 2020, due to Erdogan's purchase, from his ally Russian President Vladimir Putin, of the S-400 air defense system -- against President Trump's advice not to do so. Erdogan's words were as follows:

"I believe that President Trump has made a promise on this separately... we do hope that the promise that we have previously received is going to be productively tested towards the future. President Trump has always been a man of his word, and hopefully with respect to the F-35."

Trump added that the US-Turkey relationship was "better, probably, than it's ever been," and highlighted his personal relationship with Erdogan: "You never know why a relationship is special... it's a chemistry that works between us." In Trump's view, Erdogan can apparently do nothing wrong.

Trump previously had commended Erdogan as a "respected man and respected leader," and on another occasion said, "He is a very good friend of mine, and we have worked together very well. I love him. He is a great leader and a very strong person."

Powerful words indeed – but perturbing.

It appears that Erdogan has become Trump's new best friend. While Netanyahu previously held that position, Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance have strongly, and quite unjustly, recently criticized the Israeli prime minister. Trump actually stated that Netanyahu will "do whatever I want him to do." In a call between the two in June, Trump told Netanyahu:

"You're f**king crazy. You'd be in prison if it weren't for me. I'm saving your ass. Everybody hates you now. Everybody hates Israel because of this."

To add insult to injury, Vance said last month to Netanyahu, who has served over 18 years as prime minister, "You can't just kill your way out of solving every single national security problem that you have." He also said, "If I was in the cabinet of the Israeli government, I might not be attacking the only powerful ally that I have anywhere left in the entire world."

With such nonsense, Vance exposed his skewed understanding of Middle Eastern geopolitical events, mindsets, and relationships. In actuality, Israel is the only true friend that the US has in the region – the rest being mere transactional allies of convenience.

The main reason that the prospect of Turkey obtaining F-35 fighter jets is so disturbing is that Turkey has revealed time and again its desire for Israel to be eliminated. In fact, now that Iran is on the ropes, Turkey has positioned itself as the *primary enemy* of Israel. Erdogan is trying to present himself as the leader of the Muslim world and the natural Caliph of a coming Ottoman Empire, revived by him.

Given the vehement hostility emanating from Turkey's leaders towards Jews and their state, and that Turkey is the best-armed Muslim military in the Middle East, the possession of F-35 stealth fighter jets would decidedly pose an additional existential threat to Israel that it hardly needs.

While Israel is currently the strongest military power in the region, its edge in hardware is predominantly founded on a superior air force, whose central jet fighter is the F-35 – the world's most advanced attack aircraft. Should Turkey also acquire these fighters from the US, even without the "upgrade," Israel will be at a disadvantage.

The US government had previously blocked the sale of F-35s to Turkey, based on the Turkish purchase from Russia of its S-400 surface-to-air missile system. Erdogan claims as a defense that Turkey's S-400 has not been activated. So in that case, everything must be fine! Thankfully, the US is still insisting that so long as Turkey is in possession of the S-400, it may not re-enter the F-35 program. Erdogan seems to be counting on eventually being able to have both.

The S-400 anti-aircraft missile defense systems would help protect Turkish forces from Israel's air superiority. With Turkey having much larger ground forces than Israel, the prognosis of Israel overcoming an invasion or attack by a future Turkey using F-35s would be deeply alarming. Israel, however, is probably the sole nuclear power in the region, but would doubtless never want to reach for such a weapon.

In the interim, both Trump and Vance play their negotiating games with Iran, endeavoring to conclude an elusive ceasefire agreement with an intransigent, deceptive and wily hardcore Islamist regime – an avowed enemy – that will not honor any agreement it signs anyway. Among Shia Muslims, advancing dissimulation (*taqiyya*) is accepted Islamic doctrine to advance the greater cause of Islam.

Trump seems drawn to strong, ruthless dictators – such as Russia's Vladimir Putin and Communist Chinese President Xi Jinping, as if acceptance by them assures him that he is as strong as they are.

Similarly, he also seems drawn to jihadist leaders of countries such as Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Pakistan. They offer him money, gifts and business deals, and no doubt tell him what he likes to hear – but none of us would want to think that people are being friendly because they want something from us.

Perhaps they genuinely do like Trump; he can be delightful. That does not necessarily mean, however, that they plan to give up their jihadist dreams of conquest and join the West, or that they entertain no plans, when the opportunity soon presents itself, to try to overthrow it.

Nils A. Haug is an Attorney, author and columnist. He is member of the International Bar Association, the National Association of Scholars, the Academy of Philosophy and Letters. Among degrees in Law, Philosophy, and English Literature, Dr. Haug holds a M.A.in Jewish Studies (cum laude) and Ph.D. in Apologetical Theology. He is author of 'Politics, Law, and Disorder in the Garden of Eden – the Quest for Identity'; and 'Enemies of the Innocent – Life, Truth, and Meaning in a Dark Age.' His work has been published by First Things Journal, The American Mind, Quadrant, Minding the Campus, Gatestone Institute, National Association of Scholars, Jewish Journal, James Wilson Institute (Anchoring Truths), Jewish News Syndicate, Tribune Juive,Document Danmark, Zwiedzaj Polske,Schlaglicht Israel, The Australian Jurist,and others.