Tomorrow's Affairs

Analysis of today
Assessment of tomorrow

By: TA | AP Brief

Azerbaijan accuses Iran of a drone attack and vows to retaliate

Azerbaijan accused Iran of a drone attack on its territory that injured four civilians, and it vowed to retaliate as the war in the Middle East reached into another country.

Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Iranian drones attacked its exclave of Nakhchivan and damaged an airport building.

President Ilham Aliyev accused Iran of carrying out "a groundless act of terror and aggression," and said his military has been told to prepare and implement retaliatory measures. The Caspian Sea nation halted truck traffic across the nearly 700-kilometer (over 400-mile) border with Iran.

Iran's general staff of the armed forces denied it had launched a drone toward Azerbaijan's territory. Iran has repeatedly denied targeting oil infrastructure and other civilian targets in the war, despite its drone and missile fire hitting those sites.

The incident highlighted Azerbaijan's complicated relationship with neighboring Iran, at a time when Baku also has developed military and economic ties with Israel.

Iran has grown increasingly concerned about the U.S. and Israel potentially leveraging the Islamic Republic's various minority ethnic groups to destabilize the country as it comes under attack.

Iran has a large Azeri population and Tehran has accused Baku of allowing Israeli intelligence to operate from there. Azerbaijan, in turn, has sought to give assurances that its territory won't be used for an attack on "neighborly and friendly" Iran.

Drones crash in Nakhchivan

Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry said an Iranian drone crashed near the airport in Nakhchivan, and another one hit near a school.

The Defense Ministry said four drones were fired by Iran toward Nakhchivan, and while

one was disabled by Azerbaijani forces, the others targeted civilian facilities — including a school where classes were underway.

It was unclear if it was deliberate or an accident.

The country's Prosecutor General's office said four people were injured.

Nakhchivan is separated from the rest of Azerbaijan by a swath of Armenia about 40 kilometers (25 miles) wide.

Nakhchivan accounts for about 6% of the country's territory, bordering Azerbaijan's close ally Turkey and Iran.

> Azerbaijan's military has been instructed to prepare and implement retaliatory measures

"We will not tolerate this groundless act of terror and aggression committed against Azerbaijan," Aliyev said at a meeting of his country's Security Council in remarks carried by the Azertac news agency. "Iranian officials must provide an explanation to the Azerbaijani side, an apology must be offered, and those who committed this terrorist act must be held criminally liable."

He said Azerbaijan's military has been instructed "to prepare and implement retaliatory measures."

The Defense Ministry vowed that Iran's "attacks will not go unanswered," adding it was preparing the "necessary response" to protect "the territorial integrity and sovereignty of our country, ensure the safety of civilians and civilian infrastructure." It didn't elaborate.

Aliyev stressed that Azerbaijan "is not participating in operations against Iran –– neither previously nor this time –– and will not do so."

He added: "We have neither interest in conducting any operations against neighboring countries, nor does our policy

allow it."

The Foreign Ministry said Iran's "actions contradict the norms and principles of international law and contribute to increased tension in the region," and summoned the Iranian ambassador to lodge a protest.

Baku demanded that Iran "provide an explanation and take the necessary urgent measures to prevent the recurrence of such incidents," the statement said.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called Aliyev to condemn the Iranian drone attack and express support. The Turkish Foreign Ministry urged a halt to strikes that target "third countries in the region and increase the risk of the war spreading."