



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on October 8, 2019

Trump to Move U.S. Troops Out of Way of Turkish Incursion Into Syria

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On October 6, the White House announced the removal of U.S. troops from the Syria-Turkey border area, adding, “Turkey will soon be moving forward with its long-planned operation into Northern Syria.”

The statement followed a phone conversation President Trump had with Turkey’s President Recep Erdogan, during which Erdogan said that Turkey would soon send troops into northeast Syria.

The announcement was widely misinterpreted as stating that the United States would withdraw all of its roughly 1,000 troops still in Syria, which was what former Representative Ron Paul advocated last year, saying, “I do think Trump understands that our interventionist foreign policy is a massive waste of money and lives.”

The announcement prompted strong objections from congressional leaders on Capitol Hill, including Senator Lindsay Graham (R-S.C.) and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.). In the face of such criticism, a senior State Department official insisted the pullback concerned a “very small number” of troops.

In a series of tweets, Trump explained what his intentions were.

“It is time for us to get out of these ridiculous Endless Wars, many of them tribal, and bring our soldiers home,” he wrote in one tweet.

“The United States was supposed to be in Syria for 30 days, that was many years ago,” Trump said in one of his October 7 tweets.

The president also stressed that his decision was not tantamount to allowing Turkish forces to have free rein in the region.

In a tweet on the afternoon October 7, Trump wrote, “if Turkey does anything that I, in my great and unmatched wisdom, consider to be off limits, I will totally destroy and obliterate the Economy of Turkey.”

On the phone call with reporters, a senior administration official said Trump decided to withdraw the troops after learning that Turkey was “intent” on mounting a military operation in the region.

“Turkey appears to be set on undertaking an operation in northern Syria. That’s something that the U.S. has been able to dissuade the Turks from doing for the past two years, but it appears that the Turks are intent on some sort of military operation,” the official said.



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The official said that Trump wanted U.S. troops out of the “crossfire.”

“The president made it very clear publicly and privately that the United States does not endorse or support any Turkish operation in northern Syria,” the official said. “There’ll be no U.S. armed forces involvement or support of any operation that the Turks undertake.”

The official said this “does not constitute a withdrawal from Syria,” stressing the pullout involves troops only in a “relatively small 20-to-30-mile” region.

“We have a small number — 50 to 100 special operators in the region — and they should not be put at risk of injury, death or capture in the event that the Turks do come over the border and engage ... in combat with the local Kurdish forces,” the official said.

It might be better if the president followed his instincts “to get out of these ridiculous Endless Wars,” and pull all the troops out, instead of listening to GOP interventionists such as McConnell and Graham.

Image: ozgurdonmaz via iStock / Getty Images Plus

Warren Mass has served The New American since its launch in 1985 in several capacities, including marketing, editing, and writing. Since retiring from the staff several years ago, he has been a regular contributor to the magazine. Warren writes from Texas and can be reached at wmass@thenewamerican.com.

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