



[Trump Orders Withdrawal of U.S. Troops from Northern Syria](#)

On Monday morning, President Trump announced that U.S. troops would be withdrawing from northern Syria along the Syrian-Turkish border, in what marks a significant foreign policy reversal for his administration. While the President has repeatedly called for American troops to return home from long conflicts, his decision effectively abandons the Kurdish forces who have been a vital U.S. ally in the fight against ISIS. The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are accused of being a terror organization by Turkey, who have long harbored a desire to eradicate them. Specifically, Turkey accuses the military wing of the SDF of being an extension of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which advocated for Kurdish autonomy in Turkey, and has been subsequently banned from Turkish politics.

Upon the announcement of the American withdrawal, the White House issued a statement saying that Turkey would be moving forward with its plans for a military operation into northern Syria. A senior source within the Turkish government told Reuters that the plan would likely be delayed for a week in order to give the American troops ample time to withdraw completely. Assuming the mission was successful, the Turkish government would then take custody of approximately 12,500 foreign fighters captured by the coalition against ISIS, and currently held by the SDF. This decision satisfied a long-held desire by President Trump to not hold foreign fighters in American prisons. However, a spokesman for the SDF said that if Kurdish soldiers were forced to fight intruding Turkish forces, they would have to abandon their posts at these prisons which would likely lead to multiple escapes by high-danger detainees.

In an effort to defend the decision to withdraw American troops from northern Syria, President Trump reiterated his claim that ISIS has been completely eradicated and that he has a strong desire to get the U.S. out of “endless wars.” He also said that “Turkey, Europe, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Russia and the Kurds will now have to figure the situation out.” The President received pushback on these statements from some supporters, with former Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley and United States Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) rebuking his remarks. Ambassador Haley stated that “leaving the Kurds to die is a big mistake” with Senator Graham calling the decision “shortsighted and irresponsible” before saying that ISIS had not been completely eradicated in the region, and fighters there would now “have a new lease on life.” Graham also said that he would be introducing a bipartisan resolution in the Senate to oppose the President’s move, should the decision not be reversed. For their part, the SDF issued a statement calling the move a “stab in the back” and pledging to militarily oppose any intrusion by Turkish forces.

The United States currently has 1,000 troops stationed in northern Syria. It is not immediately clear if all 1,000 servicemembers will be immediately withdrawn, but experts have warned that removing all American forces in the region could lead to a rebirth of ISIS. Abandoning the Kurdish forces in the region also opens the possibility of an alliance between them and Iran, or with the Assad regime in Syria.