

On Sunday, October 6, US President Donald Trump and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan held a [phone call](#). Hours after the phone call, the White House announced a partial withdrawal of US troops from northern Syria. President Trump proceeded to [endorse](#) a Turkish military operation into northern Syria to clear the area of YPG forces, which Turkey believes is directly connected to the PKK, which is designated a terrorist organization by both the US and Turkey, therefore Turkey considering the YPG a terrorist organization as well.

According to Turkish authorities, the military operation is an effort to create a safe zone which will serve two purposes, “secure Turkey’s borders by eliminating terrorist elements and allow refugees to return to their homes.”



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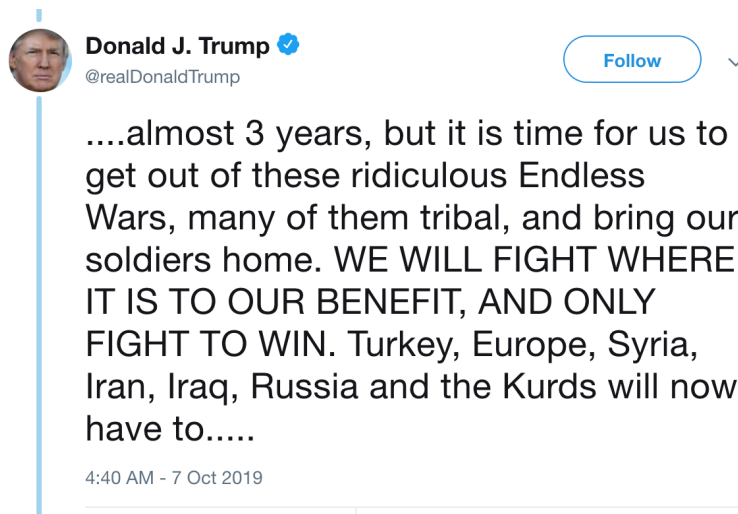
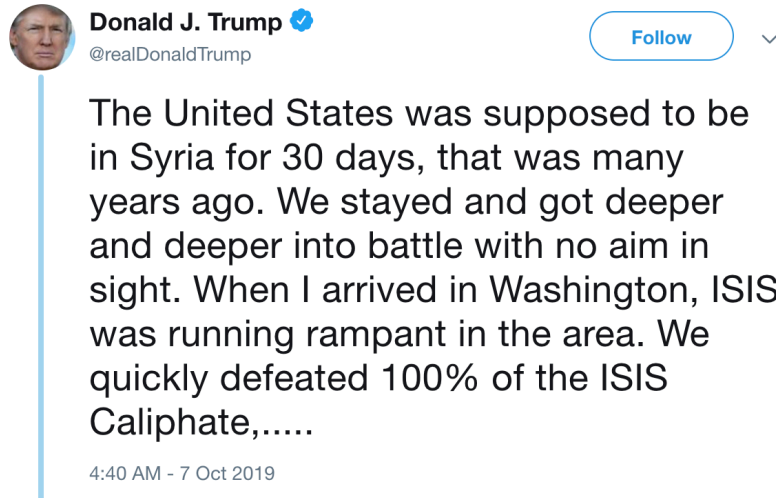


2/Safe zone will serve two purposes:
secure Turkey’s borders by eliminating
terrorist elements and allow refugees to
return to their homes.

Turkey will also continue to fight against
DAESH and will not allow it to return in
any shape and form.

1:32 AM - 7 Oct 2019

According to US President Donald Trump this was a move to get the US out of, "[Endless Wars](#)".



(The above Twitter thread is not in continuation; the full thread can be found [here](#))

US President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw troops and make way for a Turkish military operation was heavily [criticized](#) in Washington as members of congress from both sides of the aisle urged the President to reconsider.

On the other hand, Turkey [launched](#) an operation into NE Syria on Wednesday, October 9. The operation began with airstrikes, followed by a ground force operation. According to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, “Operation Peace Spring”, is meant to neutralize terror threats against Turkey as well as ensure the return of Syrian refugees.



Turkish Heritage Organization (THO) Advisory Board Members react to President Trump's announcement of US troops withdrawing from Syria and the Turkish military operation.

[Michael M. Gunter](#) is a professor of Political Science at Tennessee Technological University

"President Trump has announced these things before and then had to walk them back. The US needs to keep assets in Syria to counter Iran's influence there, so I suspect that Pres. Trump will end up keeping some US troops on the ground and that Turkey is not going to make a massive invasion. "

**Herbert Reginbogin is a Fellow at the Institute for Policy Research,
The Catholic University of America**

“America has currently lost the ability to broker a deal to harbor peace for both Turkey and Syria and conflicts will spiral as each party involved in the Syrian Conflict will eventually claim an advantage following President Trump's decision to withdraw from a joint military operation with the intent to protect Turkey's security, find an opportunity for a humanitarian return to Syria for refugees and displaced people while also establishing a zone to hamper any contacts with Syrian-Kurd forces. Without a major overhaul for new security architecture in the region to end the Syrian Conflict and bar tribal factions like the PYD from threatening other neighbors in exchange to rule the land they occupy in Syria through constitutional reforms and peace at home, the devastation is programmed to continue with a sole Turkish military operation while an oasis of stability is nothing more than a Fata Morgana.”

Malik Mufti is a professor of Political Science at Tufts University

“Stepping back from the confusion of the unfolding crisis in northeastern Syria, it is clear that at the core of all the disputes between Washington and Ankara, for at least 30 years now, is Turkey's Kurdish problem. It is a problem that benefits the adversaries of all three concerned parties; adversaries such as the Russian, Iranian, and Syrian Ba`thist regimes. Contrariwise, therefore, resolving the problem – through something like the 2009-2014 peace process – would benefit both the Turkish and Kurdish peoples, and in the long run serve US interests as well.

Unfortunately, a resolution of the problem requires all three sides to be on the same page simultaneously. Today, none of the three is on this page. The PKK and its allies tried to exploit the struggle against ISIS in order to garner American support, create an autonomous entity in northern Syria, and thus do an end-run around Turkey. The Turkish leadership responded, both in order to foil the PKK's maneuver and because of domestic electoral calculations, by aligning with Turkish ultra-nationalists and declaring the peace process definitively off the table. And the US leadership – not just under President Trump but under President Obama as well – has continued to view the Turkish-Kurdish conflict as an opportunity to gain leverage over both sides. To make matters worse, the Trump administration's incoherent and erratic behavior has dragged the Turkish-Kurdish issue into the ongoing political struggle within the United States as well, rendering a constructive approach all the more elusive.

As a result, unfortunately, it is hard to see a way forward until future developments – many of them likely to be lamentable – induce new calculations on all three sides.”

[Dr. Edward Erickson](#) is a retired professor of Military History

“President Erdogan has been trying unsuccessfully to get Trump to clarify American policy regarding a "safe zone" in northern Syria for the past year. Ambassador Jim Jeffrey has been over in Ankara repeatedly trying to figure it out for Trump with small results. Making it worse, within DOD, Syria is in CENCOM and Turkey is in EUCOM and, I'm guessing here, this impedes a coordinated DOD policy reconciling the Syrian Kurds and the Turks.

The Turks warned us over and over back in 2015 not to get in bed with the Syrian Kurds. President Obama didn't listen, and President Trump inherited a nest of vipers. For the Turks, the

establishment of an independent Kurdish state in northern Syria is a national security nightmare and (as we might say in America) it is "a clear and present danger." The Turks have not tolerated the establishment of an independent Kurdistan in northern Iraq and they surely won't tolerate one in northern Syria.

History 101: Let's go back to Operation Steel in '95 and Operations Hammer and Operation Dawn in '97. Now fast forward to Operation Euphrates Shield '16-'17 and Operation Olive Branch '18. From these, we know a lot about how the Turkish General Staff (TGS) might run a cross border incursion with limited objectives. The TGS has been planning to intervene "east of the Euphrates" for the past 18 months. When they launch (and I wrote "when..." not "if..."), it will be overwhelming and fast -- they will be very careful to avoid collateral damage and they will try to uphold humanitarian & international laws and conventions. They surely won't indiscriminately slaughter civilians. They will stay for an announced time frame - they understand that they cannot stay there forever, and they understand that the world is watching. My sense is that it will be a corps-sized combined arms operation (35,000 men using everything they've got) and, it will be tied to a supporting operation in Adlib & Afrin ("in for a penny, in for a pound"). At the end of it, the Turks will turn the ground back over to the Damascus government and go home... but not before they eradicate the military capability and capacity of the YPG/PYD."