



## America-Turkey Love-Hate Relationship, Tillerson in Ankara

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#), [USA](#)  
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*Bilateral relations are the most strained in decades over numerous issues, most notably:*

for the July 2016 coup attempt Erdogan blamed on exiled cleric Fethullah Gulen living in America;

Washington providing heavy weapons to Kurdish YPG fighters in Syria; and

its plan to establish a 30,000-strong largely Kurdish YPG border security force in northern Syria along Turkey's border Erdogan considers a threat to its security.

Earlier, Erdogan slammed Washington for continuing to arm YPG fighters, asking:

"Against whom will the US use the truckloads of weapons massed on our borders. Against (ISIS)? There is no (ISIS) there anymore. Against Syria?"

"No, they are now in the same coalition. Iraq? No, they have already invaded there. They will use them against Iran, Turkey or Russia if they dare," adding:

"No one can lecture Turkey on the war against (ISIS) because Turkey is the only NATO member directly fighting the terrorist group."

Throughout much of the war, Turkey supported ISIS, provided safe haven for its fighters on its territory, and conspired with the group in selling its stolen oil, Erdogan profiting personally from the scheme.

He's no peace advocate, no Syrian ally, no respectable leader, ruling despotically. He's playing the Russian and US cards simultaneously for his own-self-interest.

On Thursday, he and Tillerson met for over three hours in Ankara. He demands Washington

end support for YPG fighters, cease arming them, and take back weapons supplied.

He demands concrete action, not promises made to be broken. Tillerson continues his visit on Friday. He'll meet with his Turkish counterpart, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, discussing key issues straining bilateral ties.

A joint news conference is scheduled once talks conclude. Reports from Ankara and Washington so far have been sketchy.

At her Thursday press briefing, State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said she had no "details" on what Tillerson and Erdogan discussed.

With bilateral relations deeply strained, Washington and Ankara are remaining largely closed-mouthed about discussions with Tillerson – at least until more comes out at his Friday press conference with Cavusoglu.

Nauert declined to discuss what the Trump administration "may or may not do."

In Beirut before heading to Ankara, Tillerson lied saying Washington "never" supplied YPG Kurdish fighters with heavy weapons.

"We have never given heavy arms to the YPG so there is none to take back," he falsely claimed.

Weeks earlier, Defense Secretary Mattis admitted supplying their fighters with heavy weapons, saying it would eventually stop, these weapons recovered at a later time.

Last month, Sergey Lavrov slammed Washington's intention to establish a border security force in Syria, threatening Turkey and Damascus.

"Russia has serious questions in this regard, from the standpoint of Syria's territorial integrity," he said, adding:

"Washington's provocative unilateral step will in no way help resolve the Afrin situation" where Turkish and YPG fighter are battling for control.

On Thursday, reports indicated Damascus and the YPG agreed to let Syrian forces deploy in and around Afrin.

Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad said Syrian Arab Army forces will defend the area, risking conflict with Turkey.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakhavova said Washington continues "sen(ding) the Kurds convoys with weapons through the territory of Iraq, provoking Turkey."

"Turkey, in turn, has continued its military activity against Kurds in the Afrin area in northwestern Syria as part of the Operation Olive Branch.

Turkey stressed this policy is a key reason for deteriorated Ankara/Washington relations.

We'll know more about Tillerson's discussions at a Friday press conference with Cavusoglu.

No change in US policy is likely regardless of what is said.

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