

Turkey's Erdogan Vows "All Measures" to Circumvent U.S. Sanctions on Iran

By [Zero Hedge](#)

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Following Wednesday's unexpected and dramatic full and "immediate" withdrawal of all US forces from Syria, Turkey has announced it will not play ball on Iran sanctions. According to a translation of the Turkish president's words on Thursday during a [previously planned summit](#) with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in Ankara, journalist Abdullah Bozkurt [reports](#),

"Turkish president Erdogan says Turkey won't support US sanctions on Iran which he claims puts regional security and stability at risk, vows to take all measures to minimize impact of sanctions on trade between the two countries, pledges support to Iran in difficult times."

This is huge given that the complete US reversal in policy comes following a phone call last week between President Trump and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, wherein Erdogan is reported to have pressed the Kurdish problem and presence of US troops. The United States needs Turkey as a key regional economy if it hopes to effectively strangle Iran through sanctions. Without Erdogan, analysts believe, Iran will be able to weather the storm long term.

Turkish president [#Erdogan](#) says [#Turkey](#) won't support US sanctions on [#Iran](#) which he claims puts regional security and stability at risk, vows to take all measures to minimise impact of sanctions on trade between the two countries, pledges support to Iran in difficult times. pic.twitter.com/1wyMgyXEnu

— Abdullah Bozkurt (@abdbozkurt) [December 20, 2018](#)

For the past week Erdogan has threatened to launch a full-scale cross border assault on US-backed Kurdish forces in Syria, which Turkey has long considered a terrorist extension of the outlawed PKK. Currently Turkey's military is reportedly mustering forces and tanks along deployment points at the Syrian border. Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar has said the military is "intensely" preparing for a major operation against Syrian Kurds in Manbij, Aleppo Governorate, and to the east of the Euphrates. Turkish Anadolu Agency reported the defense minister promised to "bury" the Syrian Kurds.

Prior to Trump's announced Syria pullout, the promised large-scale assault and ongoing future operations would have eventually brought American troops and advisers under fire, who've found themselves in the awkward position since entering Syria of training Syrian

Kurdish militias on the one hand, and coordinating broadly with NATO ally Turkey on the other.

However, Trump's announced troop withdrawal has defused the crisis of American troops being caught in the middle, and along with it the possibility of a US-Turkey clash. Thus the US withdrawal is considered a major concession for Erdogan, which no doubt Trump was hoping to maintain as a key ally against Iran. That hope has now been dashed with Erdogan's speech Thursday.

Turkey has undermined US policy of confronting Iran. Why? B/c US attacked Turkey by arming & training YPG/Kurds. Erdogan's drip, drip Khashoggi strategy brilliant. Kicked legs out fr under Trump's Saudi policy. Congress is voting against Saudi. US needs TR on board to hurt Iran.

— Joshua Landis (@joshua_landis) [December 19, 2018](#)

This also comes a day after the US approved the sale of \$3.5bn in missiles to Turkey amid negotiations for Ankara to buy anti-air defense missiles from Russia. On Wednesday the State Department informed Congress that the plan includes transfer of 80 Patriot missiles, 60 PAC-3 missile interceptors and related equipment. A number of analysts were quick to note the deal had been firmed up immediately prior to Trump's announced Syria pullout.

But despite the multi-billion dollar weapons sale, hawks in Congress and in the president's own administration will use Erdogan's Thursday announcement to "stand by Iran" as fodder for arguing against bringing the troops home, and continuing Syria ground operations in order to counter Iranian expansion.

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