

US refuses to comment on possible Turkish attack against US Syrian ally

by Wladimir van Wilgenburg - 17/01/2018 15:32



ERBIL - Heather Nauert, the spokesperson for the State Department, **told** reporters on Tuesday, that the Trump Administration "don't have a specific report on whether or not we can confirm that [a Turkish attack on Afrin] has taken place".

She did, however, take the opportunity to underscore the important diplomatic relationship between the United States and Turkey.

"Well, Turkey is a very important and valued NATO ally. We have a lot of interactions with the Turkish Government. As you probably know, the foreign minister of Turkey is in Vancouver right now, where I believe he will be meeting or have some sort of a chat with Secretary Tillerson, or at least some of our representatives later today. So an important NATO ally," Nauert said.

The Turkish Foreign Minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, told reporters following his meeting with U.S. counterpart Rex Tillerson in Canada that Turkey **might** expand

their operation to Manbij and east of Euphrates river.

“In terms of what is going on in Syria, the United States is in Syria to defeat ISIS. Any activities that we take part in with regard to the Syrian Democratic Forces is something that’s internal only – internal only to Syria,” she added.

“And I say that because it is important that we defeat ISIS, that we make sure – and when I say “we,” I say that not just on behalf of the United States, but the entire coalition, the 72 or 73-member coalition – the importance of not letting ISIS take root the way that they had before and further destabilize that country. So that – what the United States is involved with in regards to the Syrian Democratic Forces or the SDF is that, to defeat ISIS. That is solely what it is for. The internal purpose is of defeating ISIS,” she stated.

However, she refused to answer a question regarding what the U.S. will do if Turkey attacks the SDF-linked border force.

“I’m not going to get into any kind of hypothetical like that,” she said.

Although yesterday evening Turkey shelled several villages again near Afrin, residents in Afrin told the Region that so-far the situation was stable.

“Afrin is not located within the Coalition's area of operations”, a US Military spokesperson told The Region by email when asked if the US-led coalition was worried about a possible Turkish offensive against the Kurds in Afrin.

"The coalition's mission has not changed: to defeat ISIS in designated areas of Iraq and Syria and set conditions for follow-on operations to increase regional stability," Coalition spokesperson Ryan Dillon [told](#) the Turkish government news agency Anadolu who confirmed to the Region that he gave this statement.

"We are not operating in Afrin. We are supporting our partners in defeating remaining ISIS pockets along the Middle Euphrates River Valley, specifically in areas north of Abu Kamal, on the eastern side of the Euphrates River."

The People’s Protection Units (YPG) commander Sipan Hemo warned that the Kurds would hold local and global powers responsible if Turkey attacks.

“Should Iran, Russia, Syria and even the U.S. not approve this in one way or another, Turkey cannot carry out such an attack because International law will not allow it as states have many laws that prevent this,” he [told](#) ANF English.

“Should the mentioned states fail to manifest a serious attitude in such a case, the Kurdish people will hold all of them responsible,” he added.