

U.S. lifts sanctions on two top Turkish officials

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The United States said on Friday it lifted sanctions imposed on two top officials in Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan's cabinet, a sign of improved relations after Turkey freed an American pastor from detention three weeks ago.

The United States had imposed sanctions on Justice Minister Abdulhamit Gul and Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu in August over the case of American pastor Andrew Brunson.

Turkey promptly matched the move on Friday by lifting sanctions on two corresponding U.S. officials - U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen and Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

Brunson, who had lived in Turkey for more than 20 years, had been accused of masterminding the 2016 coup attempt against Erdogan. He was allowed to return to the United States in October after two years of detention.

Erdogan and Trump had discussed improving frosty relations between Washington and Ankara during a call between the two leaders, the Turkish presidency said on Thursday.

The White House did not have any immediate comment on the lifting of the sanctions.