

Turkey says U.S. must break from Syrian Kurds after PKK reward offer

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Turkey gave a guarded welcome on Wednesday to a U.S. decision to offer millions of dollars to help capture three top Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) members but said Washington must also break its alliance with Kurdish forces in northern Syria.

Washington pledged up to \$5 million for information which could lead to the arrest of PKK military commander Murat Karayilan, and lesser rewards for two other leaders of the group.

The surprise move followed a series of steps in the last month which have eased a diplomatic crisis between the two NATO allies. However, they remain deeply divided, including over U.S. support for Kurdish YPG fighters in northern Syria.

Turkey says the YPG is indistinguishable from the PKK and demands the United States stop support for the Syrian Kurds - a U.S. ally against Islamic State in Syria.

Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said the U.S. rewards offer was a positive but "very,

very late" step, and called on Washington to adopt the same policy to the YPG as it did to the PKK.

"It is not possible for us to accept putting a bounty on PKK leaders on the one hand, and sending trucks of tools, weapons and ammunition to the YPG on the other," he told state-owned Anadolu news agency.

Turkey's foreign ministry also said it expected the United States to support the announcement with concrete action in Syria and Iraq "against the PKK and its extensions".

Turkey has regularly launched cross-border strikes into northern Iraq, targeting what it says are PKK bases near the group's Qandil mountains stronghold.

In Syria, where Turkey has conducted two military incursions into the northwest since 2016, President Tayyip Erdogan has also threatened to extend operations in northeastern border regions where YPG forces operate. He issued a "final warning" two weeks ago to anyone he said was endangering Turkey's border.

Washington announced this week that Turkey would receive a temporary waiver from oil sanctions reimposed on Iran, and Erdogan said talks on a possible U.S. fine against state-owned Halkbank over allegations of Iran sanctions evasion were on a positive track.

U.S. and Turkish troops last week began joint patrols in northern Syria's Manbij area after months of delay, and U.S. President Donald Trump and Erdogan are to meet this weekend at a summit in Paris.