

U.S Syria withdrawal depends on protection of Kurds - Bolton

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Donald Trump's national security advisor John Bolton says the withdrawal of troops from Syria depends on a guarantee that Turkey will not target the United States' Kurdish allies. David Doyle reports

The withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria came with a new condition on Sunday (January 6) - that Turkey agrees to protect the United States' Kurdish allies.

That announcement coming from President Donald Trump's national security advisor John Bolton, currently in Israel as part of a four-day trip.

His next destination is Turkey, where Bolton said he would stress with officials including President Tayyip Erdogan that Kurds must be safeguarded.

Trump's abrupt decision to announce a pullout of approximately 2,000 troops from Syria raised the question of whether Kurdish fighters in the north would now be targeted by their longtime foe Turkey.

Kurdish-led areas in northern and eastern Syria amount to around one-quarter of the country - the largest chunk of territory outside Bashar al-Assad's control.

The main Kurdish faction is the Democratic Union Party, or PYD. It's affiliated to the People's Protection Units, or YPG, and is influenced by the ideas of Abdullah Ocalan, a founding member of the Kurdistan Worker's Party or PKK.

Turkey sees the PYD and YPG as indistinguishable from the PKK - which has waged a decades-long insurgency in Turkey.

But on Sunday a Turkish presidential spokesman said it was irrational to claim that Ankara targets Kurds - instead of saying it goes after the YPG and PKK, as well as Islamic State.