

# Republican senator Graham holds Syria talks with Turkey's Erdogan

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U.S. Republican Senator Lindsey Graham met Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu in Ankara on Friday (January 18) with the latest developments in Syria high on the agenda.

The visit comes amid tensions between Turkey and the United States over the fate of U.S.-allied Kurdish fighters in Syria, with Washington insisting they not be harmed and Ankara rejecting a perceived U.S. threat to punish Turkey economically if it attacked them.

Graham, who over the past year or so has been a staunch supporter of U.S. President Donald Trump, was also scheduled to meet Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar and Intelligence Chief Hakan Fidan before winding up his visit.

U.S.-Turkish relations have been strained by U.S. support for the Kurdish YPG, which Turkey views as a terrorist group and an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) that has for decades waged an insurgency in Turkey for Kurdish rights.

The Kurdish YPG has been a U.S. ally in the fight against the Islamic State (ISIS) jihadists and it controls swaths of northern Syria. Erdogan has vowed to crush it in the wake of Trump's decision to pull troops out.