
US: 200 'Peacekeeping' Troops to Remain in Syria

22/02/2019



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The White House announced Thursday its plan to keep a small peacekeeping unit of troops in Syria. The statement retracts U.S. President Donald Trump's [announcement in December](#), in which he declared victory over the Islamic State and said that he would [withdraw all 2,000 forces](#) from the country after four years of deployment.

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The announcement was made after a phone call between the U.S. president and president of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in which the leaders agreed to maintain efforts to create a ["safe zone"](#) near the Turkish border. This action marks the second time Trump has come to a major decision regarding Syria after conversing with the Turkish president.

White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders, in an address to the press, said the "small peacekeeping group of about 200 will remain in Syria for a period of time." Sanders, however, did not clarify where or how long the troops will remain in the region, or if they would be under the United Nations (UN) authority.

The UN typically oversees peacekeeping missions in conflict zones.

A Trump official noted that the duties of the remaining troops include providing logistics, intelligence, surveillance, and necessary information for [directing airstrikes](#), which falls outside the peacekeeping mission. Peacekeeping tasks mainly reference maintaining cooperative relations between [Turkey and Kurdish-led Surian Democratic Forces](#), who are the United States' primary ally in the fight against the Islamic State.

An associate professor at the Near East South Asia Center for Security Studies and former Pentagon official, David Des Roches, charges that other motives, for the announcement, are afoot. "It's not a large number of forces. It's too small to be militarily significant. So it has to be political."

UNITED STATES SENATE



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
February 21, 2019

Contact: [Toby Tyler](#) or [Kevin Bishop](#)
(202) 224-5972 / (864) 250-1417

GRAHAM APPLAUDS TRUMP DECISION TO LEAVE TROOPS IN SYRIA

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina) made this statement on reports President Trump will leave 200 American troops in Syria.

"I applaud President Trump's decision to leave a small contingent of American forces in Syria as part of an international stabilizing force.

"This will ensure ISIS does not return and Iran does not fill the vacuum that would have been left if we completely withdrew. This also ensures Turkey and SDF elements that helped us defeat ISIS will not go into conflict.

"A safe zone in Syria made up of international forces is the best way to achieve our national security objectives of continuing to contain Iran, ensuring the enduring defeat of ISIS, protecting our Turkish allies, and securing the Turkish border with Syria.

"With this decision, President Trump has decided to follow sound military advice. This decision will ensure that we will not repeat the mistakes of Iraq, in Syria. For a small fraction of the forces we have had in Syria, we can accomplish our national security objectives.

"Well done Mr. President."

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Trump's announcement to withdraw troops in December garnered both internal and external criticism.

[Former defense secretary](#) Jim Mattis, and [special presidential envoy](#) to the coalition fighting the Islamic State, Brett McGurk, both resigned in protest. Additionally, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham raised concern of the potential threat of [Iran or Russia](#) filling the vacuum that would be created due to the absence of U.S. troops.

European allies also threatened to leave the region if U.S. troops were pulled. The new announcement encourages France and Britain to keep troops in Syria.