Trump says he will 'devastate Turkey economically' if it attacks Kurds

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President tweets blunt warning over Syria troop pullout, drawing a swift response from Ankara.

Donald Trump has warned Turkey of economic devastation if it attacks Kurdish forces in the wake of the [US troop pullout from Syria](), while also urging the Kurds not to "provoke" Ankara.

"Will devastate Turkey economically if they hit Kurds," Trump [tweeted](), while pushing for the creation of a 20-mile 'safe zone'. He then [added](): "Likewise, do not want the Kurds to provoke Turkey."

Trump did not detail who would create, enforce or pay for the safe zone, or where it would be located.

He called the [Syria]() pullout "long overdue" but said the US would still hit "the little remaining Isis territorial caliphate hard, and from many directions. Will attack again from existing nearby base if it reforms."

"Russia, Iran and Syria have been the biggest beneficiaries of the long term US policy of destroying ISIS in Syria – natural enemies. We also benefit but it is now

time to bring our troops back home. Stop the ENDLESS WARS!"

The posts drew a swift response from Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdo?an's spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin. "Mr @realDonaldTrump It is a fatal mistake to equate Syrian Kurds with the PKK, which is on the US terrorists list, and its Syria branch PYD/YPG," spokesman Ibrahim Kalin wrote on Twitter.

"Terrorists can't be your partners & allies. Turkey expects the US to honor our strategic partnership and doesn't want it to be shadowed by terrorist propaganda," he said.

Trump's Twitter posts on Sunday were the the latest in the slow drip-drip of information being released by his administration after his shock December announcement of a troop withdrawal.

Trump's top diplomat, Mike Pompeo, is on a whirlwind regional tour aimed at reassuring Washington's Kurdish allies in the fight against Isis. They fear the departure of American troops would allow Turkey to attack them.

Turkey had reacted angrily to previous suggestions that Trump's plan to withdraw troops was conditional on the safety of the US-backed Kurdish fighters, who are seen by the Turkish government as terrorists.

US-led operations against Isis in Syria have been spearheaded on the ground by the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

Ankara sees the backbone of that alliance, the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), as a terrorist group linked to the Kurdistan Workers party (PKK) which has fought a decades-long insurgency against the Turkish state.

On Saturday, more than 600 people were evacuated from the remaining Isis holdout in eastern Syria, a monitor said, as US-backed fighters prepared for a final assault on the area.

Rami Abdel Rahman from the British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said several dozen jihadist fighters were among those evacuated to areas held by the Kurdish-Arab alliance.

Abdel Rahman said 16,000 people, including 760 Isis fighters, had fled the area since the start of December, though this marked the first time the SDF and the coalition provided buses, suggesting a deal struck between the warring sides.

The United Nations said on Friday 25,000 people had fled the violence over the past six months as jihadists defend their dwindling bastions.

An estimated 2,000 civilians remain trapped in the area around the town of Hajin,

the United Nations said.

The US-led coalition on Saturday fired more than 20 missiles against jihadist positions, the observatory said.

The monitor said 300 SDF combatants had deployed near the village of Sousa in preparation for a final assault.

Agence France-Presse and Reuters contributed to this article