

# US Declares War on Turkish Tourism Economy. Ankara Retorts: “Take Your Dirty Hands off Turkey”

By [Steven Sahiounie](#)  
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## GR Editor’s Note

*Is this initiative to undermine Turkey’s tourism industry in any way related to the fact that Turkey, which is a “NATO heavyweight” is also [a firm ally of the Russian Federation, who is “sleeping with the enemy”](#). Sounds contradictory.*

*Turkey has opted in favor of Russia’s “State of the Art” S-400. That acquisition of Russian military technology is part of a concurrent military cooperation agreement as well an alliance between Turkey and Russia established in the immediate aftermath of the failed July 2016 US sponsored coup d’Etat directed against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.*

*Is the destabilization of the tourist industry a preamble to US interference in Turkey’s May elections?*

Michel Chossudovsky, Global Research, February 6, 2023

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*On February 3, the Turkish interior minister, Suleyman Soylu, blasted the US Ambassador to Turkey, [Jeffrey L. Flake](#), saying, “[Take your dirty hands off of Turkey.](#)”*

*The outrage was prompted after Washington and eight European countries issued travel warnings over possible terror attacks in Turkey. The US and its western allies have attempted to connect a recent Quran burning in Sweden with travel danger inside Turkey. Muslim countries worldwide have denounced the burning as hate speech, not free speech, but this has no apparent connection to travel safety issues inside Turkey.*

The US travel warning is tantamount to a declaration of economic war on Turkey who is in an economic downturn of its tourism sector, which was 11 % of the GDP in 2019, representing \$78.2 billion, and rose to \$17.95 billion in the third quarter of 2022, of which

85.7 percent came from foreign visitors. In 2018, tourism directly accounted for 7.7% of total employment in Turkey.

“Every American ambassador wonders how they can hurt Turkey. This has been one of Turkey’s greatest misfortunes over the years. It gathers other ambassadors and tries to give them advice. They are doing the same thing in Europe, the [American embassy is running Europe](#),” said Soylu.

Soylu has criticized the US and blames Washington for the 2016 Turkish regime change attempt, and has accused the US of ruling Europe. In foreign policies, the EU follows US directives implicitly.

“I’m being very clear. I very well know how you would like to create strife in Turkey. Take your grinning face off from Turkey,” said Soylu.

Ankara warned its citizens abroad to be aware of possible anti-Islamic attacks in the US and Europe following the burning of the Quran in Sweden. Turkey later summoned the nine ambassadors, including Flake, for talks over the warnings.

Soylu condemned the European consulate closures in Turkey as an attempt to meddle in campaigning for Turkey’s presidential and parliamentary elections, which are scheduled for May 14.

Soylu and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan have suggested that the western states had issued the security warnings in order to pressure Turkey to tone down its criticism of the Quran burning and resolve the NATO dispute in which Erdogan has voiced opposition to Sweden joining the bloc.

After a right-wing Swedish Radical Christian burned the Quran in front of the Turkish embassy in Stockholm, Erdogan threatened that he would never consent to Swedish accession.

Sweden previously has refused to extradite the 120 terrorists Turkey has demanded, and the US Senate has made it clear that if Turkey does not approve Swedish accession, arms sales to Turkey, specifically F-16s, will not be authorized.

## Turkish elections

Turkish elections are scheduled for May 14, and will be the toughest reelection fight of Erdogan’s career, and he and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) may lose the election.

The six-party opposition coalition, composed of two larger and four smaller parties, has managed to present a unified front. The opposition to Erdogan support the restoration of Turkey’s parliamentary system and the curtailment of presidential powers.

Erdogan’s fear has grown so strong that he used the courts to ban a leading potential opposition candidate, Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, from running for the CHP. However, polls suggest that Ankara’s mayor, Mansur Yavas, could beat Erdogan.

The state has more overtly targeted some political parties, especially the pro-Kurdish,

People's Democracy Party (HDP). This left-leaning party was not invited into the opposition coalition, but HDP supporters will vote against Erdogan.

## Biden supports opposition to Erdogan

US President Joe Biden hosted an emergency meeting on Nov. 16 in Bali, Indonesia, with NATO and EU leaders to discuss a response to a missile blast in Poland, but [Turkey was not invited](#). The meeting was held during the Group of 20 summit, and Turkey was present, but Biden snubbed them from the emergency meeting.

Turkey has been a full-fledged member of North Atlantic Treaty Organization since 1952, commands its second-largest military and has protected the southern flank of the alliance for 70 years.

Erdogan was again snubbed by Biden in December 2021 at the US hosted virtual 'Summit for Democracy'. In a New York Times interview published in 2020, the then candidate Biden called Erdogan an "autocrat."

"What I think we should be doing is taking a very different approach to him now, making it clear that [we support opposition leadership](#)," Biden said.

"He has to pay a price," Biden said, adding that Washington should embolden Turkish opposition leaders "to be able to take on and defeat Erdogan. Not by a coup, not by a coup, but by the electoral process."

Turkey recognized a clear attack by Biden using election meddling as a tool.

"The days of ordering Turkey around are over. But if you still think you can try, be our guest. You will pay the price." [Erdogan's spokesman Ibrahim Kalin tweeted](#).

The analysis of Turkey by [@JoeBiden](#) is based on pure ignorance, arrogance and hypocrisy.

The days of ordering Turkey around are over.

But if you still think you can try, be our guest.

You will pay the price.

— Ibrahim Kalin (@ikalin1) [August 16, 2020](#)

The main opposition CHP party quickly distanced themselves from Biden's remarks of election meddling, calling for "respect for the sovereignty of Turkey".

Turkey's six-party opposition will select its candidate to run against Erdogan on February 13, CHP leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu said.

## Obama and Erdogan

When President Obama conceived of his attack in Syria for regime change in 2011, using Radical Islamic terrorists as his foot soldiers, he called upon Erdogan to play a crucial role.

Turkey hosted the CIA office which ran the Timber Sycamore program which trained and provided weapons for the Free Syrian Army. Erdogan also took in over 3 million Syria refugees fleeing the violence. Erdogan authorized his security forces to transport weapons to the terrorists in Syria.

Erdogan was a follower of the Muslim Brotherhood who provided the political ideology for the Free Syrian Army (FSA), who were terrorists attacking unarmed civilians, but were reported by the US and western media as 'rebels'.

However, the FSA disbanded due to lack of public support in Syria, and Al Qaeda stepped in to take its place, and finally ISIS emerged as the toughest terrorist group.

In 2017, President Trump cut off the CIA program in Turkey, and supporting of the Al Qaeda branch in Idlib, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham was left to Erdogan. The US-NATO attack on Syria failed to produce regime change, but the country was partly destroyed in the process. Now, Erdogan proposes a reset in relations with Damascus, and is on track to establish business and diplomatic ties once more.

The US State Department has issued warnings and threats to Erdogan if he follows through on his plan to have a neighborly relationship with Syria. Erdogan needs to make peace with Syria to return the 3.6 million Syrian refugees back home, and revive exports to Syria which will be a huge boost to the Turkish economy. If he accomplishes this soon, he has a good chance at winning reelection in May.

## Kurds-PKK-YPG

A deadly terrorist bombing of a shopping district in Istanbul last November was carried out by a Syrian Kurd. The message was directed at Erdogan: don't attack the YPG in north east Syria, or else. Those Kurds are supported by the US military illegally occupying parts of Syria.

The US partnered with the YPG to fight the ISIS, and both Erdogan and the opposition view that as a betrayal of a fellow NATO member, and US ally. The YPG is directly linked with the PKK, an internationally designated terrorist organization and a threat to Turkey's national security.

[Erdogan has threatened a new military operation in Syria](#) to disarm the YPG regardless of their US partnership. The Syrian special envoy under Trump, James Jeffrey, advised the Kurds to repair their relationship with Damascus, as the US was not going to fight any war to defend them. The Kurd's usefulness to the US was over. Recently, the Turkish air force has been bombing them, with shells falling a few hundred feet from US personnel stationed there.

Erdogan has asked Russian President Vladimir Putin for a green light to attack the Kurds in Syria, but was cautioned against it. However, the time might be ripe for a Turkish attack on the Kurds, which would disarm them and probably would lead to a withdrawal of the 200 American troops.

## Turkey removed M4 outpost

On February 2, [Turkish troops in Syria evacuated a military outpost](#) near the M4 highway that connects the cities of Aleppo and Latakia. The former Al Qaeda branch in Syria, Hayat

Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), occupy Idlib, the last terrorist controlled area in Syria.

Turkey had been defending the HTS from attacks from Syrian Arab Army, and the Russian military. However, Erdogan has decided to drop his support of the armed opposition as he repairs his relationship with Syria.

On January 31, Ankara informed the HTS leadership of its plan to conduct patrols on the HTS-controlled portion of the M4 (Aleppo-Latakia) road, which “may be followed by joint patrols with Russia, and eventually with Syria.”

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