Turkish president says he won't hold talks with U.S. delegation on Ankara visit

Ankara, October 16 (RHC)-- Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says he would not meet with U.S. Vice President Mike Pence and State Secretary Mike Pompeo during their visit to Ankara to discuss a ground offensive by his country's military forces and allied militants against Kurdish forces in the northern part of Syria.

"I am standing tall. I will not meet with them," he told Sky News television news network on Wednesday. "They will meet with their counterparts. I will speak when (U.S. President Donald) Trump comes," he added.

Later in the day, Turkish Presidential Communications Director Fahrettin Altun wrote on his official Twitter page that Erdogan would receive U.S. officials led by Pence, who are travelling to Ankara in the hope of convincing him to halt the military offensive in northeast Syria.
"Earlier today, the President told @SkyNews that he won't receive a U.S. delegation that is visiting Ankara today. He does plan to meet the US delegation led by @VP (Pence)," Altun wrote.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Turkey will retaliate against US sanctions over his

country's military incursion into northeast Syria. Speaking in parliament on Wednesday, Cavusoglu described all threats and sanctions against Turkey as unacceptable, adding that Ankara expected the US Congress to turn back from its "damaging approach."

The U.S. has imposed sanctions on two Turkish ministries and three senior government officials following the country's military offensive against Kurdish militants in Syria. The sanctions apply to individuals, entities or associates of the Turkish government involved in "actions that endanger civilians or lead to the further deterioration of peace, security and stability in northeast Syria," Pompeo said in a statement.

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