



Erdogan Says Turkey Won't Drop Opposition to Sweden, Finland NATO Bids

Description

TURKEY: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan stood firm on Thursday in his opposition to Finland and Sweden's bids for NATO membership, saying Ankara [will not drop its objections](#).

"We have told our relevant friends we would say 'no' to Finland and Sweden's entry into NATO, and we will continue on our path like this," Erdogan said.

Turkey is opposed to the Nordic countries joining NATO over their alleged support for the PKK, a Kurdish militant group Turkey and the US consider a terrorist organization. "NATO is a security alliance and we cannot accept terrorists to be in it," Erdogan said.

Ankara also wants Finland and Sweden to lift arms export restrictions they imposed on Turkey in 2019 after Erdogan launched an offensive in northeast Syria in 2019. "We cannot say 'yes' to those who impose sanctions on Turkey, on joining NATO," Erdogan said earlier in the week.

On Wednesday, Sweden and Finland formally applied to join the military alliance, but Turkey blocked the alliance from holding early talks on their memberships. In order for the countries to join, all 30 NATO members need to consent.

Finnish President Sauli Niinisto [visited Washington on Thursday](#) and said Helsinki was working to convince Ankara to lift its objection. "We are open to discussing all the concerns Turkey may have concerning our membership in an open and constructive manner. These discussions have already taken place, and they will continue in the next days," he said.

The US and most other NATO members have welcomed the Nordic countries' applications and appear to be confident that they will be able to join despite Turkey's seemingly firm stance. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said [that he expects the dispute with Turkey to be resolved](#).

By Dave DeCamp

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