

MOSCOW (TASS) -- A roadmap for developing military and technical cooperation between Russia and Iran will be worked out in the next four years, senior researcher of the Center for Middle East Studies Vladimir Sazhin said on Friday. "Large-scale groundwork has been laid for the future," the researcher said at a roundtable discussion. "Now already four years have been left (until the embargo on the delivery of heavy offensive weapons to Iran is lifted). I believe that precisely over this time a file will be worked out for developing military and technical cooperation," the expert said.

TEHRAN (Tasnim) -- An Iranian diplomat on Friday rejected remarks by Rex Tillerson, Trump's pick for secretary of state, on a possible revision of the July 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers, saying the agreement can never be negotiated again. Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht Ravanchi said Iran "has many times reiterated that the JCPOA dossier will not open again at any rate." He pointed to a recent session of the JCPOA Joint Commission, saying the sessions was held at the request of Iran to deal with the U.S. failure to fulfill its obligations under the deal over the past year.

Viewpoint

By Kayhan Int'l Staff Writer

Who Is the Biggest Destabilizing Force in Middle East?

Abadan to Build world's Largest Maritime Museum



Siamand Rahman Shortlisted for 2017 Laureus Award



Iraq Forces Seize Tigris Bridge, Enter Mosul University



Yemeni Troops Fight Saudi Mercs Near Bab al-Mandeb

SANA'A (Dispatches) -- Yemeni armed forces have reportedly engaged in heavy fighting with pro-Saudi militants near the strategic Bab al-Mandeb Strait in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula state.

The clashes broke out on Friday after Saudi mercenaries, backed by Riyadh's military aircraft, seized the al-Zabab region of southern Yemen and the heights overlooking the al-Amri military base in the area, Yemen 24 reported.

According to militant sources, 11 Houthi Ansarullah fighters and eight militiamen loyal to the former Yemeni government were killed in the battles.

The sources said Saudi-backed militants are now advancing towards the areas near the Red Sea port city of Mokha.

Bab al-Mandab Strait is the narrow waterway separating the Arabian Peninsula from the Horn of Africa and links the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean.

It is a key strategic channel for commerce and trade, with an estimated four percent of global oil supply passing through it.

The developments come as Saudi fighter jets continue their deadly air raids against civilian targets in

Yemen.

In the early hours of Friday, at least 17 people were killed and 13 others injured after Riyadh's warplanes attacked Yemen's southwestern province of Ta'izz.

The air raids hit residential buildings, economic centers and infrastructure in the area. The Saudi warplanes also bombarded Raze district in the northwestern province of Sa'ada, using cluster bombs.

The developments came as United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) representative in Yemen Meritxell Relano said almost 1,400 children have been killed and 2,140 injured as a result of the conflict in Yemen.

The Saudi war on Yemen, which has reportedly killed at least 11,400 Yemenis, was launched in an unsuccessful attempt to reinstate the former government.

The offensive has also taken a heavy toll on the country's facilities and infrastructure, destroying many hospitals, schools and factories.

The Yemeni army, backed by Ansarullah fighters and allied popular committees, have been defending the country against the Saudi aggression.

Airport Near Damascus Hit After Army Advances: Zionist Regime Scrambles to Save Terrorists



Smoke is seen rising from Mezzah airport near Damascus following a rocket attack by the occupying regime of Israel, early Jan. 13, 2016.

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) -- The Syrian army has retaken a village in the strategic Wadi Barada area in the countryside of Damascus, which hosts water supplies to the capital and its surroundings.

Troops on Thursday advanced into the village of Bassimeh where Damascus' main river Barada as well as a spring supplying the capital's general area with water are located.

Since late December, 2016, government forces have been fighting in the area with Takfiri militants who have damaged the water processing facilities there and reduced water flow to some five million

people in the city.

As troops overwhelmed terrorists, the Syrian military said the occupying regime of Israel fired rockets early on Friday that hit near a major military airport west of Damascus that was used to attack the militants.

In a statement carried on the official news agency SANA, the Syrian military said several missiles were launched just after midnight from an area near Lake Tiberias in the third such attack recently, triggering a massive fire.

The rockets fell in the vicinity of the Mezzeh military airport on the western edge of the Syrian capital.

Residents of Damascus reported hearing several explosions that shook the city.

The Mezzeh airport compound, located on the southwestern edge of the capital, had been used to launch attacks on militant-held areas near Damascus and has come previously under terrorist fire.

The Syrian army said the Zionist regime, through its attacks, is assisting "terrorist groups" fighting the Syrian government.

"The Syrian army command and armed forces warn the Israeli enemy of the repercussions of this blatant attack and stress it will continue its

war on terrorism," the statement said.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry blamed Western countries and their regional allies for the Israeli regime's continued aggression against the Arab country in two separate letters addressed to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and rotating president of the UN Security Council Olof Skoog.

"The new Israeli missile attack on Mezzeh military airport comes within a long series of Israeli attacks since the beginning of the terrorist war on the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Syria," the two identical letters said.

They added that the ongoing Syria conflict was "planned by Israeli, French and British intelligence agencies and is being pursued by their agents in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar and other countries that want to impose their hegemony on Syria and the region."

Last month, the occupying regime of Israel fired surface-to-surface missiles that also struck near the Mezzeh airport. A week earlier, SANA said Israeli jets fired two missiles from Lebanese airspace toward the outskirts of Damascus, in the Sabboura area.

The Zionist regime has repeatedly attacked Syrian military targets elsewhere in what is viewed as an attempt to prop up terrorist groups in the face of the army advances.

Last September, an Israeli lawmaker said Tel Aviv was directly aiding the terrorist group formerly known as the Nusra Front in the

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Refugees Dying in Dire Europe Winter: UN

GENEVA (AFP) -- Refugees and migrants are dying in Europe's cold snap and governments must do more to help them rather than pushing them back from borders and subjecting them to violence, the UN refugee agency UNHCR said on Friday.

"Children are particularly prone to respiratory illnesses at a time like this. It's about saving lives, not about red tape and keeping to bureaucratic arrangements," Sarah Crowe, a spokeswoman for the UN children's agency UNICEF told a UN briefing in Geneva. "The dire situation right now is Greece."

UNHCR spokeswoman Cecile Pouilly cited five deaths so far from cold and said about 1,000 people including children were in unheated tents and dormitories on the Greek island of Samos, calling for them to be transferred to shelter on the mainland.

Hundreds of others had been moved to better accommodation on the islands of Lesbos and Chios in the past few days.

In Serbia, about 80% of the 7,300 refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are staying in heated government shelters, but 1,200 men were sleeping rough in informal sites in Belgrade.

The bodies of two Iraqi men and a young Somali woman were found

close to the Turkish border in Bulgaria and two Somali teenagers were hospitalized with frostbite after five days in a forest, Pouilly said. The body of a young Pakistani man was found along the same border in late December.

A 20-year-old Afghan man died after crossing the Evros River on the Greece-Turkey land border at night when temperatures were below -10C. The body of a young Pakistani man was found on the Turkish side of the border with Bulgaria.

"Given the harsh winter conditions, we are particularly concerned by reports that authorities in all countries along the Western Balkans route continue to push back refugees and migrants from inside their territory to neighboring countries," Pouilly said.

Some refugees and migrants said police subjected them to violence and many said their phones were confiscated or destroyed, preventing them from calling for help, she said.

"Some even reported items of clothing being confiscated thus further exposing them to the harsh winter conditions," she said. "These practices are simply unacceptable and must be stopped."

Joel Millman, spokesman for the

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First Airbus Inducted Into Iran Aviation Fleet

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- The first of 100 Airbus planes that Iran purchased following its nuclear deal with world powers arrived in Tehran on Thursday, heralding a new chapter for the country's aging and accident-prone fleet after years of sanctions.

The Iran Air A321 jet touched down after a flight from Toulouse, France, where the headquarters of the European consortium are located. The 189-seat plane is the first of 100 purchased under a December deal worth \$18 billion.

Transport Minister Abbas Akhoundi told reporters at an airport ceremony that the plane would be used for domestic flights. The ISNA news agency quoted him as saying another two Airbus jetliners would be delivered in the next two months.

Iran is hoping to rapidly upgrade its fleet now that sanctions have been lifted under the 2015 nuclear accord, in which Tehran pledged to curb its uranium enrichment.

Most of Iran's aging fleet of 250

commercial planes was purchased before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and as of June, only 162 were operational, with the rest grounded because of a lack of spare parts.

Iran Air, whose website lists a fleet of 43 planes, offers direct flights to over 30 international destinations, including London.

The company recently sealed a separate agreement to buy 80 planes from Boeing, beginning next year.

The election of Donald Trump, however, has cast doubt over the future of the deal. He repeatedly criticized the nuclear agreement on the campaign trail but has not said what he plans to do about it once in office.

Akhoundi said Iran hopes the U.S. "continues to remain true to its commitments" under the new administration.

"We hope that America's political community has reached a level of maturity and accountability to create an atmosphere so that the

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U.S. Plans in Al-Quds 'Assault' on Muslims

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) -- Jerusalem Al-Quds' grand mufti on Friday branded plans by president-elect Donald Trump to move the U.S. embassy in Occupied Palestine to Jerusalem Al-Quds an "assault on Muslims across the globe."

"The pledge to move the embassy is not just an assault against Palestinians but against Arabs and Muslims, who will not remain silent," Muhammad Hussein said in a sermon at Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem Al-Quds' Old City.

On Tuesday, Palestinian leaders called for Friday prayers at mosques across the Middle East this week to protest Trump's campaign pledge.

There have been warnings that the move would constitute recognizing Jerusalem Al-Quds as the occupying regime of Israel's capital and could inflame tensions in the Middle East and possibly sink what remains of peace efforts.

"The transfer of the embassy violates international charters and norms which recognize Al-Quds as an occupied city,"

Hussein said in his sermon, avoiding mentioning Trump by name.

The Palestinians regard East Jerusalem Al-Quds as the capital of their future state, while the occupying regime of Israel proclaims the entire city as its capital.

The city's status is one of the thorniest issues of the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Zionist regime occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem Al-Quds in 1967. It later annexed East Jerusalem Al-Quds in a move never recognized by the international community.

Muhammad Shtayyeh, a senior Palestinian official and Fatah central committee member, said on Tuesday that the Palestinian leadership had been informed by diplomatic contacts that Trump could call for the move in his inauguration speech on January 20.

The Palestinians have added the issue to the agenda of a meeting of foreign ministers from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on January 19 in Malaysia, he added.