

Senior Official: Saudis Angered By Hezbollah Anti-Terror Fight

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – A senior Hezbollah official says Riyadh’s “anger and failure in the region” is behind its hostile stance against the Lebanese resistance movement, which has been battling Takfiri groups in Syria.

In recent months, Saudi Arabia has cranked up its pressure on Lebanon amid Hezbollah’s gains against Takfiri terrorists in Syria.

In March, the Arab League and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), both under Riyadh’s influence, decided to classify Hezbollah as a terrorist organization under the Saudi pressure.

“Saudi Arabia and its allies’ anger and failure in the region prompted them to take revenge on the resistance in Lebanon because it has been a staunch supporter of the resistance in Syria,” the deputy head of Hezbollah’s executive council Nabil Qaouk said Monday.

He further said Saudi Arabia and its allies have failed to break the will of Hezbollah, and that no one would be able to defeat the resistance front “no matter what resolutions they adopt.”

Last month, Saudi Arabia suspended a \$3-billion package to the Lebanese army and \$1 billion in aid to its internal security forces.



Nabil Qaouk, the deputy head of Hezbollah’s executive council, speaks during a memorial in Qana town in southern Lebanon on May 2, 2016.

Hezbollah slammed Riyadh’s move and said it exposes the real face of Saudi Arabia and refutes its claims about fighting terrorism.

Qaouk further stressed his movement’s steadfastness in fulfilling its duties, saying “We will never back down on our duty to protect our people against the Takfiri and Israeli aggression.”

He further said the resistance “is stronger on the battlefield,” and expressed Hezbollah’s determination to score more victories against its enemies.

“Those who are fighting the resistance will only be disappointed over and over again,” he added.

The Hezbollah official also accused Saudi Arabia, Israel and the

United States of supporting ISIL in a “clear attempt to topple the regimes” in Iraq and Syria.

ISIL “in those countries is witnessing an inevitable end due to the accomplishments of the Syrian and Iraqi armies and their allies, which will change all equations in the region,” the Hezbollah official said.

UN Committee to Grill Zionist Regime on Torture

NEW YORK (Dispatches) – The UN Committee Against Torture is to question the Zionist regime on its policies with regard to torture.

Israeli authorities are to appear before the panel over Tuesday and Wednesday as part of a routine procedure implemented by the world body as Tel Aviv has signed the 1991 UN Convention Against Torture.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the committee is to raise with the Israeli authorities such issues as the conditions of Palestinian detainees, including minors, the demolition of Palestinian homes, settler violence against Palestinians, and Israeli investigations of torture complaints.

The authorities representing the Zionist regime before the panel are likely to argue that the

convention’s jurisdiction does not apply to the West Bank as it is under the military control and not the “full control” of the regime.

The committee refuted the Israeli claim in a 2012 report, saying Tel Aviv was to observe the convention in all the areas “subject to the de jure or de facto control” of the regime.

It said the regime “and its personnel have repeatedly entered and established control over the West Bank and Gaza.”

The regime was established in 1948, when it occupied Palestinian land along with expanses of other Arab territories during full-fledged military operations. The occupied lands also include Lebanon’s Shebaa Farms and Syria’s Golan Heights.

In 1967, it occupied the Palestinian territories of the West Bank, including East al-Quds, and the Gaza Strip. It later annexed the West Bank and East al-Quds in a move never recognized by the international community.

Tel Aviv withdrew from Gaza in 2005, but has been keeping the territory under a crippling siege and regular deadly offensives.

The regime’s “obligation to prevent acts of torture or ill-treatment in any territory under its jurisdiction must be interpreted and applied to protect any person, citizen or non-citizen, without discrimination,” the UN’s 2012 report had said.

Zionist troops routinely abduct Palestinians in the West Bank and put them behind bars based on the so-called administrative detention policy.

Iraqi Forces Liberate Hit-Hadithah Road in Anbar



Members of the Iraqi security force attend a training camp near Fallujah, Anbar Province.

BAGHDAD (Press TV) – Iraqi forces have liberated a strategic road between the cities of Hit and Hadithah in Anbar Province from ISIL as they press on with the anti-terror operation in the area.

Iraq’s joint operations command,

which is coordinating the battle, said in a statement on Monday that troops advanced along the Euphrates River, retaking control of several villages in Anbar.

The army’s 7th division advancing from al-Baghdadi met counter-terrorism

forces moving up from the city of Hit in the opposite side, gaining control of the key highway.

“The road is therefore open between Hit and Hadithah, via al-Baghdadi, after an 18-month siege by the terrorists of ISIL,” Iraq’s joint operations command said.

“The siege of Hadithah and al-Baghdadi was broken after liberating the strategic highway between Baghdadi and Hit,” Major General Ali Ibrahim Daboun, the army commander responsible for the area, told AFP.

He also said the engineering units are currently clearing the area of the explosive devices planted by the ISIL terrorists.

“The engineering corps of the army continues to remove explosive devices to reopen the road for goods, oil prod-

ucts and food,” Daboun said.

However, Sheikh Abdullah al-Jughaiifi, a commander of Hadithah’s tribal fighters, said travelling on the liberated road is still a risky move as al-Dulab, which is located east of al-Baghdadi in a loop of the Euphrates, is still under ISIL control.

“The people are hopeful but for now nobody will take the risk of travelling on this road so long as al-Dulab has not been retaken,” Jughaiifi said.

The recapture of the highway breaks the year and a half siege of Hadithah, the third city of Anbar, which was repeatedly attacked by ISIL terrorists who failed to seize it due to the resistance of the dominant tribes.

The only access to the city was by air through the nearby al-Asad military airbase.

President ...

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hope that Iran would be able to exploit the loan package efficiently.

She emphasized that both Iran and South Korea have huge potentials for mutual cooperation that are yet to be tapped.

President Park named the energy sector as a key area in that connection, emphasizing that Iran as the owner of energy resources and South Korea as the owner of modern technologies will benefit from cooperating with each other in that area.

Other areas that she said are equally important to both countries are the tourism industry, the water sector, transportation, urban development and tourism.

President Park arrived in the Iranian capital Tehran on her first trip to Iran and the first by a South Korean president in decades.

She is heading a delegation that comprises over 230 executives and businesspeople and is expected to stay in the Islamic Republic until Tuesday.

After her arrival in Tehran, a series of key cooperation agreements were signed by the two countries.

On Tuesday, 13 more agreements were signed by private sector enterprises from both countries. They mostly concerned cooperation between Iranian and South Korean companies over energy, power, automobile and railroad projects as well as the financing of different industries.

South Korea has been a major importer of Iran’s crude oil. On Sunday, Minister of Petroleum Bijan Zangeneh said Iran’s oil exports to South Korea have more than quadrupled to 400,000 barrels a day since sanctions were lifted in January.

Iran, whose exports to South Korea were less than 100,000 barrels a day before sanctions were lifted, has since worked to quickly boost its output. It has focused on selling to its traditional customers in Asia, but has also shipped cargoes to Europe.

The value of non-oil trade between Iran and South Korea in 2013 stood at around \$4.1 billion from which \$3.8 billion were the exports of South Korea to Iran and some \$300 million were Iran’s exports to South Korea.

Senior ...

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more than 190 cases with domestic courts against Washington compared to the 90 cases pending against Iran in U.S. courts by the date.

“In the world of politics, one should possess counter pressure levers. Iran should therefore respond to the American move. We possess the means to take action against the U.S.,” he said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif has denounced the seizure of around \$2 billion in frozen assets recently authorized by a U.S. court ruling as “highway robbery,” vowing that the Islamic Republic will retrieve the sum anyway.

“It is a theft. Huge theft. It is highway robbery. And believe you me, we will get it back,” Zarif told The New Yorker magazine in an interview published on April 25.

In August 1953, the British and American intelligence agencies initiated a coup by the Iranian military, setting off a series of events, including riots in Tehran, which led to the overthrow and arrest of Mosaddeq.

His overthrow consolidated a pro-U.S. monarchy’s rule for the next 26 years.

After the Islamic Revolution, the U.S. and its allies broadly supported the former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein in his invasion of Iran in 1980 and eight years of aggression.

European ...

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“Banks want the maximum certainty,” said Tanguy Coatmellec, a Dubai-based partner at Ernst & Young’s financial-services advisory group. “A big part of the risk is really the U.S. political position over the long term. Either financing methods will be found or these contracts won’t be finalized.”

Nuclear Sanctions
France’s Societe Generale SA, Germany’s Deutsche Bank AG, Zurich-based Credit Suisse Group AG, ING Group NV in the Netherlands and the UK’s Standard Chartered Plc are among the big European banks that say they’re generally not prepared to do business in Iran yet.

The U.S., Russia and European countries in January lifted a series of economic sanctions. Still, significant restrictions remain on Iran. A crucial ban remains on

dollar-denominated trades related to Iran, scaring away most large European banks.

Iranian officials are pushing the U.S. to reassure banks on doing business with Iran. Iranian Central Bank Governor Valiollah Seif told Bloomberg Television last month that the U.S. Treasury’s OFAC should issue guidelines encouraging European banks to be more receptive to Iran. Clarifying ‘Confusion’

The U.S. will work to clarify the existing “confusion” among some foreign banks, Secretary of State John Kerry said April 22, before a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif. He stopped short of saying the Treasury will issue guidance elaborating on permitted transactions, encouraging banks instead to reach out with questions. “When in doubt, ask,” he said.

U.S. officials have been holding meetings around the globe this year with government representatives and bank executives in more than a dozen countries to discuss concerns linked to sanctions relief, according to a Treasury spokesperson. The U.S. Treasury and Department of State have reached out to French government officials and executives, according to the spokesperson, who didn’t comment on possible assurances made.

Most Aggressive
French companies have been among the most aggressive in pursuing Iranian deals. More than a dozen top managers for companies from builder Vinci SA to Aeroports de Paris SA flew last month to Tehran with Transport Minister Alain Vidalies as Air France restarted its Iranian route after an eight-year break. While French businesses this year have pledged more than \$30 billion of investments in Iran, it remains unclear how recent business agreements will get bank funding.

Removing such barriers is among the topics up for discussion at the European Forum, a conference that opened in Zurich on Tuesday. “The situation today is still a bit premature to have a position there,” BNP Paribas Chief Financial Officer Lars Machenil said Tuesday in a Bloomberg Television interview when asked about the bank’s plans to finance companies signing deals in Iran. Clarification will be needed over conditions for financing Iran-related business, he said. Companies “can go with their own financing” or seek other ways of funding including local financing, he said.

In a rare trip by a banking executive, Mediobanca SpA CEO Alberto Nagel visited Tehran in April as part of an Italian group led by Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. The country’s biggest publicly-traded investment bank was also among a group of Italy-based lenders, which included Credit Suisse Group AG’s Italian unit, that sent a delegation to Iran in November.

Oil and aviation deals usually get financing in dollars with large banks syndicating, or sharing, risks. This means the ban on dollar transactions remains a hurdle for many recent deals like Iran’s January agreement to buy 118 Airbus planes worth \$27 billion. “We are making good progress,” Airbus Chief Financial Officer Harald Wilhelm said on a call Thursday. “Given the strong U.S. dollar content in our aircraft, we have to apply for OFAC license and so we are working on that” and the plane-maker is also working on how to “ensure financing,” he said.

Ali Abedzadeh, director of Iran’s Civil Aviation Organization, said in an April 18 interview that some European and Asian institutions “are ready to work with us” on financing the Airbus deal. “We want to try and do this via the private sector. We’re not very keen on using government trade finance routes,” he said.

“Certain ...”
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For his part, Masset acknowledged that Tehran and Paris shared commonalities in their positions on a potential solution to the crisis in Syria.

He listed some instances of the such shared views as emphasis on “fighting terrorism, support for the democratic process in Syria, and the notion that the country’s fate had to be determined by its people.”

The UN has hosted weeks of on-and-off peace talks aimed ultimately at ending Syria’s devastating five-year conflict.

A landmark partial ceasefire took effect in Syria on February 27. A recent surge of violence, however, has shaken it.

Turkish Parliamentary Body Approves Bill to lift MPs Immunity

ANKARA (Press TV) – A Turkish parliamentary commission has approved a controversial bill to strip lawmakers of immunity from prosecution, paving the way for a law that critics say is aimed at targeting Kurds and dissidents.

Representatives from the ruling AK, CHP and nationalist MHP parties approved the legislation late Monday amid the absence of pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) deputies. The AK party had submitted the

draft proposal to the Turkish Parliamentary Constitutional Committee on April 12, and 316 lawmakers from the governing social conservative political party had signed it before submission.

The legislators pushed each other, squared up and traded kicks and punches. They also threw water bottles at each other. The brawl prompted HDP representatives to withdraw.

Hours earlier, when the committee debated the draft law, a brawl broke out

between AK and HDP members.

The bill will be put to vote after a debate in the Turkish parliament’s general.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has called for the prosecution of HDP members, accusing them of being affiliated to the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK).

Turkey has been taking tough on Kurdish militants in the country’s southeast, with military and police

claiming that they have killed hundreds of PKK members.

Senior HDP figures have repeatedly challenged the figures, saying many of those killed in the crackdown have been civilians.

Turkish lawmakers are immune from prosecution while in office. The police can file “dossiers” against politicians, which can lead to a legal process once they cease to be members of parliament.