

Iraqi Forces, Tribal Fighter Thwart ISIL Onslaught on Amiriyah Fallujah

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Iraqi security personnel, backed by pro-government fighters from Popular Mobilization Units and tribal fighters, have managed to repel a massive offensive by members of the Takfiri ISIL terrorist group in the country's beleaguered western province of al-Anbar.

Major General Hadi Razji, the provincial police chief, told al-Sumaria television network on Wednesday that security forces and Lawa al-Amiriyah al-Samoud tribesmen, receiving support by Iraqi fighter jets and artillery units, repelled a ISIL onslaught on the town of Amiriyah Fallujah, located about 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) south of Fallujah.

He added that 450 vehicles belonging to the extremists were also destroyed in the process.

Separately, Khamis al-Issawi, a Lawa al-Amiriyah al-Samoud tribal leader, said his fighters and security forces had destroyed an ISIL base on the fringes of Amiriyah Fallujah, noting that three tribesmen had been killed and six others injured during the clashes with ISIL terrorists.

The northern and western parts of Iraq have been plagued by gruesome violence ever since ISIL



Iraqi government forces are seen near the Falahat Village west of Fallujah.

terrorists mounted an offensive in the country in June 2014.

Iraqi government forces, backed by fighters from allied Popular Mobilization Units, have been pushing the terrorists out of the country's territory.

Iraqi forces liberated Fallujah on June 17.

On Tuesday, elite counter-terrorism forces and their allies wrested control over Telol al-Baj area, which lies on the highway linking the town of al-Shirqat, situated about 250 kilometers (155 miles) north of the capital, Baghdad, to the southern part of Mosul.

"Security personnel have liberated Telol al-Baj, and several units have been deployed four kilometers (2.4 miles) away from the area to prevent the infiltration of vehicles rigged with explosives into the region," Lieutenant General Abdul Ghani al-Assadi, commander of Iraq's counterterrorism forces, said.

Saudi Fighter Jets Bomb Ta'iz, Kill 40 Yemeni Civilians

SANAA (FNA) – Saudi warplanes pounded the Yemeni province of Ta'iz, and killed over three dozen people on Wednesday despite the ongoing UN-brokered ceasefire between the warring sides in Yemen.

The Saudi airstrikes targeted a local market in Ta'iz province in Southwestern Yemen, killing at least 40 Yemeni civilians, including women and children.

At least 15 other Yemeni people were injured in the Saudi air raids.

In a relevant development on Tuesday, at least 20 civilians were killed in Saudi airstrikes on Ta'iz Province.

Saudi warplanes bombed Hayfan district of Ta'iz, leaving at least 20 civilians dead and 15 others injured.

Some Yemeni media outlets have put the number of the dead at 35.

The news comes hours after four terrorist bomb attacks hit military and security positions in Mukalla city of Hadhramaut Province, leaving 48 civilians dead and some 30 others injured.

Meanwhile, a Saudi jets mistakenly hit a military convoy of pro-Riyadh militants in the strategic mountain of Hailan in Ma'rib Province on Monday night.

Five militants, including a commander, were killed and six others wounded in the air raid.

Saudi Arabia has launched the invasion to restore power to former President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi in the Arab world's most impoverished country since March 2015.

More than 9,800 people have been killed and at least 16,000 others injured since the onset of the aggression.

Syria Opp. Threatens to Quit Peace Talks, Urges No-Fly Zone



A meeting between UN Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura and members of the Syrian opposition during peace talks at the United Nations in Geneva.

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Syrian opposition groups have threatened to walk away from peace talks with the government, and demanded the establishment of a no-fly zone over the Arab country by foreign countries.

Two dozen opposition groups wrote

to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Tuesday, voicing dissatisfaction with the ongoing peace talks in Geneva and threatening to quit unless their demands are met.

The signatories further called on Ban to validate the air-dropping of aid to

various areas of the country "irrespective of Syrian regime consent."

They also urged the UN chief to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court - an idea which UN Security Council members Russia and China have vetoed in the past.

Predicting another veto, the groups called on Ban to urge member states to consider a special tribunal for Syria or to prosecute cases under universal jurisdiction.

"But if the international community cannot even protect our ability to serve and assist Syrian society, our presence in Geneva is not only meaningless, it is unnecessary," they said.

Back in April, the talks foundered after the Saudi-backed opposition group abandoned the negotiating table.

The High Negotiations Committee (HNC) left the negotiations to protest at what it called escalating violence and restrictions on humanitarian access in

Syria and declared a "new war" on the government.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The UN has stopped its official casualty count in Syria, but UN special envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura estimates that over 400,000 people have been killed in the conflict.

On Wednesday, reports said a coalition of Kurdish, Arab, Assyrian, Armenian, and Turkmen fighters had seized a military airport held by ISIL terrorists near the Iraqi border.

The UK-based Observatory for Human Rights said the operation took place at dawn, leading to the liberation of the Hamadan airport.

ISIL controls the nearby town of al-Bukamal, whose recapture would hamper the militants' ability to move between the Iraqi and Syrian territories of their self-declared headquarters, namely Mosul in Iraq and Raqqah in Syria.

Pakistan Deports 500 Afghan Refugees

ISLAMABAD (Press TV) – Pakistan has deported at least 500 Afghan refugees following their detention in a northwestern border province, local officials say.

Mushtaq Ahmad Ghani, the provincial information minister in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, said Wednesday that unregistered Afghans have become a major security issue for the Islamabad government.

"We don't suggest any aggressive campaign against Afghan refugees, but we have been hosting them for the past 35 years and it is time they

should go back to their country," Ghani said.

The provincial minister also urged the federal government in Islamabad to review its policy on the refugees, saying, "If Pakistan wants to host them, then it needs to register them and bring them under a proper network."

Abdul Qadir Baloch, Pakistan's federal minister for states and frontier regions, has warned that the country is not willing to host Afghan refugees indefinitely.

The Afghan refugees who remain are routinely accused by authorities of

harboring militants.

Sartaj Aziz, foreign policy adviser to Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, told a Pakistani television channel last week that Afghan refugee camps have become "safe havens for terrorists."

According to Pakistan's English-language Dawn newspaper, more than 2,000 Afghan refugees were detained in May, 400 of whom were deported to Afghanistan.

The number of Afghans voluntarily returning home has plunged this year as violence worsens in Afghanistan.

The United Nations Refugee Agency says about 6,000 Afghans have chosen to return home from Pakistan so far in 2016, well below last year's voluntary repatriations that amounted to over 58,000.

The Pakistani government is still undecided on the renewal of the refugees' registration cards beyond June 30. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said during a recent visit to Pakistan that he had made the case to the government for extending the June 30 deadline.

One Iranian ...

(Continued From Page One)

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan noted that the bombing came during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, and he called for global unity in the fight against terrorism.

Turkey's Western allies, including the United States, blamed the country's open-border policy for allowing extremist groups like Daesh to become powerful inside Syria, and the chaos has increasingly spilled over into Turkey, with terrorist attacks and waves of refugees.

Turkey, a NATO member, has often been at odds with Syria's supporters its approach to the region. Many countries believe that Turkey's early policy on Syria enabled the growth of Daesh, and they have long felt that Turkey was a reluctant partner in fighting the terrorist group. Turkey, in turn, has grown angry over American support for Syrian Kurdish rebels that it sees as terrorists because of links to Kurdish militants inside Turkey.

Tuesday's assault continues a string of deadly attacks.

Some of the recent terrorist attacks in Turkey — including a car bombing in Ankara, the capital, in February — have been attributed to Kurdish militants, which has heightened tensions between Ankara and Washington over the support the United States has given to Syrian Kurdish militants.

The attack on Tuesday evoked the bombing of the Brussels airport several months ago and highlighted the conundrum security officials face in minimizing casualties from terrorist attacks. In Brussels, the attackers managed to get inside the terminal and detonate their explosives. But at the Istanbul airport, the first security check is in a vestibule at the entrance to the terminal, which theoretically adds a layer of security. But even so, people have to line up there and, as the attack demonstrated, it is an easy target for terrorists.

Flights out of Istanbul were immediately canceled Tuesday night, and ones on their way were diverted. The airport, the third busiest in Europe and the 11th busiest in the world, was closed after the attack, but Yildirim, the prime minister, said early Wednesday that it had reopened.

Although no group claimed responsibility for the attack, initial speculation centered on the country's two main enemies: Daesh and Kurdish militants linked to the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has waged war with Turkey for more than three decades. Last year, peace talks with the PKK broke down, and the two sides have been at war since. But hours after the attack, Turkish officials turned their attention toward Daesh.

"The terrorists arrived at the airport in a taxi," Yildirim said. "We will share more details about the attack later. There was no security lapse at the airport."

Turkey has been rocked by a series of bombings since 2014, and the attacks have been increasing in frequency. In some cases, Kurdish militants have claimed responsibility, but in others, including ones this year in Istanbul's old city and on its main pedestrian boulevard, Turkish officials have blamed the Islamic State.

Analysts noted that attacks involving multiple suicide bombers take time to prepare and are not typically attempted on very short notice.

"Unfortunately, we see the side effects of a disastrous Syria policy that has brought terrorism into the heart of Istanbul and Ankara," said Suat Kinikioğlu, a former lawmaker who is now chairman of the Center for Strategic Communication, a research organization, in Ankara. "This is obviously intended to create an atmosphere of chaos and hit the economy and tourism."

When the attack happened, Asli Aydintasbas, an analyst and writer on Turkish affairs, was on a plane bound for Istanbul but was rerouted to Ankara, where the airport was filled with stranded and confused tourists, double-checking with airport workers that they had in fact landed elsewhere.

"Our world is turned upside down," said Aydintasbas, who has chronicled Turkey's descent in to chaos in recent years in her columns.

Referring to Istanbul, and the stature it attained in recent years as a global tourist destination, she said: "Now this is a Middle Eastern country where these things happen."

Putin ...

(Continued From Page One)

The downing of the Russian warplane in Syria slammed the brakes on burgeoning relations between Russia and Turkey and sparked a bitter war of words between the leaders.

Putin called it a "stab in the back" and demanded an apology from Erdogan, who he also accused of being involved in the illegal oil trade with the Daesh group.

Ankara has said Erdogan expressed his "regret" over the incident in Monday's letter to Putin and asked the family of the pilot who died to "excuse us", but has not explicitly confirmed he apologized for shooting down the plane.

Turkey has argued that the Russian plane strayed into its airspace and ignored repeated warnings, but Russia insisted it did not cross the border and accused Turkey of a "planned provocation."

The countries are on opposing sides in the Syrian conflict, with Ankara backing rebels fighting to topple President Bashar al-Assad while Moscow is one of his allies.

The crisis in relations has severely hit Turkey's tourism industry, with the number of Russian tourists drastically declining in holiday resorts along the Mediterranean coast.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich told local news wires that the ban on charter flights and the product embargo would formally be lifted in the "next few days."

Dmitry Gordin, the vice president of Russia's association of tour operators, predicted on television that "roughly within three months we can return the flow of tourists to the same level as before sales were shut down."

Russia and Turkey also halted talks in December on the joint TurkStream project, to pipe gas to Turkey and southern Europe but officials suggested negotiations might start again.

Russia is currently suffering its longest economic recession since Putin came to power over 16 years ago due to Western sanctions over the Ukraine crisis and the fall in oil prices.

Tehran ...

(Continued From Page 2)

The Iranian spokesperson expressed sympathy with the families of the victims of terrorist attacks by Takfiri groups in Lebanon.

At least five people lost their lives and nearly two dozen others were wounded in deadly bombings near the border with crisis-stricken Syria on Tuesday.

The Lebanese army said in a statement that the raids were conducted in six areas of the hilly eastern region of Baalbek, including the towns of Taybeh, Younin, Douris, Tal Al-Abyad and Al-Hamoudia. It added that 103 Syrian nationals were arrested and nine unlicensed motorbikes and cars in their possession seized.

The statement came only hours after eight people sustained injuries when three bombers riding motorcycles blew themselves up in the center of the predominantly Christian border village of Al-Qaa near the border with Syria.

Earlier on Monday, five people lost their lives and 15 others suffered injuries when four bombers targeted the same village. The explosions reportedly struck at 10-minute intervals.

Lebanon has often seen the infiltration of Takfiri elements from neighboring Syria into its territory, where they attack the civilian population or security forces with bombings.

On June 12, a bomb explosion rocked the western part of the Lebanese capital, Beirut, but did not cause any casualties.

Last November, however, more than 40 people were killed and dozens of others wounded after two bombings, claimed by the Takfiri Daesh militants, targeted a security post in the Bourj el-Barajneh area in the southern suburb of the Lebanese capital.

Kerry: ...

(Continued From Page 2)

"The presence of experts and advisers from Iran gave us a major boost. They provided us with (military) guidelines, and even prevented the fall of the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, Erbil," he said.

Earlier this month, Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari said Baghdad needed help from its friends, including Iran, to be able to take out the terrorists wreaking havoc in the Muslim country.

"There is coordination between Russia, Syria, Iran and Iraq. Iraq needs the experience and information provided by these countries," Jaafari told Lebanon's Al-Mayadeen television in an interview.

Daesh terrorists, who were among militants initially trained by the CIA in Jordan in 2012 to destabilize the Syrian government, now control parts of Iraq and Syria, where they are engaged in crimes against humanity.

In recent months, the militants have been losing ground in both Syria and Iraq.