

## Landmine Blast Kills 3 Saudi Soldiers

RIYADH (Press TV) – At least three Saudi soldiers have been killed when a powerful landmine explosion ripped through their military vehicle in the kingdom's southwestern border region of Najran. An informed source, requesting anonymity, told Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television network that the incident occurred on Friday afternoon, identifying the deceased as Mohammed al-Fatih, Hazam al-Farwan and Hayef al-Qahtani. Later in the day, Saudi fighter jets carried out five airstrikes against Samah military base in Yemen's southwestern city of Dhamar, located some 100 kilometers (62 miles) south of the Yemeni capital, Sana'a.

When you get ill do not get nervous about it and try as much as possible to be hopeful.

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# 'Unauthorized Foreign Presence on Syria Soil Unacceptable'

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Syria says the foreign forces who have made their way into the country and established bases there without the consent of Damascus are occupiers and should leave Syrian soil.

Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal al-Mekdad said it is "unacceptable" for any foreign troops to have a presence on the Syrian soil without the government's approval, adding that Damascus will deal with this issue as a case of "occupation."

Mekdad was referring to the presence of American and Turkish forces in Syria, whose respective countries have refused to pull them out in defiance of Damascus' warnings.

Turkey and the U.S. have also their own troops on the ground in Syria.

The comments come days after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says Turkey is to keep up its so-called Euphrates Shield military operation in northern Syria, which serves to keep U.S.-backed Kurdish militants away from its borders.

Mekdad called the Turkish pres-



U.S. troops sit atop an armored vehicle on a road near the northern Syrian village of Ain Issa on June 3, 2017.

ence "invasive," and urged Ankara to stop intervening in Damascus' affairs.

The United States led scores of its allies in an invasion of Syria in 2014, claiming it sought to root out the terror group of Daesh. The mission had no Syrian or UN mandate.

In a unilateral mission, Washington has also deployed its own troops to Syria, where they support anti-Damascus terrorists.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin's point man has

met with Syrian President Assad for talks on counterterrorism fight and the Arab country's path towards peace and reconstruction.

Assad received Alexander Lavrentiev in Damascus, where the two sides discussed bilateral anti-terror cooperation, the peace process between the Syrian government and opposition in the Kazakh capital of Astana and the upcoming Syrian National Dialogue Congress in Sochi, the official SANA news agency reported.

At the request of Damascus, Russia has been providing airpower to the Syrian army's ground operations against terrorists.

The support, alongside Iranian military advisory assistance, enabled Syria to liberate all the territories captured by the Daesh terrorists and reverse many gains by the terrorists across the country.

Russia, together with Iran and Turkey, has been mediating the Astana talks aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the crisis in Syria.

As part of the Astana format, the Russian resort city of Sochi is to host a congress towards the end of January to pave the way for constitutional reforms in Syria.

Assad and Lavrentiev agreed that the Sochi event's potential outcomes had to "meet the aspirations of the Syrian people in preserving their homeland and restoring security and stability to its territory," SANA said.

Assad said the cooperation among Syria and its allies, including Russia, against terrorism was a "decisive factor in foiling the hegemony and division plots put by the West and its tools against Syria and the region."

## UN Raises Alarm Over Human Rights Situation in UAE



Dubai special counter-terrorism police cadets mock an urban hostage rescue mission in Dubai in April 2009.

NEW YORK (Dispatches) – The UN has painted a grim picture of the human rights situation in the United Arab Emirates, raising concern over the torture of prisoners, injustice against foreign workers and discrimination of women in the Persian Gulf state.

A report by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has shed light on the suppression of freedom of expression and the undue influence of executive authorities and security services on the judiciary in the Emirati state.

The 13-page report was prepared on January 5 and is expected to be presented at the 29th session of the Human Rights Council, which will run from January 15 to 26.

"UAE authorities regularly subject those that violate their restrictions to torture, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, and unfair trial procedures," the UK-based Emirate Centre for Human Rights, wrote on its Twitter page.

In its report, the UN body expressed regret over the UAE's failure to establish a national human rights institution in accordance with international standards.

The report argued that the justice system in the UAE is complex and impedes migrant workers and the stateless from bringing their grievances to justice.

On free speech, the UN body cit-

ed imprisonment and trials for people who had simply expressed their views or criticized institutions.

The commission also condemned arrests and forced disappearances outside the legal framework and the transfer of people to secret prisons under the pretext of being accused of "terrorism".

UAE authorities have used torture to force defendants to confess to the charges against them and deprive them of healthcare, the report said

Civil society groups are expected to submit later this month at the Palace of Nations in Geneva documents detailing rights abuses in the UAE.

Earlier in July 2017, the UAE accused Alkarama Foundation, a Geneva-based organization which provides pro-bono legal assistance to victims of human rights violations, of having "connections to terrorism."

The organization had sought consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), allowing it to speak on behalf of clients at reviews of the country's human rights records at the UN.

However, Alkarama's application was rejected after a draft resolution spearheaded by the UAE and backed by Algeria, India and the United States was passed at an ECOSOC meeting in July.

## Trump's Green Light to Zionist Settlements Slammed

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The secretary general of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has lashed out at U.S. President Donald Trump for giving a green light to accelerated Zionist settlement activities by recognizing al-Quds as the regime's capital.

"President Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem (al-Quds) as Israel's capital did not only disqualify the U.S. from playing any constructive role towards achieving peace, but it provided the extremist Israeli government with an opportunity and a green light to speed up their plans of the disposition of the Palestinian people," Saeb Erekat said.

Erekat pointed to planned meetings of the Palestinian leadership on Sunday and Monday to formulate a response to Trump's al-Quds decision and "discuss several recommendations toward holding Israel accountable to ad-

vance with the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people."

Earlier in the day, Peace Now, an Israeli anti-settlement group that monitors settlement activity in the occupied West Bank, said the Zionist regime's authorities have approved more than 1,100 new settler units in the occupied West Bank.

The approvals were given on Wednesday by a military affairs committee responsible for authorizing settlement construction.

Meanwhile, the European Union condemned the settlement approvals as "further jeopardizing the prospect of a contiguous and viable future Palestinian state."

"The European Union's position on Israeli settlement construction and related activities is clear and has not changed: all settlement activity is illegal under international law, and it

undermines the viability of the two-state solution and the prospects for a lasting peace. The EU expects the occupying regime's authorities to reconsider and reverse these decisions," an EU spokesperson said in a statement.

The UN special coordinator for the Middle East talks, Nickolay Mladenov, also condemned the new settlement approvals as an obstacle to peace.

"In the aftermath of the decision to advance over 1,000 housing units in the occupied West Bank, I reiterate that Israeli settlement construction is illegal under international law and is one of the major obstacles to peace. I urge the Israeli authorities to cease and reverse such actions," Mladenov said in a statement.

"Settlement-related activities undermine the chances for the establishment of a viable, contiguous Palestinian state as part of a negotiated two-state solution,"

he added.

According to Peace Now, the regime approved some 6,742 settlement units for construction in 2017, the highest figure since 2013. In 2016, the number was 2,629 units.

Zionist war minister Avigdor Lieberman said Tuesday he would present for approval a plan to build 1,285 housing units in West Bank settlements this year.

Wednesday's approvals came just days after Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party voted for a resolution that calls for the formal annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank.

A few days earlier, the Zionist cabinet approved \$11 million in funding for settlement activities in the West Bank.

Tel Aviv has stepped up its land grab policies since January 2016, when Trump took office.

## Turkey Reinstates 1,800 Civil Servants After Acquittal

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Turkish authorities have reinstated hundreds of civil servants who had been fired over alleged links to a failed coup attempt in 2016.

In an emergency decree published on Friday, judges exonerated 1,823 employees after finding they had had no links to those blamed for the 2016 coup bid.

The public employees had been sacked for downloading an encrypted messaging app known as ByLock, which authorities say was used by the putschists to carry out the coup.

Late last year, however, Turkish authorities concluded that the ByLock app had been unknowingly downloaded by thousands of users

and could not be used as positive proof proving involvement in the failed coup.

Among those acquitted on Friday were 544 personnel from the Education Ministry, 204 from the Health Ministry, and 458 personnel from the police force.

The employees will have to return to work within 10 days and will receive their wages for the period they were not working but cannot apply for compensation.

However, rulings against 262 people, including 48 military personnel, were upheld, state-run news agency Anadolu said.

Ankara holds U.S.-based Turkish cleric Fethullah Gulen responsible for orchestrat-

ing the attempted coup. Gulen has denied the charge.

Meanwhile, Turkey has warned its citizens against traveling to the United States due to terrorism and arbitrary detentions, advising nationals to take precautions if they do decide to travel.

"Turkish citizens traveling to the United States may be subjected to arbitrary detentions based on testimonies of unrespected sources," Turkey's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Turkey's Hurriyet Daily News website also quoted the ministry's statement as saying that there had been an increase in terror attacks and violent incidents in the United States recently.

## Yemeni Forces Fire Ballistic Missile at Saudi Military Facility

SANAA (Press TV) – Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement says it has fired a ballistic missile at a special forces camp and a facility for gunships in the southwestern Saudi border province of Najran.

Ansarullah announced that the projectile was a Qaher M-2 ballistic missile, without providing further details.

The Saudi-led coalition fighting against Yemen has not made any immediate comments with regard to the missile launch.

Yemeni forces regularly fire ballistic missiles at Saudi positions inside the Arab kingdom in retaliation for its military strikes on Yemen.

On Wednesday, Yemeni forces captured a Saudi military base in Najran during a retaliatory operation, killing several of the troops stationed there.

There has been no exact information about the number of Saudi casualties during Riyadh's war on Yemen, as the kingdom has

sought to cover up the issue.

Saudi Arabia, backed by a coalition of its allies, started the war on Yemen in March 2015, hoping that with blunt force, it would be able to restore power in a matter of weeks to a former Riyadh-friendly Yemeni regime.

The Saudi regime has, however, been unable to accomplish the objectives of its military aggression some three years into the war, which has claimed over 13,700 lives.

Despite the coalition's superior aggregate military power, Riyadh has been bogged down in the war against mostly tribal fighters with limited fighting equipment.

Saudi Arabia, already economically challenged, has decided to pay out an extra 5,000 Saudi riyals (1,333 US dollars) monthly to the troops fighting on the front lines in the war on Yemen, where reports have painted a grim picture of the Saudi-led military personnel's morale.