

Russia: U.S. May Seek Longer Stay in Syria

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – Russian has warned of the U.S. might have plan to continue its military presence in Syria for a long term in an attempt to create a “quasi-state” in the eastern areas of the country.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, speaking at a Tuesday press conference, criticized the U.S. for its “completely different” position with regard to its future military presence in Syria, adding, “We have a suspicion.... that the United States wants to stay there for a long time, if not forever.”

“The Americans, in my opinion ... are trying to act by dangerous unilateral steps. And by the way, these steps look more and more like part of a line for creating a certain quasi-state on a large part of the Syrian territory — on the eastern bank of the Euphrates and up to the Iraqi border,” he added.



This file photo taken on March 5, 2017 shows a convoy of U.S. armored vehicles driving near the village of Yalanli, on the western outskirts of the northern Syrian city of Manbij.

Moscow and Washington support opposing sides in the Syrian conflict. Russia assists the Syrian government and has been carrying out

an aerial bombardment campaign against terrorist positions in Syria. The U.S.-led coalition has been conducting airstrikes against what

are said to be Daesh targets inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from the Damascus government or a UN mandate.

The military alliance has repeatedly been accused of targeting and killing civilians. It has also been largely incapable of achieving its declared goal of destroying Daesh.

Lavrov warned that the U.S. policies “undermine the territorial integrity of Syria,” expressing hope that the UN will prevent “external players” from undermining the Security Council’s road map for a peace process in the country.

The Russian foreign minister pointed to the ongoing international efforts to hold talks between the Syrian government and the opposition and reaffirmed Moscow’s support for participation of Kurdish factions in the process.

Arab States Urged to Resolve Dispute With Qatar

DOHA (Dispatches) – U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has called on Arab monarchies to resolve their diplomatic dispute with Qatar, during a visit to the Persian Gulf.

Tillerson spoke on Tuesday at the Kuwait International Conference for Reconstruction of Iraq in Bayan, a city in Kuwait.

He started his trip on Sunday

by visiting Cairo, Egypt, a trip through the Middle East as he faces confrontational talks at almost every stop on his five-country tour. A key U.S. ally, the Zionist regime, is conspicuously absent from his itinerary.

This is while Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, and several other countries cut off diplomatic ties with Qatar in

June over allegations that Doha is sponsoring terrorism and destabilizing the region.

Qatar has vehemently denied the accusations, calling them unfounded.

Qatar, home to the forward headquarters of the US military’s Central Command and some 10,000 American troops, had assigned some of its U.S.-

provided fighter jets to the unprovoked war, which has killed over 12,000 Yemeni people while plunging the impoverished country into a humanitarian crisis.

Washington has been actively supporting the Saudi-led war, supplying weapons and intelligence to the aggressors under the guise of fighting terror.

Police Allowed to Call for Corruption Indictment of Zionist PM

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime’s so-called Supreme Court has authorized police to make recommendations regarding the indictment of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on corruption charges, rejecting a petition that had been filed to block those recommendations.

Right-wing attorney Yossi Fuchs had filed the petition last week, asking the top court to prevent police from publicly recommending to the attorney general to indict Netanyahu in the graft probes.

The tribunal, however, dismissed the petition, saying that it had previously passed judgment on the system of recommendations and upheld its lawfulness.

“There is no reason to interfere,” read the court ruling, meaning the police recommendations can now be forwarded.

Netanyahu is suspected of being involved in bribery, fraud and breach of trust.

He has been questioned in two separate cases, involving allegations that he received lavish gifts from wealthy businessmen and negotiated a deal with a newspaper owner for more favorable coverage. He has denied any wrongdoing.

Speaking before the court ruling, Fuchs claimed that his petition was a demand for “justice,” but also admitted it was meant to protect Netanyahu’s right-wing administration.

A poll conducted by Hadashot TV news last December showed that 60 percent of Israelis say Netanyahu should step down if police recommend an indictment against him.

People have been holding weekly protests to demand Netanyahu’s resignation over the corruption scandals, but the premier has described the events as part of efforts meant to topple him “at any cost.”

Saudi Cluster Bombs Continue to Endanger Yemeni Kids’ Lives

SANAA (Press TV) – Thousands of innocent children continue to fall victim to Saudi Arabia’s use of cluster bombs in aerial attacks on residential areas across the Yemen, corroborating assertions of violation of international law in the impoverished Arab country.

Derhim al-Tuheiti was playing in a farming field in an area in Yemen’s western coastal province of Hudaydah, located 150 kilometers southwest of the capital Sana’a, less than a week ago when he found an unexploded cluster bomb.

He took it home, believing it was a toy or a piece of scrap metal. All at once, like deafening firecrackers, explosions ripped through the building, seriously injuring Derhim, his mother and siblings.

“I was working outside my house to earn money and feed my family. I was in shock when I returned home. People told me all my family members, including my wife, had been transferred to hospital. Now my wife has a back injury, and has gone insane due to the shock,” Ahmed, father of the family, told Press TV.

Derhim was taken to the intensive care unit at al-Thawra Hospital, and had to undergo numerous surgeries. He had both

lower legs amputated after the horrific incident.

“Doctors amputated his legs as they had grave shrapnel wounds. The cluster bomb had also seriously injured his head, and paralyzed the right side of his body,” Doctor Khlowl M Doublah stated.

Cluster munitions, which are banned by more than 100 countries, present an enormous danger to civilians.

Dropped from the air or fired from the ground, they are designed to break open in mid-air, releasing the sub-munitions over a wide area in a way that cannot discriminate between civilians and military targets.

Many of the sub-munitions fail to explode on impact and effectively become anti-personnel mines. Unexploded sub-munitions have the potential to remain lethal for years, posing a high risk to the civilian population, both during and after the conflict.

Cluster bombs are banned under the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), an international treaty that addresses the humanitarian consequences and unacceptable harm caused to civilians by cluster munitions through a categorical prohi-

bition and a framework for action.

At least 13,600 people have been killed since the onset of Saudi Arabia’s military campaign against Yemen in 2015. Much of the country’s infrastructure, including hospitals, schools and factories, has been reduced to rubble due to the war.

The Saudi-led war has also triggered a deadly cholera epidemic across Yemen.

According to the World Health Organization’s latest tally, the cholera outbreak has killed 2,167 people since the end of April 2017 and is suspected to have infected 841,906.

In November 2017, the United Nations children’s agency, UNICEF, said more than 11 million children in Yemen were in acute need of aid, stressing that it was estimated that every 10 minutes a child died of a preventable disease there.

Additionally, the UN has described the current level of hunger in Yemen as “unprecedented,” emphasizing that 17 million people were food insecure in the country.

The world body says that 6.8 million, meaning almost one in four people, do not have enough food and rely entirely on external assistance.

Turkish MP Jailed for Exposing Ankara’s Arms Aid to Syria Terrorists

ANKARA (Dispatches) – A court in Turkey has sentenced a legislator from the main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) to five years and 10 months in jail for leaking classified material, and exposing to a newspaper a video showing weapons shipment to parts of Syria held by foreign-backed terrorists.

The court passed the verdict on Enis Berberoglu, who is currently being held at Istanbul’s Maltepe Prison, on Tuesday.

He was convicted on charges of “revealing information that should remain a secret for the sake of the state’s security.”

Prosecutor Mehmet Yesilkaya had initially sought life term for Berberoglu. A regional appeals court in Istanbul, however, quashed the conviction and in October ordered a retrial.

Back in May 2015, Cumhuriyet daily posted on its website footage showing Turkish security forces in early 2014 inter-

cepting a convoy of trucks carrying arms for the militants in Syria.

The paper said the trucks were carrying some 1,000 mortar shells, hundreds of grenade launchers and more than 80,000 rounds of ammunition for light and heavy weapons.

Ankara denied the allegation and claimed that the trucks had been carrying humanitarian aid to Syria. However, Berberoglu defended the video, saying it was genuine.

Two prominent Cumhuriyet journalists were among other defendants in the case. Can Dundar and Erdem Gul were sentenced to at least five years in jail for revealing what was said to be state secrets.

The men were acquitted of espionage charges, which could have led to life sentences.

Turkey stands accused of supporting terrorist groups fighting to topple the Damascus government since March 2011.

Afghan Army Shake-Up to Push Out Old Guard

KABUL (Dispatches) – Afghan President Ashraf Ghani plans to retire more than 2,000 army generals and other senior officers, aiming to bring new blood into the military’s top ranks to battle a resilient Taliban insurgency, officials said.

Many of the existing commanders are “too old to keep up with modern warfare”, a senior military official said, adding that the U.S. military had been pressing for a clear-out of the ranks.

The army structure is top-heavy with senior officers, reflecting a country that has been at war for nearly 40 years.

But the plan is causing resentment among the veteran officers, many of whom fought in U.S.-backed fighters against Soviet occupation in the 1980s, the civil war in the 1990s, or were part of the 1990s Northern Alliance opposition to Taliban rule.

“We have more generals and colonels than the U.S. army ... generals and senior officers going back generations who can’t fight, can’t lead and have occupied their posts for years,” said a senior government official involved in the reform effort.

“The shake-up is absolutely necessary because our allies, particularly the Americans, have clearly told us that they won’t be able to win with this current set-up,” said the official, who declined to be identified.

Dawlat Waziri, spokesman at the Ministry of Defense, said 164 generals and other senior officers were retired last week, adding that about 2,100 more generals and colonels would be retired in phases over the next 18 months.

Younger officers had been frustrated by a lack of promotion for years, Waziri said.

“They were stuck in one post and could not get promotion and it was hurting their morale,” he said.

Retiring officers would get \$250 for every year of service, plus a pension of several hundred dollars a month, the first official said.

Younger officers welcomed the plan.

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and companionship with the Islamic Revolution,” General Jafari said.

Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri says the downing of the Israeli F-16 warplane will establish new rules of engagement with the Tel Aviv regime’s acts of aggression.

“What happened is larger than a battle and a little less than a war. It will create new balances and rules of engagement in the region,” Lebanon’s Arabic-language daily newspaper al-Joumhouria quoted Berri as saying on Monday.

He added, “This event is the first of its kind in tens of years. However, no escalation is expected. Things will end here; they will not develop into an all-out war.”

Palestinian Islamic resistance movement, Hamas, has announced in a statement that its fighters and the Palestinian nation stand by Syria in the face of the occupying regime’s latest act of aggression against the Arab country plagued with foreign-sponsored militancy.