

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – A top Iraqi official says the Daesh terrorist group’s leader Ibrahim al-Samarrai, aka Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, is “alive” and is being treated in a field hospital in Syria, less than a year after sources announced the death of the notorious ringleader. “We have irrefutable information and documents from sources within the terrorist organization that al-Baghdadi is still alive and hiding” in Jazira region, in Syria’s northeastern province of Hasakah, Iraqi government daily al-Sabah quoted Abu Ali al-Basri, the head of the Iraqi interior ministry’s intelligence and counter-terrorism operations service, as saying.

Submission to Allah’s Will is the best companion; wisdom is the noblest heritage; theoretical and practical knowledge are the best signs of distinction; deep thinking will present the clearest picture of every problem.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Zionist Regime, U.S. Committing ‘Land Theft’ in West Bank



The photo, taken from the outskirts of the Palestinian city of Nablus, shows a view of the wildcat Jewish settlement outpost of Havat Gilad, February 2, 2018.

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime is committing “land theft” in the occupied territories as Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with the “complicity” of the U.S. government is trying to pass a legislation that would effectively annex West Bank settlements, a top Palestinian official says.

“Netanyahu’s latest statement ... confirms U.S. complicity with Israeli colonial plans,” said Saeb Erekat, the secretary general of

the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), on Monday, denouncing the Zionist regime’s moves as “land theft.”

Earlier in the day, Netanyahu told the regime’s 120-seat parliament (Knesset) that he had been discussing legislation with Washington that would effectively annex Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank.

“On the subject of applying sovereignty, I can say that I have been

talking to the Americans about it for some time,” Netanyahu was quoted by a spokesman of his right-wing Likud party as telling a meeting of its legislators.

However, the United States dismissed claims by Netanyahu that Washington and Tel Aviv are in talks for “annexation” of Palestinian lands.

The White House made the announcement Monday in a rare show of discord between Netanyahu and

U.S. President Donald Trump.

“Reports that the United States discussed with Israel an annexation plan for the West Bank are false,” White House spokesman Josh Raffer said. “The United States and Israel have never discussed such a proposal, and the president’s focus remains squarely on his Israeli-Palestinian peace initiative.”

After the announcement, the Zionist prime minister’s office rushed to clarify his statement, claiming that he had just updated the Americans on proposed legislation in Israeli parliament.

Some analysts have also said that his move was an attempt to please his supporters in the Likud party.

His statement was decried by Palestinians with Nabil Abu Rudeineh, a spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, asserting that any annexation would “destroy all efforts to try and save the peace process.”

“No-one has the right to discuss the situation of the occupied Palestinian lands,” Abu Rudeineh said from the Russian capital Moscow, where Abbas was holding talks with President Vladimir Putin.

Hailed as a “great friend to the Jewish people” by Netanyahu, President Trump has mended ties with the regime that had gone sour under former President Barack Obama.

‘Russians Killed in U.S. Airstrikes in Eastern Syria’

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – A group of Russian private military contractors have been killed in recent attacks by U.S. warplanes in eastern Syria.

Russian media reports said Tuesday that the several Russians were helping the Syrian and Russian military in the drive against terrorists in the province of Dayr al-Zawr when they came under attack by the U.S. forces last week.

Russia’s Defense Ministry said its troops were not involved in the incident while Kremlin spokes-

man Dmitry Peskov would not comment on the issue and said the report needed to be verified.

The reports said the military contractors were part of a Syria government offensive to take back control of oil fields in Dayr al-Zawr from terrorists.

The U.S. military has confirmed that it has attacked pro-government forces in eastern Syria. It said in a statement last week that the operation came after some 500 pro-government forces attacked a group of U.S.-backed

opposition forces in the region. It said U.S. advisors had a presence among the opposition group.

Russia has repeatedly accused the United States of trying to hamper a Syrian full victory against Daesh, a terrorist group that is on its last legs in eastern Syria and in the neighboring Iraq. Moscow has released evidences showing that U.S. forces stationed in Dayr al-Zawr’s border regions and in Jordan have been collaborating with Daesh and other terrorists through providing intelligence

about Syrian and Russian forces.

Russia has backed Syria’s fight against terror since late 2015 when Russian air force and troops arrived in the Arab country at an official request of Damascus to help the government fight against Daesh and other terrorists.

Russia’s assistance has proved to be a major success as Syria has managed to liberate key areas over the past years, including the second largest city of Aleppo, relying on Russia’s air cover and military advice.

Erdogan:

U.S. Funding of Kurdish Militants in Syria to Impact Turkey’s Decisions

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has warned that Washington’s refusal to stop funding the Kurdish militants in Syria will affect Ankara’s decisions, ahead of a visit by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson this week.

Addressing members of his ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) in parliament on Tuesday, Erdogan criticized Washington for supporting militants from the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG).

“Our ally’s decision to give financial support to the YPG... will surely affect the decisions we will take,” Erdogan said.

Ankara views the YPG as a terrorist organization and an extension of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) that has been fighting for

an autonomous region inside Turkey since 1984.

Erdogan’s comments followed the release of the U.S. Department of Defense’s 2019 budget, which includes funds to train and equip local forces purportedly fighting Daesh.

“It is very clear that those who say ‘we will respond aggressively if you hit us’ have never experienced an Ottoman slap,” Erdogan said, in an apparent reference to comments made by U.S. Lieutenant General Paul Funk during a visit to the northern Syrian city of Manbij last week.

Funk had said American troops would remain in Manbij despite Ankara’s demands for a U.S. pullout.

U.S. officials claim that the YPG is the most effective fighting force against the Daesh terrorist group in northern Syria, and have substan-

tially increased their weaponry and technology support for the terrorist group.

Turkey is wary of the presence of Kurdish militants close to its borders in Syria, and has been opposed to Washington’s efforts to train and arm them in the Arab country. The US has said it has no plans to pull out troops stationed near the town of Manbij.

Ankara has been waging “Operation Olive Branch” against the Kurds in Syria’s Afrin region since January 20 in a bid to eliminate the Kurdish militants. Turks have said the offensive could extend to Manbij and beyond.

Erdogan had earlier said the YPG is trying to establish a “terror corridor” on Turkey’s southern border, linking Syria’s northern city of Afrin with a large Kurdish-controlled area to the east.

Report:

Kabul in Secret Talks With Taliban



Afghan security personnel stand at the site of an attack near the Marshal Fahim Military Academy base in Kabul, Afghanistan, January 29, 2018.

KABUL (Press TV) – Afghan officials are conducting talks with the Taliban militant group following a recent wave of deadly bombings and terror attacks by the outfit that have left almost 200 people killed, a report says.

“Afghanistan’s intelligence Chief Masoom Stanikzai and its National Security Chief Mohammed Hanif Atmar continue to each talk separately to the Taliban,” the Associated Press reported Tuesday citing individuals “familiar with the backdoor negotiations.”

According to the report, the secret talks with the terrorist group reflect a desire in Kabul to end the Taliban militancy, which has lingered on 17 years after a United States-led military invasion of the country toppled a Taliban regime.

The unidentified sources further said that the problem was that neither one of the top Afghan security officials in contact with the Taliban “is talking to the other or to the High Peace Council,” which was established by Kabul to discuss peace with the Taliban.

Disagreements within the Afghan government have also reportedly expanded, even as Taliban militants continue to gain more territory across Afghanistan — and despite the recent deployment of thousands of more U.S. troops to the country — while exploiting increasingly ruthless tactics.

The AP report said Hakim Mujahid, a member of the High Peace Council, had confirmed that Stanikzai still maintained regular contacts with the Taliban’s point man for negotiations, Mullah Abbas Stanikzai. The two are not related.

Meanwhile, representatives from dozens of countries are due to meet in the Afghan capital later this month for a second time to discuss the so-called Kabul Process aimed at forging a path to peace. The first round was held in June.

Still, the latest spate of violence has limited options for Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who is also fending off a mini-revolt within his own government, feuding with the vice president as well as a powerful northern governor.

Zionist Regime’s Military Trial Opens for Palestinian Girl Hero

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime’s military has begun the trial of a Palestinian teenage girl, who gained international fame for slapping a Zionist trooper in the face, behind closed doors.

Ahed Tamimi, 17, was taken away from her home by the military last December after a video went viral showing her slapping and punching two Zionist troopers during a raid on the village of Nabi Saleh, northwest of Ramallah.

She has been hailed as a heroine by many Palestinians for bravely standing up to the Israeli military aggression and recognized as a symbol of the Palestinian resistance against the regime’s occupation.

Tamimi has been charged with 12 counts -- including assault, stone-throwing, incitement and making threats -- in connection with the events in the video as well as five other incidents.

A hearing into the case of Tamimi opened at the Ofer military prison in the West Bank village of Betunia on

Tuesday.

The judge ordered journalists and diplomats to leave the courtroom, but the girl’s family members were allowed to remain there.

Tamimi’s lawyer Gaby Lasky criticized the judge for shutting the media and members of the public out of the trial.

“They understand that people outside Ofer military court are interested in Ahed’s case; they understand that her rights are being infringed and her trial is something that shouldn’t be happening.”

Lasky went on, “So the way to keep it out of everybody’s eyes is to close doors and not allow people inside the court for her hearing.”

On Monday, Amnesty International called for Tamimi’s release and accused the Tel Aviv regime of discriminatory treatment of Palestinian children.

“As an unarmed girl, Ahed posed no threat during the altercation with the two Israeli soldiers who were heavily armed and wearing protective clothing.”