

NEW YORK (Dispatches) – Iran's UN envoy has slammed as illegitimate unilateral sanctions that the Security Council imposes on countries under political pressure from certain members.

Gholamali Khoshroo also delivered a speech on behalf of the Non Aligned Movement, expressing concern about attempts by the Security Council to enter areas of norm-setting and establishing definitions that fell outside the bounds of its purview.



TEHRAN (Fars) -- Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani on Wednesday warned of dangerous U.S. policies against global peace, saying Washington is resurrecting terrorist groups in the Middle East and North Africa.

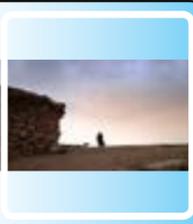
"The U.S. national security strategy and nuclear doctrine in the new era is a serious threat to global peace and violates the UN Charter, and all deterrent measures are required to prevent this madness," Shamkhani said in a meeting with Dutch Foreign Affairs Minister Sigrid Kaag here.

Viewpoint

By: Kayhan Int'l Staff Writer

Birds of the Same Feather Flock Together

Iranians Have Always Fought for Peace: Official



Esteghlal Upset Al-Hilal in 2018 AFC Champions League



'West Complicit in Terrorist Crimes Against Civilians in Syria'



Why Is Pakistan Sending Troops to Saudi Arabia?

ISLAMABAD (Middle East Eye) -- A leading Pakistani newspaper has called it a mystery. Politicians have demanded a debate. The defense minister was summoned.

But several days after Pakistan announced it was sending over 1,000 new troops to Saudi Arabia, details about what they will do and why they are being dispatched now remain murky.

The decision comes three years after Pakistan refused to send soldiers to join the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen.

The Pakistani military has officially said that the troops are on a "training and advise mission" and will not be deployed outside of the kingdom - and specifically not in Yemen. There are already 1,600 personnel in the country, Defense Minister Khurram Dastgir told Pakistan's Senate on Monday.

But even after Dastgir's explanation of the new deployment, politicians were still puzzled - and frustrated.

"This is shedding no light on the decision that has been taken," Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani said in response to Dastgir. "I'm sorry. The statement is inadequate."

Rabbani later threatened Dastgir with "contempt of parliament" after he refused to provide further detail, according to Pakistani daily Dawn.

Amid the grilling and obfuscation, analysts speculate that the real mission of the Pakistani troops may be to protect the Saudi royal family, months into a purge that has seen hundreds of the kingdom's richest citizens and relatives rounded up for alleged corruption.

"The Saudis may think there is an internal issue - they can't trust their guys, so they are getting the Pakistanis," Kamal Alam, a visiting fellow at the Royal United Services Institute, told Middle East Eye.

It wouldn't be the first time Pakistanis have guarded the royal family. In the early 1970s, King Faisal, whose foreign policy was guided by pan-Islamism, and then-Pakistani prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, developed a warm relationship which saw the first Pakistani military presence in the kingdom, Alam said.

At the request of King Fahd in 1982, General Zia ul-Haq, then Pakistan's president, sent an armored brigade to the kingdom. It served as "an elite fighting force to defend the monarchy from any foe at home or abroad," wrote Bruce Riedel, a former CIA analyst and director of the Brookings Intelligence project, this week.

Riedel told MEE that he believes the new deployment will primarily be used as Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman's personal guard force, backing up royal bodyguards.

The unit "will be loyal to him and Pakistan just in case his enemies move to oust and/or kill him," Riedel said. "He has made a lot of enemies in three years, including many in the royal family."

Why This Is Sensitive

The deployment is a sensitive one for Pakistan. While Islamabad and Riyadh have a close relationship, in recent years, the Pakistanis have tried to break free from the impression that they are Saudi puppets, Alam said.

General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Pakistan's current army chief who took command in November 2016, has focused on building relationships around the Persian Gulf including, for the first time, with Iran. The new Saudi deployment could disrupt those efforts, although Bajwa reportedly contacted Iran, Turkey and Qatar ahead of the announcement.

Having Pakistani troops in Yemen - where the Saudi-led coalition is fighting the Houthi group - could spark sectarian tensions in the country which has 35 million Shias among its nearly 200 million population and shares a border with Iran.

When the Saudis requested Pakistani support in 2015, the parliament debated for four days, eventually passing a resolution to maintain neutrality in the conflict.

Alam said it is very unlikely that Pakistani soldiers will be deployed into Yemen if only because they don't speak Arabic. "So they will be sitting ducks going to war into Yemen . . . It would make no sense," he said.

But the Saudi-Yemeni border area might be a different story. Last year, senior Pakistani security sources told MEE that Pakistan's army planned to send a brigade of combat troops to protect the vulnerable border from Houthi reprisal attacks.

Without greater clarification, Alam said, speculation will continue. "Either they are hiding it or genuinely haven't decided it," he said.

The Saudi embassy did not respond to a request for comment ahead of publication.

Veteran British Politician:

Saudi Arabia Faces 'Certain Defeat' in Yemen



Saudi soldiers stand guard as workers unload aid packages from a Saudi air force cargo plane at an airfield Yemen's central province of Marib on Jan. 28.

LONDON (Dispatches) -- A former Conservative cabinet minister has said that Saudi Arabia faces "certain defeat" and humiliation in Yemen and has called on British Prime Minister Theresa May to use the upcoming visit of Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman to pressure the kingdom to halt its bombardment of the country.

In an interview with Middle East Eye, the former secretary for international development Andrew Mitchell said it was now clear Saudi Arabia would "not win a war from the air" and warned that the "human misery and heartache" in Yemen would continue unless UK and international pressure was used to force Saudi Arabia to return to the negotiating table.

Saudi Arabia has conducted

bombing missions in Yemen since 2015 with arms and military support from the U.S., UK and other countries. At least 13,600 civilians have been killed in the conflict, though the true death toll is potentially far higher as few organizations on the ground have the resources to count the dead.

"Saudi Arabia will not win a war from the air and the certainty of its defeat is underlined by the small scale of the Saudi forces on the ground in Yemen," Mitchell said.

"The current situation will lead to its humiliation in respect to Yemen, but also in relations to the wider region and with Iran."

The visit by the powerful Saudi crown prince to London next month, during which he will meet senior royals and the

prime minister, Theresa May, is set to highlight the UK's close relationship with Saudi Arabia and its conduct in the three-year war on Yemen.

Mitchell said ministers must take a firm line with the crown prince over Yemen to steer him away from a "failed policy that has brought misery and heartache" to Yemen.

His comments come after shadow foreign secretary Emily Thornberry demanded that May stops "bowing and scraping" to the crown prince and halts the sale of weapons to Saudi Arabia.

The comments by Mitchell also come as the UK has drafted a UN Security Council resolution condemning Iran for allegedly violating the arms embargo on Yemen.

The UK move will likely be welcomed in Riyadh, but has prompted allegations from Mitchell that the UK, which has licensed the export of more than \$6.4bn of arms to Saudi Arabia since 2015, is not being "even handed".

Mitchell said: "In the same way we condemned the Houthi attack on Riyadh airport, we must not be afraid to condemn the nightly attacks on Yemen by the Saudi air force that have killed and maimed innocent men, women and children."

He added that the UK must be "even handed" and work towards the goal of negotiations without conditions to end the conflict.

The British government claims it is pressing Saudi Arabia to boost the flow of humanitarian aid to Yemen, and is lobbying for a peaceful solution to the conflict which has allowed militant groups, including Al-Qaeda and Daesh, to flourish in the chaos of war.

The British foreign secretary, Boris Johnson, on Monday accused Iran of supplying military equipment to force in Yemen, in breach of a UN arms embargo.

"I call on Iran to cease activity which risks escalating the conflict and to support a political solution to the conflict in Yemen," he said.

A UN report also listed 10 incidents in which Saudi airstrikes killed 157 civilians, including at least 85 children. The strikes targeted residential building, factories and civilian vessels, prompting the UN experts to find that Saudi forces had failed to adhere to "principles of international law of proportionality and precautions in attack".

(Continued on Page 7)

U.S. Targeting Asian Banks Over Trade With Iran

TEHRAN (Press TV) – U.S. authorities say they are turning their focus to Asia to strangle financial transactions with Iran after closing off money flows through European banks.

The shift underscores the current U.S. administration's disdain for a landmark nuclear deal which should have paved the way for Iran's reconnection to the international banking system.

After milking billions of dollars from European banks for processing Iranian transactions, U.S. enforcers are reportedly targeting lenders in South Korea, Taiwan, China and elsewhere.

At least two South Korean banks are facing legal action in Alaska and New York courts over

Iran-related business, Bloomberg reported on Tuesday, citing court documents and testimony.

State-owned Woori Bank and Industrial Bank of Korea which are among the largest lenders in the country are being sued for allegedly transferring \$1 billion of Iranian funds from escrow accounts, the financial news and information provider said.

Those accounts held revenues from Iranian oil exports and were effectively locked up in different countries, theoretically limiting the amount of hard currency Tehran could receive. The money held in escrow accounts could be used for purchase of local goods because Iran was cut off from the global financial system.

(Continued on Page 7)

Some Bodies Recovered From Plane Crash Site

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- The bodies of seven victims of Sunday's air crash in Iran were brought down from the mountainous crash site on Wednesday, according to Mizan, the official news site of the Iranian judiciary.

There were no survivors among the 66 passengers and crew on the plane that plowed into a mountaintop in southwest Iran.

The bodies of 32 passengers have so far been found and many of the remaining bodies are buried under ice and snow, officials said.

"The first team that went to the crash site was able to bring back a few of the bodies of those who lost their lives and deliver them to the medical authorities at the bottom of the mountain a few

minutes ago," Mohsen Momeni, the director of the Isfahan branch of the Red Crescent told the Mehr news agency on Wednesday.

The black box of the airplane has still not been found, local officials told state TV.

The Aseman Airlines plane disappeared from radar screens 50 minutes into Sunday's flight from Tehran to the southwestern city of Yasuj. The Iranian military located the wreckage in the central province of Isfahan on Tuesday morning.

Glacial temperatures and the mountainous terrain hampered search efforts in recent days, adding to the grief and anger felt by families of the victims.

(Continued on Page 7)