

Iraqi Forces Inch Closer to Strategic Mosque in Mosul

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Iraqi government forces have closed in on the strategic Grand al-Nuri Mosque in the western part of Mosul as they are fighting fierce street battles to drive Daesh terrorists out of their former urban stronghold in the country.

Military officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said on Wednesday army soldiers had encircled Daesh's stronghold in the Old City of Mosul.

The media bureau of the Iraqi Joint Operations Command announced in a statement that members of the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) were 200 to 300 meters away from the mosque, where purported Daesh ringleader Ibrahim al-Samarrai aka Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi gave his famous speech on the formation of the terror group back in June 2014.

The statement added that Iraqi Air Forces jets had carried out two separate airstrikes in the Old City of Mosul. One of the aerial assaults targeted a vehicle, killing three terrorists, while the other strike destroyed an arms depot, and left 10 Daesh terrorists dead.



Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) Humvees advance towards the Old City of Mosul on June 20, 2017 during the ongoing offensive to retake the last district still held by Daesh terrorists.

Separately, Federal Police Forces Commander Lieutenant General Shaker Jawdat said security forces had stormed Mosul's Old City from the southern front.

He stated that units of the 20th Brigade of the Federal Police had attacked the district, besieged the terrorists and advanced towards shopping complexes in al-Sarjkhana area.

Taking back the Old City of Mosul, a densely populated warren of narrow alleyways on the western side of Mosul, is crucial to recapturing the whole of the northern city.

The United Nations says around 150,000 civilians are trapped in the neighborhood along with hundreds of Daesh terrorists.

The Office of the United Nations

High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said on June 16 that Daesh terrorists were holding more than 100,000 Iraqi civilians as human shields in Mosul's Old City.

The presiding UNHCR representative in Iraq, Bruno Geddo, told reporters in the Swiss city of Geneva that Daesh snipers try to kill anyone trying to leave the area, stressing that the small number of civilians who manage to escape are "deeply traumatized."

Iraqi army soldiers and volunteer fighters from the Popular Mobilization Units, commonly known by their Arabic name, Hashd al-Sha'abi, have made sweeping gains against Daesh since launching the Mosul operation on October 17, 2016.

The Iraqi forces took control of eastern Mosul in January after 100 days of fighting, and launched the battle in the west on February 19.

An estimated 862,000 people have been displaced from Mosul ever since the battle to retake the city began nine months ago. A total of 195,000 civilians have also returned, mainly to the liberated areas of eastern Mosul.

Soft... (Continued From Page One)

"Women will also be symbols of a new Saudi consumer modernity and soon may be allowed to drive cars. In the future, Saudis will enjoy themselves up to a certain level without harassment by the religious police," she added.

According to Rasheed, Al-Qaeda's sectarian outlook may prove to be useful for Muhammad bin Salman's current crisis with Iran.

Second, erratic economic policies that may not deliver the desired neoliberal economy - including weaning Saudi Arabia away from oil by 2020, shrinking the welfare state, privatization and, most importantly, floating 5 percent of the Saudi oil company Aramco in international markets by September 2017 - will continue, she added.

Third, Muhammad bin Salman will struggle to become a serious regional power in a bid to emerge as the dominant force dictating the outcomes of several conflicts in the Arab world. He has already alienated Turkey and Iran - the former sided with Qatar in the latest crisis. He also promised to bring the war deep inside Iran, a statement that ultimately amounts to a declaration of war.

Muhammad bin Salman, Rasheed wrote, does not seem to know the implications of his flamboyant statements. But he and Daesh share the same sectarian outlook and may well cooperate, especially after Daesh runs out of targets in Syria and Iraq.

"Daesh may be instructed to move its terrorism campaign to Iran after its defeat in Mosul and Raqqa," she wrote.

According to Rasheed, Muhammad bin Salman may have scored success with Israel in his bid to form an alliance against both Iran and Qatar.

"He will continue to clandestinely cooperate with Israel in security and economic matters, but we shouldn't expect an Israeli flag to be raised in Riyadh soon. This will take some preparation and coordination and the stakes in such a controversial move are high," she added.

Israel's communications minister, Ayoub Kara, said on Wednesday the occupying regime welcomed bin Salman's appointment, adding that he hoped the change would accelerate the kingdom's rapprochement with Tel Aviv.

"Salman's appointment means more economic cooperation in the Middle East, and not just regarding oil," Kara said in a statement.

"The strengthening of relations with the Trump government is the beginning of a new and optimistic time between Saudi Arabia and regional states, including Israel and the Jewish people," he added.

Muhammad bin Salman is expected to continue courting U.S. President Donald Trump, exchanging weapon contracts and investment promises for continuous support - at least in public.

However, Rasheed summed up Saudi Arabia under the ruler.

"Muhammad bin Salman is not a capable fire fighter or a tactical statesman. He thinks only money solves problems but this has not enabled him to claim victories in the many wars and conflicts that he started. He is more likely to light further regional fires than extinguish existing ones."

Leader... (Continued From Page One)

Abadi was on a regional tour

that started in Saudi Arabia and included a stop in Kuwait.

He also met Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, as Iraqi forces on Tuesday pressed an assault on the Old City in western Mosul, the last part of Iraq's second city still held by the jihadists.

"The liberation of Mosul is the symbol of the end of terrorism and a victory for Iran, Iraq, Syria and all the countries of the region that are fighting against terrorism," Rouhani said during talks with Abadi.

He said Iran stands by Iraq in its fight against the Takfiris and considers a "victory over terrorism" as its own.

Iran has been a key backer of the Syrian and Iraqi governments as they seek to root out Daesh and other Takfiri terrorists, sending military advisers to the two countries.

Egypt... (Continued From Page One)

to a treaty from before Saudi Arabia was founded.

Parliamentary leaders and government lawyers say the House of Representatives is the only entity allowed to rule on matters of sovereignty. But in June last year the country's highest administrative court ruled Egypt's sovereignty must stand.

The Red Sea deal has become politically sensitive for Sisi's government. Saudi Arabia helped Sisi with aid since he toppled President Muhammad Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013.

But Egyptians are eager for economic revival after years of political upheaval and after a devaluation of the Egyptian pound, tax rises and subsidy cuts introduced by Sisi's government that have put pressure on their living costs.

The islands issue touched national pride, prompting thousands of protesters to take to the streets in April chanting "people want the fall of the regime", a slogan little heard since the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011.

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behavior. Proportionate to what they may do, a crushing response has been planned, and will be delivered," IRGC spokesman Ramezan Sharif said.

He said it took just 11 days for IRGC forces to pinpoint the command and planning posts which Daesh used to plot the terrorist attacks in Tehran.

The powerful retaliation, Sharif said, sent across a resounding message to "the terrorists, their regional and international backers, and also all those, who might even consider threatening our country's national security."

On Monday, Sharif was quoted as saying that "if they (Daesh) carry out a specific action to violate our security, definitely there will be more launches, with intensified strength."

But the missiles sent a message to more than just the extremists in Iraq and Syria, Sharif told state television in a telephone interview.

"The Saudis and Americans are especially receivers of this message," said Sharif. "Obviously and clearly, some reactionary countries of the region, especially Saudi Arabia, had announced that they are trying to bring insecurity into Iran."

Egypt Begins Delivery of 1 Million Liters of Fuel to Gaza



Palestinian security forces (R & L) and an Egyptian border guard (C) stand as Egyptian trucks carrying fuel enter the southern Gaza Strip from Egypt through the Rafah border crossing, June 21, 2017.

CAIRO (Dispatches) – Egypt has begun the delivery of one million liters of fuel to the besieged Gaza Strip in an attempt to ease the electricity crisis in the Palestinian territory.

Eight shipments had entered Gaza, with 14 expected later in the day, sources at the Rafah crossing said on Wednesday.

One million liters, which is

220,000 gallons, of fuel were expected to be delivered on Wednesday.

The fuel will be routed to the only power station in Gaza, which has been closed since April due to fuel shortages.

Samir Moutair, the director general of the Gaza electricity company, said new deliveries would enable the power station to operate for two to three days.

On Monday, the Zionist regime began reducing its electricity supplies to Gaza. More than a week ago, Tel Aviv announced its controversial decision to further pressure the impoverished Palestinian territory.

On June 11, Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's security cabinet gave the Israel Electric Corporation (IEC) the green light to implement the controversial cut, a step that is expected to further de-

teriorate the power crunch plaguing the seaside Palestinian territory, run by the resistance movement Hamas.

The occupying regime's decision was reportedly made after the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority, led by President Mahmoud Abbas, slashed its monthly payments for the power supplies to Gaza by 30 percent. The Palestinian Authority and Hamas are at loggerheads, and Abbas' decision is considered as indirect pressure on Hamas to relinquish the control of Gaza.

Electricity supply is a major concern in the hot and cramped territory, which is currently marking the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. Palestinians in Gaza currently receive only three or four hours of electricity a day. The electricity is delivered from the territory's own power station and others in Israel and Egypt.

WHO:

Polio Outbreak Paralyzes 17 Children in Syria

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – A polio outbreak has paralyzed at least 17 Syrian children since March, the World Health Organization says, calling the situation in the war-torn country "very serious."

"We are very much worried, because if there is one case of polio with a kid that is paralyzed, it is already an outbreak," WHO spokesman Tarim Jasarevic said at a press conference in the Swiss city of Geneva on Tuesday.

He added that for every polio-caused paralysis there are almost 200 children, who has been infected by the virus but exhibit no symptoms. "The virus is circulating. It is very serious," he said.

Less than two weeks ago, the UN agency for the first time announced two cases of polio-caused paralysis among Syrian children. It also said at the time that the Arab country had been hit by its first outbreak of the crippling illness since 2014. Polio mainly affects children under the age of five.

According to Jasarevic, the new cases all appeared between March 3 and May 23, but they were only just confirmed, since the process of determining with certainty that whether a case of acute flaccid paralysis was caused by polio can take up to as long as two months. He also warned that "more confirmations" would be expected.

Jasarevic added that all of the cases but one

had been registered in the Mayadin district of the eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr, large part of which is currently under the control of the Daesh terrorist group, and a siege of the capital Damascus has restricted access to basic goods, services and medicine for the inhabitants of the province.

One case of polio-caused paralysis surfaced in Raqqa, Daesh's de facto capital in the Middle Eastern country, he said.

According to Jasarevic, the WHO plans to bring in more of the polio vaccine, Oral polio vaccine (OPV), to get immunization levels high enough to ensure they can curb the outbreak. He also said that the agency intended to vaccinate over 400,000 children under five in Dayr al-Zawr.

Zionist Troops Shoot, Kill Palestinian Youth

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Zionist troops have shot dead a young Palestinian man in the occupied West Bank amid ongoing tensions between the occupying regime's troops and Palestinian protesters in the occupied territories.

Palestinian sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Zionist troops shot dead the Palestinian at a checkpoint in al-Jab'a village, north of al-Quds, on Tuesday afternoon for allegedly attempting to carry out a stabbing attack. No one was injured in the purported stabbing at-

tack. The slain Palestinian man was later identified as Biha Emad Samir al-Harabawi – a 23-year-old resident of al-Eizariya city.

Three Palestinian teenagers, identified as 19-year-old Bara Ibrahim Muhammad Saleh, Adel Hassan Ahmad Anakush, 18, and Osama Ahmad Mustafa Atta, 19, purportedly wounded 23-year-old Staff Sergeant Major Hadas Malka outside the Damascus Gate entrance to the Old City of Jerusalem al-Quds on June 16.

An unnamed Zionist police spokesperson said the three Palestinians were "shot and killed" following the attack.

The Zionist police officer, who was in critical condition, was taken to the emergency care unit at nearby Hadassah University Medical Center. Hospital officials later pronounced her dead.

The Daesh terrorist group later claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement posted on its Amaq news agency.

Hamas resistance movement, however, dismissed the allegation, stating that the

trio was affiliated to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

The three slain Palestinians came from the village of Dayr Abu Mash'al, located 24 kilometers west of Ramallah. Zionist troops have put the village on complete lockdown ever since.

The occupied Palestinian territories have witnessed new tensions ever since Zionist troops introduced restrictions on the entry of Palestinian worshippers into the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in East Jerusalem al-Quds in August 2015.