

Zionist Commander Orders New Settlement in West Bank

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – A Zionist commander has ordered the construction of a new settlement north of the occupied West Bank for settlers of a former “unauthorized” outpost.

The chief of the Zionist regime’s central command, Maj. Gen. Roni Numa, issued the order for the residents of the Amona outpost, Israeli paper Ha’aretz reported.

The settlers have rejected a number of alternatives, including their absorption into existing settlements. Amona spokesman Avihai Boaron welcomed the decision, saying, “It is sadly too early to celebrate.”

The regime occupied West Bank and East al-Quds, another Palestinian territory, in 1967. It has since built over 230 settlements in the lands in what is seen as a precursor to a possible annexation.

The announcements come after U.S. President Donald Trump visited the region where he reiterated Washington’s commitment to the Zionist regime’s security. Encouraged by Trump’s election, the regime unveiled plans in April to build 25,000 settler units in al-Quds.

The regime’s Construction Minister Yoav Gallant said Tel Aviv “has said today, with a clear and clarion voice ‘the eyes of the Jewish people have been directed toward Jerusalem and the Western Wall for 2,000 years.’”



The picture taken on April 14, 2016 shows a partial view of the illegal settlement of Givat Zeev near the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah.

Israel, he said, “is not only declaring that the Western Wall belongs to it, but it is also investing its resources in it.”

Tel Aviv lays claim to al-Quds in its entirety, including the eastern occupied section which Palestinians want for their capital.

Separately, the occupying regime’s education ministry approved a plan

to encourage Arab schools in East al-Quds to switch to the Israeli curriculum.

The ministry said, “The purpose of this five-year plan is to improve the quality of education in East Jerusalem (al-Quds), with an emphasis on encouraging the study of the Israeli curriculum in the schools.”

“This is part of an effort to improve the quality of life and the environment in the Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem, and to enhance the ability of East Jerusalem residents to integrate into the Israeli economy and society, and thus strengthen the economic and social resilience of the entire capital,” it added.

Iraq’s ...

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In Mosul, Iraqi forces began a new offensive to drive Daesh militants from the remaining pockets of territory that the Takfiri militants still hold in the Old City, in Mosul’s western half. The Daesh hold on Mosul has shrunk to just a handful of neighborhoods in and around the Old City district where narrow streets and a dense civilian population are expected to complicate the fight.

Iraq’s second-largest city, Mosul fell to Daesh in the summer of 2014 as the militants swept over much of the country’s north and central areas. Weeks later the head of the Takfiri group, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, announced the formation of a self-styled caliphate in Iraq and Syria from the pulpit of a Mosul mosque.

Iran ...

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“The blows which have been dealt to terrorist groups by security, military and defense forces have forced them to carry out their idiotic acts somewhere else but they will receive a teeth-breaking response anyway,” he added.

Last month, 10 Iranian border guards were killed and two others injured in an ambush attack near the town of Mirjaveh in the southeastern Sistan-and-Baluchestan province. The assailants escaped into Pakistan after the attack, for which the Jaish ul-Adl terrorist group claimed responsibility.

“We have many different enemies who have infiltrated parts of the countries around us,” Rezaei said.

Putin ...

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Macron’s invitation for Putin was a surprise after his tough stance on Russia during the French presidential campaign. That contrasted sharply with his rivals, including far-right candidate Marine Le Pen and conservative Francois Fillon, who both backed ending Western sanctions against Moscow over the Ukrainian crisis.

Macron’s aides also claimed that Russian groups launched hacking attacks on his presidential campaign but Moscow has strongly denied all allegations of election meddling.

Putin, however, made his preferences in the French presidential election clear by hosting Le Pen at the Kremlin in March. Putin also has frequently met with Fillon, the French prime minister from 2007-2012, and praised him as an experienced statesman.

Analysts say the visit to Paris offers Putin an opportunity to improve ties with France that had steadily deteriorated in the closing months of Socialist Francois Hollande’s presidency.

“As a person who pays utmost attention to personal contacts, Putin believes that only a one-on-one meeting could give answers to many questions about Macron as a person and as president of France, as well as his future foreign policy course and his stance on Russia,” Tatyana Stanovaya of the Center for Political Technologies, an independent Moscow-based think-tank, wrote.

In October, Putin abruptly shelved a trip to Paris after Hollande alleged that Russia could face war crime charges for its actions in Syria. Hollande also refused to take part in the opening of the newly built Russian Orthodox Spiritual and Cultural Center in Paris and was only interested in talking with Russia about Syria.

Putin’s foreign affairs adviser, Yuri Ushakov, said Russia was dissatisfied with the current level of political contacts. “The meeting is very important for both Russia and France,” he told reporters.

Ushakov said he expects an “interesting discussion” on ways to implement a 2015 Minsk deal for eastern Ukraine, which was brokered by Germany and France. The U.S. and the EU have made the prospect of lifting economic and financial sanctions against Moscow contingent on fulfilling the peace agreement.

Ushakov said that the two leaders will also have a “frank” discussion on Syria, where Russia has backed Syrian President Bashar Assad and France has pushed strongly for his removal. He added that last week’s suicide attack on Manchester Arena emphasized the need to pool efforts in the fight against terrorism.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Sunday urged European Union

nations to stick together in the face of emerging policy divisions with the U.S., Britain’s decision to leave the bloc and other challenges. Merkel also stressed the importance of being good neighbors “wherever that is possible, including with Russia, but also with others.”

Eurasian ...

(Continued From Page One)

“We would like to have a framework signed then,” said Suleimenov, who became minister in December after previously working as the minister in charge of economy and financial policy at the EEU Commission in Moscow.

At the same time, Suleimenov warned that any souring of U.S.-China trade relations under Trump would be harmful for Central Asia.

Trump’s campaign for the White House was marked by strong anti-free trade rhetoric and heavy criticism of China, which he threatened with import tariffs and a move to label it a currency manipulator.

China’s One Belt One Road policy to aggressively expand trade relations with Central Asian countries is seen in the region’s capitals as a crucial driver of their economic growth.

“I am personally afraid of (Trump’s) dealings with China,” Suleimenov said.

Trump’s ...

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“He travels to a country, which has been convicted in American courts,” Qassemi said, referring to criminal conviction of Saudi agents at U.S. tribunals for their role in the September 11, 2001 terror attacks.

The Iranian spokesman said Saudi Arabia is “a country, whose positions on extremism and terrorism over the past decades are clear.”

Syria De-Escalation Talks Qassemi said Iran, Russia and Turkey are seriously continuing efforts as part of the Astana talks to maintain a ceasefire in Syria.

The talks have been focusing on reinforcing the standing truce, which has resulted in the creation of four de-escalation zones in Syria.

Qassemi said once an agreement is reached, the guarantors are needed to dispatch troops to the zones to monitor the ceasefire.

“The Astana debate is constantly underway and talks continue. There are negotiations among the three countries on reducing tensions and if necessary conditions are met, the three countries are required to send troops in order to supervise the ceasefire,” he said.

“We are ready to grant this if the necessary understanding is reached,” Qassemi added.

Riyadh Statement

Qassemi also touched on an Arab-American summit held in Riyadh on May 21, which put emphasis “on the need to stop Iranian intervention in other countries’ internal affairs” and called Iran’s ballistic missile program “dangerous.”

The spokesman said the statement was a “unilateral” one, issued either without the other Arab attendees’ knowledge or contrary to their respective positions.

“The meeting was met with some setbacks and frustration, which will become clear in the future,” he added.

Qassemi said, “Our policy concerning the neighboring countries is clear. We have always tried to speak with them with the language of friendship and amity and to boost our commonalities.”

“We do not dictate to others what they should do, but we warned ahead of the meeting about the Zionist plot aimed at creating schism in the Muslim world,” the official added.

Missile Work to Continue

Qassemi touched on a series of measures being pushed through U.S. Congress against Iran purportedly over its missile program, saying Tehran would react only if they receive the U.S. administration’s signature.

The spokesman reiterated that Iran’s missile work does not violate any UN Security Council resolution -- as the projectiles are not capable of carrying nuclear warheads -- and the program is completely of defensive and deterrent nature.

“Our missile policy is not going to undergo any changes,” he asserted.

More U.S. Lawmakers Line Up Against Trump’s Saudi Arms Deal



U.S. President Donald Trump (background R) and First Lady Melania Trump waving as they board Air Force One before leaving Riyadh to the occupied territories, May 22, 2017.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – U.S. President Donald Trump’s massive \$110 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia faces a bleak future in Congress as more lawmakers raise questions about the regime’s atrocities in Yemen.

Trump signed the multi-billion dollar deal with Saudis during his maiden overseas trip to Riyadh

last week, boasting that it was going to make and save “billions of dollars and millions of jobs” in the U.S.

Besides fighter jets, warships and other weapons, the deal also included precision guided munitions (PGMs), the sale of which was halted last year by then U.S. President Barack Obama

over the Riyadh’s ongoing war against Yemen.

In a letter to the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, Ted Lieu, a Democrat, and Ted Yoho, a Republican, asked their fellow lawmakers to reconsider the sale of PGMs under Trump’s arms deal.

They argued that the Obama administration decided to halt the sale “due to concerns over the widespread civilian casualties in Yemen” and “significant deficiencies” in the Royal Saudi Arabian Air Force’s (RSAF) targeting capabilities.

“This decision was the result of an internal review launched after the United Nations and a number of human rights organizations documented a series of RSAF airstrikes on civilian targets including hospitals, markets, schools and a large funeral,” the wrote.

In October last year, Saudi aircraft targeted a crowded

funeral ceremony in Yemen’s capital, Sana’a, killing over 140 people and injuring more than 500 others.

Saudi Arabia has been leading an invasion of Yemen from the air, land, and sea since March 2015. The unprovoked war has killed over 12,000 civilians and wounded thousands more.

In their letter, Lieu and Yoho said the Trump State Department had reversed the PMGs sale ban in March “without providing any justification for what had changed in its assessment.”

The letter came days after Senators Chris Murphy, Al Franken and Rand Paul introduced a measure to block the deal through a vote in early June.

Senator Patrick Leahy, the ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, has also blasted Trump for the deal, accusing him of kowtowing to “one of the world’s wealthiest and repressive regimes.”

Australia Promises More Troops for NATO’s Afghanistan Mission

CANBERRA (Reuters) – Australia will send an additional 30 troops to join the NATO-led training and assistance mission in Afghanistan, bringing its total deployment there to 300, Defense Minister Marise Payne said on Monday.

NATO requested more troops last month as U.S. President Donald Trump considers whether to expand the operation by several thousand, 16 years into the seemingly intractable war against the Taliban and other militants.

Australia is not a member of NATO but is a staunch U.S. ally and has had troops in Afghanistan since 2002.

“These additional (Australian Defense Force) members will allow Australia to commit additional



Afghan children walk past security forces in the Chaparhar district of Nangarhar Province on May 21, 2017.

advisers to further develop the long-term capabilities of the Afghan security forces, as part of

our current train, advise and assist mission,” Payne told a Senate committee.

In February, U.S. General John Nicholson, the commander of NATO’s Resolute Support mission, requested several thousand more international troops to break a stalemate against the Taliban, the remnants of al Qaeda, Daesh and other terrorist groups.

Trump’s administration is yet to respond to the request but has increased bombing missions in Afghanistan.

The NATO force currently stands at about 15,000 troops, including about 8,400 U.S. military personnel.

Taliban forces increased their attacks in recent weeks before the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, with a string of strikes in Kandahar, Paktia, Helmand and other provinces.