

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Wednesday Iran's defensive missile program is part of its "national interests," asserting that new U.S. sanctions against Tehran are "illegitimate" and only harm the nuclear deal between Tehran and the P5+1.

Lavrov said Iran's development of an array of ballistic missiles does not violate the UN Security Council's Resolution 2231, adopted in July 2015 to endorse the landmark nuclear agreement. "The missile program is Iran's internal affair. Iran is not prohibited from having it," Lavrov said. "The UN Security Council's resolution contains no legal bans on that score."

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – Iran on Wednesday reaffirmed its full commitment to the 2015 nuclear agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as it criticized the U.S. for hindering the implementation of the deal.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi said U.S. claims that Iran was not committed to the spirit of the JCPOA are "aimed at deflecting the global public opinion away from the unconstructive and provocative acts by the U.S. against the Islamic Republic of Iran, which have stopped Iran from reaping the full benefits of the JCPOA."

**Viewpoint**

By Kayhan Int'l Staff Writer

### Could MBS Be Trusted for His Feelers of Peace?

### Numerous Volcanoes Discovered in Antarctica



### Buffon, Messi, Ronaldo Shortlisted for Player of Year: UEFA



### 'Saudi-Led Siege Can't Bring Qatar to Its Knees'



## Turkish Foreign Minister Warns: Iraqi Kurdish Referendum Risks Civil War

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Turkey warned Wednesday that plans by the leadership in Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region to hold a referendum on independence could lead to civil war, in Ankara's strongest warning yet against next month's poll.

"In that country (Iraq), which has been through so many problems, a referendum on independence can make the situation even worse," Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told the state TRT Haber broadcaster.

"God forbid, it could even bring it to civil war," he added.

Turkey has a substantial Kurdish minority which is sometimes estimated as making up around a quarter of its total population of just under 80 million.

Ankara has in recent years forged strong ties with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq but is extremely wary of any move towards independence by the region.

Turkish security forces in the southeast of the country are still fighting the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has waged a deadly three-decade insurgency.

The PKK initially aimed to carve out an independent Kurdish state in the southeast although its declared ambitions are now more focused on autonomy and rights.

Ankara is also concerned about the presence of the Syrian Kurdish militia People's Protection Units (YPG) in the border area, fearing an autonomous Kurdish region could also emerge in northern Syria.

Analysts have little doubt that the September 25 referendum would result in a 'Yes' for an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq.

But the result would be non-binding and leave the approximately five million Kurds of northern Iraq some way away from actual independence.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in June strongly criticized the referendum plan, calling it "an error" and "a threat" to Iraq's territorial integrity.

"The fundamental reason for our opposition to this referendum is the importance of preserving Iraq's territorial and political integrity," Erdogan's spokesman Ibrahim Kalin said in a radio interview Wednesday, denying any ill will towards the Kurds.

Most Kurds are spread between Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. Iraqi oil in the Kurdistan region is exported through Turkey, a key economic lifeline for the region.

On Monday, Zionist Union MK Ksenia Svetlova said a number of senior Iraqi Kurd officials have visited Occupied Palestine over

the last several weeks urging the occupying regime of Israel to both support its independence and send a message to Washington to do the same.

The Jerusalem Post reported on Sunday that PM Benjamin Netanyahu told a delegation of U.S. Republican congressmen on Thursday that he is in favor of an independent Kurdish state in parts of Iraq.

Netanyahu, according to a source who took part in the discussion, expressed his "positive attitude" toward a Kurdish state in the Kurdish areas of Iraq, saying that the Kurds are a "brave, pro-Western people who share our values."

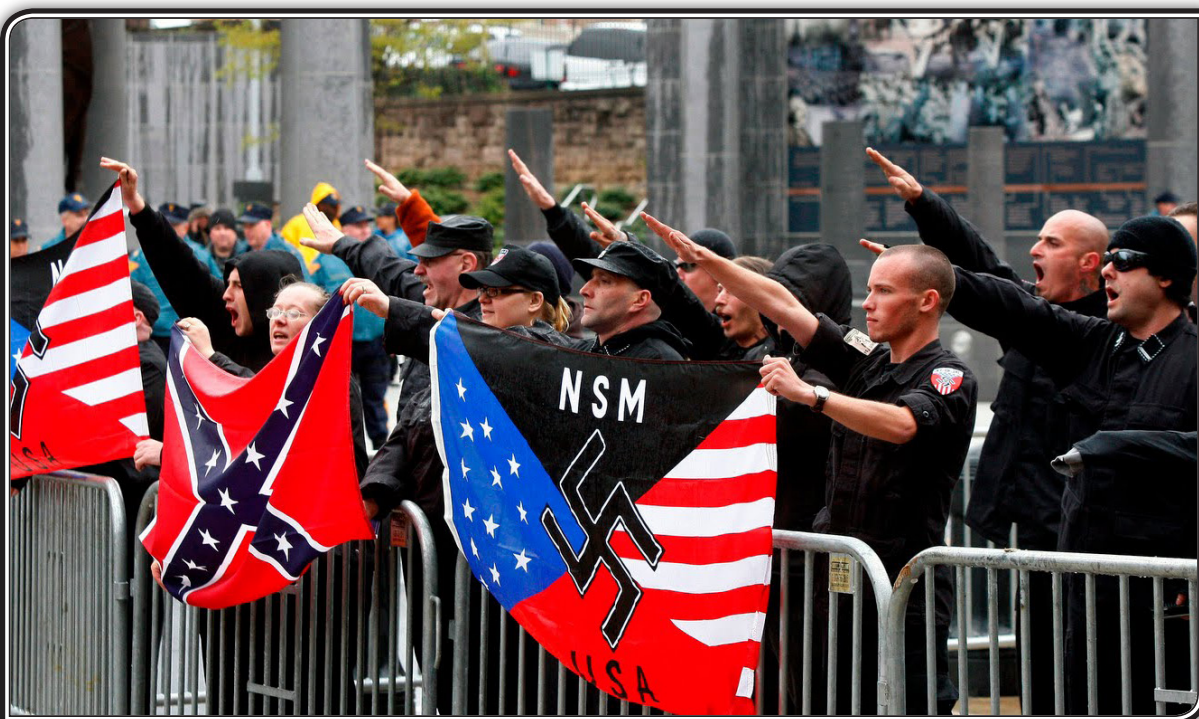
Netanyahu's comments to the congressmen came the same day that U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson asked Barzani to postpone the independence referendum.

Svetlova, who chairs a Knesset caucus for strengthening relations between the occupying regime of and Kurdish rulers, said that visiting Kurdish officials were looking for Israel's help in getting Washington to back the independence drive.

"They say that Israel has a strong lobby, and the ear of (U.S. President Donald) Trump, and that they would be very happy if we could help," she said.

Svetlova said she was "100% sure that Kurdish independence is good for us because we need to look for partners in the Middle East."

## Supremacists Celebrate Fresh Trump Support



U.S. white supremacists make Nazi salutes in a show of force, supported by President Donald Trump.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei joined the international criticism of race-related violence in the United States on Wednesday with a tweet.

"If U.S. has any power, they better manage their country, tackle #WhiteSupremacy rather than meddle in nations' affairs. #Charlottesville," Ayatollah Khamenei's official Twitter feed posted.

The Leader's office was responding to the furor in the U.S. over an attack in Charlottesville by a suspected Nazi sympathizer, who ploughed his car into anti-racism protesters, leaving one dead and 19

injured. U.S. President Donald Trump has raised another huge controversy by saying there was "blame on both sides."

Earlier, Iran's Foreign Ministry lashed out at Washington for a "hypocritical" annual report on the situation of religious freedom in the Islamic Republic.

"It is clear that religious and racial discrimination, Islamophobia, and xenophobia are a widespread and frequent phenomenon among American politicians," spokesman Bahram Qasemi hit back on the ministry's website.

White supremacists welcomed

Trump's insistence on blaming "both sides" for deadly violence in Charlottesville.

The praise for the Republican leader drew concern and condemnation from across the political spectrum, including from senior figures within his party.

Trump's presidential campaign last year enjoyed broad far-right backing, and the Trump administration includes several figures linked to far-right and neo-Nazi groups.

Trump initially blamed "many sides" for the violence and avoided calling out the far-right by name. After an outcry, he specifically

condemned white supremacy two days later.

By Wednesday, however, Trump again criticized "both sides" including anti-fascist protesters, who he described as the "alt-left", a term popularized by the far-right.

The U.S. president earned praise from white supremacist ideologue, Richard Spencer, and from former KKK leader, David Duke.

Responding to a tweet by far-right polemicist Ann Coulter, which praised Trump for standing up to the media, Spencer wrote: "Trump cares about the truth."

Duke wrote on the social media platform: "Thank you President Trump for your honesty and courage to tell the truth about Charlottesville and condemn the leftist terrorists in BLM/Antifa."

Black Lives Matter (BLM) is a U.S.-based civil liberties organization demanding equal rights for African Americans and an end to police brutality.

From the center-right to the left, Trump's behavior and comments have attracted condemnation on Twitter.

During his address on Wednesday, the U.S. president referred to "very fine people" on both sides of the divide.

Activist and writer Shaun King said Trump's speech was an "an open embrace of white supremacy."

"As expected, white supremacists loved the off-script press conference Donald Trump just gave. loved it."

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## Iranian, Turkish Top Brass Discuss Key Issues

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Turkish and Iranian military leaders held talks on Wednesday over cooperation in the Syrian conflict and counter-terrorism, officials said, during a rare visit to NATO-member Turkey by the Islamic Republic's military chief of staff.

Turkey's ties with Washington have been strained by U.S. support for Kurdish fighters in Syria, and the visit by Iranian General Muhammad Hussein Baqeri is the latest sign that Ankara is increasing cooperation with other powers such as Iran and Russia.

Baqeri met his Turkish counterpart on Tuesday and Turkey's Defense Minister Nurettin Canikli on Wednesday in what Turkish media said was the first visit by an Iranian chief of staff since Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

He was due to meet President Tayyip Erdogan later on Wednesday.

Turkey and Iran have supported rival sides in Syria's six-year-old conflict, with Tehran helping President Bashar al-Assad to drive back terrorists battling to overthrow him, including some supported by Ankara.

Turkey is concerned that the Syrian chaos has empowered Kurdish forces who it says are closely tied to the long-running insurgency in its southeastern regions, as well

as Daesh terrorists who have waged attacks inside Turkey, and is working with Iran and Russia to reduce the fighting in some areas.

An Iranian source said Baqeri was accompanied by the head of the ground forces of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, Iran's most powerful security entity.

"There have been no such visits between the two countries for a long time, but considering regional developments and security issues - border security and the fight against terrorism - there was a need for such a visit," Baqeri told Iranian state television on arrival on Tuesday.

The Iranian source said that, in addition to the war in Syria, the two sides would discuss the conflict in Iraq as well as dealing with Kurdish militants in the Turkish-Iranian border region, where Turkish media say Turkey has started building a frontier wall.

Turkey, Iran and Russia agreed in May to set up "de-escalation zones" in Syria to try to stem the fighting in some parts of the country, including the northern province of Idlib, which borders Turkey and has since been overrun by Takfiris linked to a former Al-Qaeda affiliate.

That has thrown into question any suggestion

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## Leaks Reveal Secret UAE-Zionist Links

LONDON (Dispatches) – The UAE's top diplomat in America sought a battle damage assessment of the occupying regime of Israel's 2012 eight-day war on Gaza from the "father" of the Zionist regime's Iron Dome missile system, according to leaked emails obtained by Middle East Eye.

Yousef Otaiba was introduced to Uzi Rubin by a senior pro-Israel analyst in Washington, although it was unclear if the two ever met. But the emails, obtained by the GlobalLeaks hacking group, show growing military and diplomatic ties between the Persian Gulf kingdom and the occupying regime of Israel.

Robert Satloff, the executive director of a Washington-based pro-Israel think-tank, wrote to Yousef Otaiba on 19 December 2012 to suggest a meeting with Uzi Rubin, a former Israeli brigadier general who led the Zionist missile organization. Within three days, Rubin and Otaiba were emailing directly.

The exchange came a month after Israel's operations against targets in Gaza, which according to UN figures killed 174 Palestinians, 107 of them civilians including 33 children. There were six Zionist casualties.

Rubin visited Washington to praise the alleged success of the Iron Dome system during the eight-day war. He told a forum of

guests: "In strategic terms, the recent conflict was largely a 'push-button' war."

Satloff, who hosted Rubin, wrote afterwards to Otaiba: "You were on my mind yesterday when I heard a compelling presentation by the father of Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile system, Uzi Rubin."

"He closed his presentation with comments about the applicability of the system to (Persian) Gulf states facing Iranian missiles. I assume your side has heard from him and his colleagues directly; if that's not the case, I can certainly set something up."

Otaiba replied "I have not met with Uzi. I would be interested in hearing how it did in Gaza recently. I read the press commentary on its performance but would be interested to hear more specifically."

Satloff then sought permission to introduce Rubin to enable a future meeting, to which Otaiba agreed. The communications appeared to quickly pay off - in an email direct to Rubin on 22 December, 2012, Otaiba said: "Let me know when you're next in DC."

Rubin replied that he had already returned home, and signed off: "Perhaps next time. Regards - Uzi."

Satloff did not deny his email exchange

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