

CAIRO (Reuters) – Lebanon foiled a plot by a suicide bomber to blow up a plane bound for the United Arab Emirates from Australia earlier this month, Lebanon's interior minister said on Monday.

Nohad Machnouk told Saudi-owned television station Al-Arabiya Al-Hadath that the bomber was Lebanese and had planned to blow up a plane bound for Abu Dhabi.

Earlier this month an Australian man was detained in Sydney during raids to disrupt what authorities described as a Daesh-inspired plot to bomb an Etihad Airways flight.

*There is no greater wealth than wisdom, no greater poverty than ignorance; no greater heritage than culture and no greater support than consultation.*

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

## 'Over 200 Daesh Terrorists Killed in Russian Airstrike in Dayr al-Zawr'



A displaced Syrian boy walks across the rubble of buildings in Raqqah's western al-Sabahiya district where he is taking shelter on August 14, 2017.

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Russia's Defense Ministry says its aircraft have eliminated more than 200 Daesh terrorists on their way to the eastern Syrian city of Dayr al-Zawr.

The operation also destroyed around 20 SUVs laden with large-caliber weapons and mortars, as well as armored vehicles, including tanks, the Ministry said in a statement on Monday. The city contains relatively large concentrations of the Takfiri group's terrorists and is subject to offensives by both the Syrian Army and its allies, and Russian warplanes.

The ministry said the city was now

witnessing "international terrorists... trying to regroup and equip their last base in Syria."

"The defeat of ISIS (Daesh) in the Dayr al-Zawr region will be a strategic defeat for the international terrorist group in the Syrian Arab Republic," the statement said.

Earlier in the month, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said if the group lost the city, it would potentially mean it had suffered an ultimate defeat.

"This is perhaps the main point at the Euphrates, which will in many ways indicate the end of the fight against ISIS," he said.

Dayr al-Zawr, however, still contains some 125,000 civilians, a fact that could slow down the military operations targeting the city.

### 125 Civilians Killed in U.S. Strikes

In another development, a monitoring group says more than a dozen civilians have lost their lives in a week as the U.S.-led coalition purportedly fighting the Daesh terrorist group conducted a series of aerial assaults in Syria's terrorist-held northern city of Raqqah.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported on Monday that 125

civilians, including at least 40 minors and 25 women, had lost their lives in U.S.-led aerial attacks against the city, located about 455 kilometers (283 miles) northeast of the capital Damascus, between August 14 and August 21.

The Britain-based monitoring group added that 27 people, among them seven children and six women, died on Sunday when U.S.-led military aircraft bombarded Harah al-Badou and other neighborhoods in Raqqah.

The Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, in two separate letters sent to UN Secretary General António Guterres and rotating President of the UN Security Council Amr Abdellatif Aboulatta on August 17, called on the United Nations to take on its responsibilities concerning the establishment of international peace and security to put an end to the U.S.-led coalition's crimes against innocent Syrians.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry also accused the U.S.-led coalition of using guided bombs and internationally-banned white phosphorus munitions in flagrant violation of international law and human rights principles.

The U.S.-led coalition has been conducting airstrikes against what are said to be Daesh targets inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from the Damascus government or a UN mandate.

The military alliance has repeatedly been accused of targeting and killing civilians. It has also been largely incapable of fulfilling its declared aim of destroying Daesh.

## UN Warns Over Civilian Casualties in Iraq's Tal Afar



Iraqi government forces supported by fighters from the Abbas Brigade, which are part of the Popular Mobilization units, advance towards the city of Tal Afar on August 20, 2017.

NEW YORK (Dispatches) – The United Nations has called on all parties involved in operations to free the Iraqi city of Tal Afar from its occupying Daesh terrorists to avoid civilian casualties.

"Thousands of people are fleeing Tal Afar for safety. Families are trekking for 10 to 20 hours in extreme heat to reach mustering points. They are arriving exhausted and dehydrated," said the UN's Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Lise Grande, in a statement released on Sunday.

The statement was released after Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi announced the commencement of a major offensive to retake the city of Tal Afar, located near Mosul. "We announce the launch of an operation to liberate Tal Afar. I say to Daesh either you surrender or die," Abadi said.

Grande described the situation inside the city as being "very tough," due to the lack of food, water and basic necessities.

"More than 30,000 people have already fled the district. We don't know how many civilians are still in the areas where fighting is occurring, but we are preparing for thousands more to flee in coming days and weeks," she added.

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She further went on to highlight the UN's deep concerns over the "extreme risks that families are facing," urging all engaged in the conflict "to avoid civilian casualties and ensure people have the assistance they are entitled to under international humanitarian law."

Iraqi government forces liberated four districts in Tal Afar from the grip of the terrorists.

Commander of Federal Police Forces Lieutenant General Raed Shaker Jawdat said that security forces, backed by members of the Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) and fighters from pro-government Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), have reclaimed Abra al-Najjar, Abra Hanish, Greater Abra and Lesser Abra, Arabic-language Baghdad Today news website reported.

Tal Afar and the surrounding area are among the last pockets of Daesh-controlled territory in Iraq, after the country's second-largest city of Mosul.

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### Qatar Envoy:

## UAE Supports Counter-Revolutions, Paid for Egypt Coup

DOHA (Dispatches) – The Qatari Ambassador to Turkey has accused the United Arab Emirates of sponsoring "counter-revolutions in the Arab world and revival of dictatorships", stating that Abu Dhabi has spent millions of dollars for the overthrow of Egypt's first democratically-elected president Mohamed Morsi.

"The UAE and a number of allies have paid around \$40 billion to consolidate the military coup in Egypt alone," Salem bin Mubarak al-Shafi said in reference to Morsi's ouster by former army chief and current President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in July 2013.

"We say that these countries have not learnt their lesson well. Blaming

Qatar, using broad terms such as counterterrorism and attacking moderates with an intention to win the heart of the West will not help them," he added.

Shafi further dismissed assertions that Doha is backing extremists in the Middle East.

"There are some Arab countries which are afraid of revolutions. Instead of reforming their regimes and fulfilling public aspirations, they heap the blame on Qatar," the Qatari ambassador commented.

Shafi stressed that Qatar is "doing all it can to serve security and stability in the region in a way that does not clash with aspirations of the people."

The Qatari ambassador also rejected Persian Gulf states' demands that Doha cut defense ties with Ankara, describing it as a "flagrant intervention in the internal affairs" of the gas-rich kingdom.

"This is against all international law and norms. The demands concerning closure of the Turkish base and severance of our military relations with Turkey translate as infringement of our sovereignty rights and violation of our independence," Shafi pointed out.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Bahrain all cut off diplomatic ties with Qatar on June 5, after officially accusing it of "sponsoring terrorism."

## Trump Eying Afghanistan's \$3tn Natural Resources

KABUL (Dispatches) – Afghanistan's \$3 trillion wealth of natural resources has taken the center of attention for U.S. President Donald Trump in his strategy for the stalemate in the South Asian country.

While the US Department of Defense's estimates have put Afghanistan's untapped wealth of gold, copper, uranium and other rare-earth minerals at well around \$1 trillion, Afghan officials' latest geological studies have hinted the figure is three times bigger.

Washington's war in Afghanistan has dragged on for 16 years and has cost the U.S. economy more than \$714 billion dollars, according to the Pentagon's Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) July report.

The second longest war in the U.S. history has also killed over 2,000 American soldiers and injured 20,000 more.

The Trump administration has been under overwhelming pressure to turn the tide in Afghanistan.

Although opinions vary on whether the U.S. president would authorize an increase in U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan, there is a common consensus that the Trump administration is exploring ways to recoup some of the money funneled into the war over the past years.

In fact, Trump has already discussed the possibility with his Afghan counterpart Ashraf Ghani and reportedly views the potential there as a justification for prolonged U.S. military presence.

According to administration sources, the White House is already considering sending an envoy to Afghanistan to meet with mining officials.

Trump has been receiving informal advice on Afghanistan from his billionaire friend Andy Feinberg, who owns major U.S. military corporation DynCorp.

The company has been operating in Afghanistan since 2003 and is believed to play a role in securing the country's mines, according to the New York Times.