

# Syria's Dayr al-Zawr Air Base Working Again

**DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – The Dayr al-Zawr military airport in eastern Syria, which the Syrian army recaptured this month from Daesh terrorists, began functioning again on Monday for the first time in nearly a year, Syrian state media and a monitoring group said.**

The military base is seen as a valuable asset for the Syrian army as it presses its campaign against Daesh in Dayr al-Zawr province.

Two planes landed and took off from the base on Monday, state TV reported - the first such activity there since September 2016, the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group said.

Monday's flights carried aid to Dayr al-Zawr, Syrian state media and the British-based Observatory said.

On Sunday, the United Nations said it had halted costly airdrops to the city as a land corridor opened.

Syrian troops seized a suburb of the eastern city of Dayr al-Zawr on Sunday, tightening the noose around Daesh terrorists, a Syrian military source said.

The army pushed into the city this month with the help of Russian air power, breaking a Daesh siege of an enclave there that had lasted



*A Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) fighter looks with binoculars as he sits next to anti-tank weapons in the village of Sabah al-Khayr on the northern outskirts of Dayr al-Zawr, Syria, February 21, 2017.*

three years.

The Syrian army and allied forces captured al-Jafra district on the western bank of the Euphrates river, the military source said.

"They have no outlet except crossing the Euphrates towards the eastern bank and fleeing towards the desert, or (the towns)

al-Bukamal and al-Mayadin," the source told Reuters.

The terror outfit started its campaign of bloodshed and destruction against the Arab country in 2014, taking over vast swathes of territory. It, however, was forced out of much of its turf a year later against Army advances,

which have been backed by Russian aerial support, Lebanese Shia fighters, and Iranian military advisory assistance.

Earlier this month, the Syria Army and its allies broke a nearly three-year-old Daesh siege on government-held parts of the provincial capital.

## Amid ...

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French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, speaking on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York, echoed widespread international concern about the referendum.

"There are important clauses on autonomy in the Iraqi constitution," Le Drian said.

"They should be respected, accepted and protected in dialogue between Baghdad and Kurdistan," he said. "We think any other initiative would be untimely."

On Sunday, the UN chief also urged Iraq's Kurdish leaders to scrap the upcoming secession vote, saying it would undermine the ongoing battle in the Arab country against Daesh terrorists.

"Any unilateral decision to hold a referendum at this time would detract from the need to defeat ISIL (Daesh)," United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres said in a statement.

It would also harm reconstruction efforts and the return of refugees after years of war with Takfiri terrorists, he added.

Guterres said any dispute between the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan Regional Government had to be resolved through dialog and "constructive compromise."

The region is adamant to hold the referendum on September 25 despite regional and international opposition. Critics say partitioning Iraq could be the last thing the country, scarred by years of violence, needs.

Abadi told the Associated Press in an interview earlier that Iraq was prepared to intervene militarily if the Kurdish region's planned referendum resulted in violence. If the Iraqi population is "threatened by the use of force outside the law, then we will intervene militarily," he said Saturday.

"If you challenge the constitution and if you challenge the borders of Iraq and the borders of the region, this is a public invitation to the countries in the region to violate Iraqi borders as well, which is a very dangerous escalation," Abadi said.

The leaders of Iraq's Kurdish region have said they hope the referendum will push Baghdad to come to the negotiating table and create a path for independence. However, Abadi said such negotiations would likely be complicated by the referendum vote.

"It will make it harder and more difficult," he said, but added, "I will never close the door to negotiations. Negotiations are always possible."

Meanwhile, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will meet Abadi this week to discuss concerns about the referendum.

With the largest Kurdish population in the region, Turkey fears that a "yes" vote would fuel separatism in its southeast, where militants of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) have waged an insurgency for three decades. Tensions between Arbil and Baghdad have flared in the lead-up to the Sept. 25 vote.

Earlier this week Iraq's Parliament rejected the referendum in a vote boycotted by Kurdish lawmakers.

## U.S. ...

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Many protesters believe police provoked demonstrators by showing up in riot gear and armored vehicles.

Stockley shot Smith after high-speed chase as officers tried to arrest Smith and his partner in a suspected drug deal. Stockley, 36, testified he felt endangered because he saw Smith holding a silver revolver when Smith backed his car toward the officers and sped away.

Prosecutors said Stockley planted a gun in Smith's car after the shooting. The officer's DNA was on the weapon but Smith's wasn't. Dashcam video from Stockley's cruiser recorded him saying he was "going to kill this (expletive)." Less than a minute later, he shot Smith five times.

Stockley left the police department and moved to Houston three years ago.

## Confrontation ...

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"The Syrian army storm units have pushed the Daesh militants out of several villages on the eastern bank of the Euphrates River and are continuing their offensive toward the east, extending their gains."

U.S.-backed and Kurdish-led forces have also been advancing on the eastern side of the river, as both sides seek to expand their control of the oil-rich province bordering Iraq. Many oil fields, including al-Omar, Syria's largest, are on the eastern bank.

Over the weekend, the U.S.-backed SDF forces said its fighters were hit by Russian airstrikes on the eastern bank of the river, in an industrial area they recently liberated from Daesh. Russia denied it was behind the airstrikes.

Rami Abdurrahman, the head of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, confirmed the crossing, which he said was preceded by intense aerial bombing on the eastern bank.

"Even if the pro-government (forces) keep up their advance in the city, it will mean nothing if they don't control the eastern bank," Abdurrahman said.

The U.S.-backed offensive is focused on the Iraq border area, which is still controlled by Daesh.

## Iran ...

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If Trump decides not to certify, Congress will then have 60 days to debate whether to re-impose sanctions.

On Sunday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said Tehran would not submit to U.S. "bullying."

"The corrupt, lying, deceitful U.S. officials insolently accuse the nation of Iran and its establishment of lying, whereas the nation of Iran has acted honestly and will continue on this path until the end in an honest manner," said Ayatollah Khamenei.

Amano often describes his agency's work as technical rather than political and has declined to comment on Haley's remarks about inspections. In a speech on Monday, however, he defended the deal as an important step forward.

"The nuclear-related commitments undertaken by Iran under the JCPOA are being implemented," Amano said.

The nuclear deal is expected to be a major topic of discussion at the general assembly of the United Nations starting this week in New York.

Speaking to reporters in New York ahead of the 72nd session of the assembly, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian staunchly defended the JCPOA, stressing the importance of sustaining the deal.

"It is essential to maintain it (the JCPOA)," said Le Drian, whose country is a signatory to the nuclear agreement.

The French foreign minister also spoke about the possibility of holding talks to "complement" the agreement, saying that even so, "we could complement the accord for after 2025."

The gathering in Vienna also saw as expected the Japanese Amano, 70, appointed to serve a third four-year term as IAEA director general.

## IAEA ...

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U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nicky Haley recently asked the IAEA to seek access to Iranian military bases to ensure that they were not concealing activities banned by the 2015 deal.

Iran has dismissed the demand as "merely a dream".

The Israeli article came a few days after Iranian Ambassador to the IAEA Reza Najafi denounced the West's double standards on the possession and development of atomic technology, urging a complete end to any nuclear cooperation with the Zionist regime.

The occupying regime of Israel is estimated to have 200 to 400 nuclear warheads in its arsenal. The regime, however, refuses to either accept or deny having the weapons.

It has also evaded signing the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), denying any international access to its atomic weapons installation.

The head of Iran's nuclear agency said on Monday he was confident that the IAEA would remain impartial in its reporting on the Islamic Republic's nuclear program.

Ali Akbar Salehi, who heads the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), made the remark in a speech at the 61st IAEA General Conference here.

He said Washington's hostile behavior was in contravention of both the JCPOA's letter and spirit. But Iran was confident the IAEA would resist unacceptable requests and would protect sensitive technical and industrial information obtained during inspections in Iran, he added.

# Iraqi Authorities Confirm Relocating Daesh Families

**BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – The Iraqi authorities on Monday confirmed having relocated about 1,400 foreign wives and children of suspected Daesh terrorist to a new site north of Mosul, dismissing the concern of aid organizations who were not warned about the move.**

"They were transported to a safe location with better services, in Tal Keif, under the supervision of the Iraqi forces and specialized committees," said an Iraqi military statement.

Meanwhile, eight tribal fighters of an Iraqi paramilitary unit have been

killed in a booby trap blast near the northern city of Mosul.

Jabbar al-Maamuri, a commander of Iraq's tribal fighters, said on Sunday that the attack was carried out at a school in the village of Majarine, which is located 20 kilometers (12 miles) west of Mosul.

More than a dozen others were injured. The school was being used as a training center and it had been booby-trapped by the Daesh Takfiri terrorists, the commander said.

The village was retaken from Daesh in early July as Iraqi forces

closed in on Mosul.

The Sunday explosion is the latest example of dangers left behind by the retreating Daesh terrorists.

In another such deadly incident in newly recaptured areas, six members with the paramilitary troops of Hashd al-Sha'abi were killed on Saturday in Akashat in the western province of Anbar.

In July, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi formally declared victory over Daesh in Mosul, which served as the terrorists' main urban stronghold in the conflict-ridden Arab country.

In the run-up to Mosul's liberation, Iraqi army soldiers and volunteer fighters from the Popular Mobilization Units had made sweeping gains against Daesh since launching the operation on October 17, 2016.

The city, located some 400 kilometers (250 miles) north of the capital Baghdad, fell to Daesh in June 2014.

The full recapture of Mosul, Daesh's de facto capital in the Arab country, has proven to be the effective end of the terror group in Iraq.

## As Tensions Mount

# Turkey Summons German Ambassador

**BERLIN (Dispatches) – Turkey summoned Germany's ambassador to its foreign ministry on Monday, Berlin said, amid a mounting row between the two NATO members.**

Der Spiegel magazine said Ankara wanted to raise a German parliamentary motion last year that declared the 1915 massacre of Armenians by Ottoman forces a genocide - a description that Turkey has long fiercely rejected.

There was no immediate comment from Turkish authorities on the summons or the broader dispute, which has been exacerbated by the German parliamentary vote and Berlin's criticism of Ankara's rights record.

Germany's foreign ministry said it was the 17th time its envoy Martin Erdmann had been summoned, underlining the divisions at a time when European powers are counting on Turkey to help contain migrant flows, and to confront Daesh terrorists over its borders with Iraq and Syria.

Germany has criticized mass arrests carried out in Turkey since last year's failed coup against President Tayyip Erdogan and demanded the release of around a dozen German or Turkish-German citizens arrested in recent months.

Chancellor Angela Merkel, who is seeking re-election on Sunday, has

called for Turkey's EU accession talks to be called off. Germany also says it is limiting arms sales to Turkey.

Turkey says Germany has ignored Ankara's requests for the extradition of suspects it believes are linked to the putsch and accused Berlin of using Nazi-

like tactics by banning pro-Erdogan rallies on German soil.

Turkey, which says the killings of Christian Armenians during World War One do not amount to genocide, already recalled its ambassador to Germany after parliament passed the resolution last year.

# Turkey, Azerbaijan Begin Joint Air Drills

**ANKARA (Daily Sabah) – Turkish and Azerbaijani air forces launched joint flight and tactical exercises Monday, the Azerbaijani defense ministry said.**

The annual air drills, dubbed "TurAz Kartali-2017" (TurAz Eagle-2017), will last 12 days until September 30.

"The exercises involve up to 30 aircraft of the air forces of Azerbaijan and Turkey, including MiG-29, F-16, Su-25, C-130 Hercules, CASA CN-235 planes, as well as Mi-35, Mi-17 and Sikorsky S-70 helicopters," the defense ministry's statement said.

The exercises will focus on improving coordination and joint action between the two air forces

as well as incorporating a target practice component for fighter jets and helicopters.

In June, Turkish and Azerbaijani armed forces conducted the latest joint military exercises in Nakhichevan, an enclave of Azerbaijan, as part of the efforts between the two nations to bolster cooperation in every area, including defense.

Meanwhile, Turkey also launched an unannounced military drill near the border with Iraq, just a week before the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) will hold a controversial independence referendum, the military said in a statement Monday.

# Kuwait Orders North Korea's Ambassador to Leave

**KUWAIT (Reuters) – Kuwait has ordered North Korea's ambassador to leave within a month as the Persian Gulf country downgraded diplomatic relations with Pyongyang, a North Korean diplomat in the region said.**

The United Nations Security Council imposed new sanctions after North Korea's sixth and largest nuclear test this month, and the

United States called on countries to sever diplomatic and financial ties with it.

The diplomat, who asked not to be named, told Reuters the ambassador, So Chang Sik, will leave following Kuwait's decision to downgrade the North Korean diplomatic representation to charge d'affaires level.