

Zionist Jet Bombs Occupied Golan Heights

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – A fighter jet belonging to the Zionist regime has targeted positions in Syria's occupied Golan Heights after a Patriot missile allegedly intercepted and shot down an unmanned aerial vehicle purportedly operated by the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement.

The aerial assaults targeted a number of areas in Syria's strategic southwestern region of Quneitra near the border with Israeli-controlled Palestinian territories, Beirut-based and English-language Daily Star reported.

Earlier, the Israeli media outlets claimed that Zionist troops had struck a reconnaissance drone as soon as it had entered the skies over the occupied Golan Heights.

Life has two days: One in your favor and one to your disadvantage. If in your favor, then don't let it be in vain and if to your disadvantage, then don't be sad.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

If Referendum Held

Turkey Threatens to Impose Bans on Iraqi Kurdistan



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan addresses the United Nations General Assembly at UN headquarters in New York City, September 19, 2017.

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says his country may impose sanctions on Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region if it goes ahead with a planned independence referendum.

Speaking to reporters outside his hotel in New York, where he is attending the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) meeting, Erdogan said his cabinet was due to discuss possible sanctions on the Iraqi Kurdistan when it convenes on Friday, state news agency

Anadolu reported.

"As the national security council, we will advise the government on our decision. With it, the cabinet will meet and discuss this. It will both evaluate this and put forth their own stance on what kind of sanctions we can impose, or if we will, but these will not be ordinary," the Turkish president said.

"We will announce our final thoughts on the issue with the cabinet meeting and national security council decision," Erdogan said. "I think it would be better

if they saw this."

Addressing world leaders at the UNGA on Tuesday, Erdogan cautioned that the upcoming referendum in northern Iraq could lead to new conflicts in the Middle East, without elaborating.

Meanwhile, Turkish Defense Minister Nurettin Canikli has reiterated Ankara's opposition to a planned Kurdish independence referendum in northern Iraq, warning that disintegration of Iraq will lead to a global conflict.

During a Tuesday speech in Ankara,

Canikli described the planned referendum as a major risk for his country and underlined Turkey's determination to take "every step" to thwart any similar measure in its southeast Kurdish areas.

"A change that will mean the violation of Iraq's territorial integrity poses a major risk for Turkey," Canikli said.

"The disruption of Syria and Iraq's territorial integrity will ignite a bigger, global conflict with an unseen end," he added.

The Iraqi Kurds plan to hold the plebiscite on September 25 in three provinces that make up their region, as well as in disputed areas that are controlled by Kurdish forces but claimed by Baghdad, including the oil-rich Kirkuk Province.

Canikli's remarks come a day after Turkey launched a military exercise without warning across its southern border with Iraq which is scheduled to last until September 26, a day after the planned referendum.

On Tuesday, Turkish troops turned their weapons towards Kurdish-run northern Iraq, with tanks and rocket launchers mounted on armored vehicles facing the Iraqi frontier, Reuters reported.

Turkey, which has the largest Kurdish population, has robust economic ties to Iraq's Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). The standoff has weakened the Turkish lira beyond 3.5 to the dollar for the first time in four weeks.

Amid Yemen War Saudi Arabia Signs Military Deal With UK

RIYADH (Dispatches) – Britain and Saudi Arabia have signed a framework deal on military and security cooperation as the Riyadh regime intensifies its ongoing campaign against Yemen.

According to the Saudi state news agency SPA, the deal was signed as British Defense Secretary Michael Fallon discussed military cooperation with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who serves as the kingdom's defense minister and deputy prime minister. The SPA report did not provide details of the agreement.

In December last year, British Prime Minister Theresa May said Britain would invest over three billion pounds (\$4.05 billion) in the military sector in the Parisian Gulf Arab states over the next decade.

London seeks to build on traditionally strong ties with the oil-wealthy monarchies before its planned departure from the European Union.

Britain's close relationship with Arab states of the Persian Gulf region have drawn concern from human rights groups, including the criticism of Saudi airstrikes that have killed hundreds of Yemeni civilians.

In July, Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT), a group working to end the international arms trade, argued at a UK court that the British government was acting unlawfully by selling arms to Saudi, given widespread concerns about the war on Yemen.

In March, Amnesty International condemned the United States and the UK for their "shameful" weapons

transfers to Saudi Arabia, saying Washington and London were fueling the serious human rights violations and war crimes in Yemen committed by Riyadh. It said the countries had sold over \$5 billion worth of weapons to the Riyadh regime since the beginning of the campaign, more than 10 times the \$450 million they have allegedly spent to help save Yemeni civilians.

Since March 2015, Yemen has been under heavy airstrikes by Saudi warplanes as part of a brutal war against the Arabian Peninsula country in an attempt to crush the popular Houthi Ansarullah movement and reinstall the former president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, a staunch ally of Riyadh.

More than 12,000 people have been killed ever since, and much of the country's infrastructure, including hospitals, schools and factories, has been ravaged. The Saudi war has also triggered a deadly cholera epidemic across Yemen, dragging the impoverished nation to the brink of a widespread famine.

On June 6 last year, the United Nations gave in to a Saudi demand to remove the oil-rich kingdom from its annual blacklist of child rights violators, less than a week after it blamed Riyadh for the killing of hundreds of Yemenis.

Both Saudi Arabia and the UN drew international criticism after then UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon acknowledged that he had expunged Riyadh from the blacklist under "undue pressure."

Raqqah Campaign in 'Final Stages'

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – The so-called Syrian Democratic Forces said on Wednesday its campaign to capture Raqqah from Daesh terrorists group was in its final stages and its fighters had seized 80 percent of the city.

In a statement, the SDF said it had opened a new front against Daesh on the northern edge of Raqqah, describing this as "a feature of the final stages of the Euphrates Wrath campaign, which is nearing its end".

The SDF, an alliance of Kurdish and Arab militants, launched their offensive on Daesh in Raqqah city in June, backed by U.S.-led air strikes and special forces on the ground. The city had served as Daesh's de facto capital in Syria.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said on Wednesday that the SDF had taken more than 90 percent of the city, adding that the major remaining

hurdle for the forces was a large concentration of mines in the area.

Daesh captured Raqqah in July 2014 and declared the city its stronghold in Syria. The SDF launched its assault on Raqqah on June 6.

The Syrian army soldiers, backed by allied fighters, are also engaged in counter-terrorism operations around Raqqah.

Daesh has lately retreated from much of the territory under its grip amid sweeping advances by the Syrian forces on the battlefield.

Earlier this month, the Syrian government forces broke the three-year-long Daesh siege on Dayr al-Zawr, which is currently the main Daesh base in the country.

Tens of thousands of civilians have fled Raqqah in recent months, but up to 25,000 people are estimated to be still trapped in the city.



Smoke billows in Raqqah, Syria, on September 4, 2017, as the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) battle to retake the city from Daesh terrorists.

Separately on Wednesday, the Syrian army released 21 civilians held up in a Daesh hideout on the western outskirts of the city of Dayr al-Zawr.

Additionally, Russian warplanes bombed terrorist targets in the western

provinces of Idlib and Hama.

Russia has been conducting air raids against Daesh and other terrorist outfits inside Syria at the Damascus government's request since September 2015.

Survey Shows:

More Palestinians Seek Abbas' Resignation

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – A survey shows that 67 percent of Palestinians want the resignation of President Mahmoud Abbas and 75 percent remain skeptical of the role the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump plays in resolving the Zionist-Palestinian conflict.

The result of the survey, conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research among 1,270 Palestinians, was published Tuesday. It showed that only 33 percent of Palestinians wanted Abbas to remain in office. Three quarters believed the Trump administration was not serious about a peace deal.

The poll showed 52 percent of Palestinians still supported a two-state solution, but 57 percent said it was no longer feasible because of the regime's settlement expansion.

The Survey Research poll had an error margin of three percentage points. The latest survey comes a day ahead of a meeting between Abbas and Trump on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

President Trump, who has not publicly supported establishing a Palestinian state or offered another path forward, said this week that his administration was "working very hard" toward a deal.

The Trump administration has been by and large vague about the potential establishment of a Palestinian state. Earlier this year, Washington suggested that it would no longer insist on the so-called two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which envisages the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

In 1948, Zionist troops seized vast expanses of Palestinian territories in Western-backed military operations and forced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homeland.

Abbas's popularity has been sinking in the absence of strong diplomacy against the regime, a stagnating West

Bank economy and the resurgence of forms of corruption that had been significantly reduced under former Prime Minister Salam Fayyad.

Abbas, 82, is suddenly surrounded by a series of political challenges that amount to jockeying for succession.

Last month, Abbas threatened to gradually cut financial support to the impoverished strip of Gaza "by 100 percent" until Palestinian resistance movement Hamas agreed to reconcile with Fatah.

Hamas has shunned contacts with the occupying regime, while the Palestinian Authority maintains security coordination with Tel Aviv.

Qatari Emir Slams Saudi-Led Siege at UN Speech

DOHA (Dispatches) – Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani has sharply denounced the Saudi-led bloc of countries for imposing an "unjust" blockade against his nation, saying such pressure tactics amount to "terrorism."

"I stand before you while my country and my people are subjected to an ongoing and unjust blockade imposed since June 5 by neighboring countries," Sheikh Tamim said in an address to the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

In one of the worst diplomatic disputes to hit the Persian Gulf region in decades, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain and the UAE cut diplomatic ties with Qatar and slapped an economic embargo on the country, accusing it of supporting terrorism.

Doha rejects the allegation and suggests it is being targeted because it has been following foreign policies that are more independent of the Riyadh regime.

The boycotting states have issued a list of demands for Qatar to meet in order for the dispute to be resolved, but Doha has refused to comply with them, slamming the demands as an attack on its sovereignty.

"The countries who imposed the blockade on the State of Qatar interfere in the internal affairs of many countries, and accuse all those who oppose them domestically and abroad with terrorism. By doing they are inflicting damage on the war on terror," the Qatari Emir said.

Sheikh Tamim highlighted Qatar's resistance in the face of the Saudi-led bloc's excessive demands and said Doha

has "refused to yield to dictations by pressure and siege."

The blockade was meant to put pressure on Qatar via "foodstuffs, medicine and ripping off consanguineous relations to force them change their political affiliation to destabilize a sovereign country," he said in a 22-minute address. "Isn't this one of the definitions of terrorism?" Sheikh Tamim asked.

The Emir further called for "for an unconditional dialogue based on mutual respect for sovereignty" to end the diplomatic crisis gripping the Persian Gulf region.

Earlier this month, Saudi Arabia suspended any dialogue with Qatar, accusing it of "distorting facts," shortly after a report of a phone conversation between the Qatari Emir and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman suggested a breakthrough in the Persian Gulf dispute.

Following his Tuesday speech, Sheikh Tamim held a meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump, where the latter said he had a "very strong feeling" the Qatar row would be solved "pretty quickly."

With no end in sight for the crisis, a furious war of words erupted between diplomats from Qatar and its boycotters at an Arab League meeting in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, last week.

Qatar's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Soltan bin Saad al-Muraikhi took the podium at the event to denounce what he called a "vicious media campaign" against his country "waged by rabid dogs backed by some regimes."