

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, have held a “constructive” phone conversation regarding issues to be raised during the upcoming Astana meeting on the Syrian conflict, the Kremlin says. In a statement issued on Saturday, the Kremlin said the two leaders discussed joint efforts during the talks that are set to be held in the Kazakh capital later this month, including the creation of “de-escalation zones” in Syria, and further coordination towards ending the crisis in the Arab country.

Generosity is to help a deserving person without his request, and if you help him after his request, then it is either out of self-respect or to avoid rebuke.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

## Syrian Army, Allies Liberate Central Town in Homs



Syrian forces flash the V-sign from the side of a road on the outskirts of Dayr al-Zawr on September 24, 2017, as government forces continue to press forward in the offensive against Daesh terrorists across the province.

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Syrian government forces, supported by fighters from allied popular defense groups, have managed to wrest complete control over a town in the central province of Homs as they continue to score more territorial gains against the Daesh terrorist group across the war-ravaged Arab country.

Syria’s official news agency, SANA, reported that Syrian troops and their allies had regained control of al-Qaraytan, located some 100 kilometers from the ancient city of Palmyra and nearly 300 kilometers from

Dayr al-Zawr, after eliminating the Daesh terrorists that had infiltrated it.

Earlier this month, the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that Daesh terrorists had overrun the town.

The Britain-based monitoring group said on Saturday that some terrorists had surrendered and others had withdrawn from the town after heavy fighting.

The group said Daesh terrorists were now in control of a patch of desert in the east of Homs province.

The report comes as Syrian gov-

ernment forces are carrying out fresh operations against Daesh terrorists in the eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr, inflicting substantial losses on them.

Daesh overran large parts of Dayr al-Zawr province, including its many oil fields, in mid-2014 as it seized swathes of land in Syria and neighboring Iraq.

Meanwhile, a militant group that calls itself the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) says the Syrian city of Raqqah, where Daesh terrorists have recently left, will be part of a system of “federal government” in the country’s

north.

The SDF said on Friday that it had “liberated” Raqqah after driving out Daesh terrorists from the city, which was Daesh’s former “capital” in Syria; but the terrorist group had largely left the city as part of a deal with the SDF and a U.S.-led coalition, both of which are operating in Syria without the Syrian government’s permission.

Later, the SDF said the political future of the city and the province of the same name would be determined “within the framework of a decentralized, federal, democratic Syria.”

The thinking behind the brazen announcement by the mainly Kurdish group was not clear. Raqqah is the territory of Syria, which is governed by a sovereign power, the Damascus government.

The Syrian military has so far not taken on the Kurdish militants. But the SDF has reportedly shelled the positions of government troops on several occasions in recent weeks, and with its refusal to hand over Raqqah to the government, the SDF now risks further provoking the Syrian military, which is also receiving aerial cover from the Russian military.

In ominous wording, the SDF also said that it would “protect the frontiers of the province against all external threats.”

## Car Bomb Kills 15 Afghan Army Personnel in Kabul



Afghan National Army (ANA) commandos take part in a military exercise at the Kabul Military Training Center (KMTTC) on the outskirts of Kabul, October 17, 2017.

KABUL (Dispatches) – A bomber detonated a car full of explosives on Saturday outside Afghanistan’s top military training center in Kabul, killing at least 15 soldiers, a military spokesman said.

Coming after a particularly deadly week for Afghanistan’s security forces, it was the second major attack in the capital in 24 hours after a bomb attack at a Shia mosque killed more than 50 worshippers on Friday night.

“Army personnel were coming out of Marshal Fahim University when a suicide bomber in a car targeted them. Fifteen soldiers who were there for training were killed and four others were wounded,” Ministry of Defense spokesman Dawlat Wazari said.

The university, on the western outskirts of Kabul, is home to the Afghan military’s officer training school and other training academies.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but Taliban insurgents have conducted a wave of attacks this week on Afghan forces who have been struggling since most foreign troops left at the end of 2014.

### Rockets Strike Near NATO Base

In another development, two rockets have struck near the headquarters of the NATO military mission in Afghanistan’s capital, Kabul, with no reports of casualties.

Afghan security officials said the attack took place close to Resolute Support headquarters in Shashdarak area of Kabul at around 6 a.m. local time (01:30 am GMT) on Saturday.

Reports said alarms could be heard at the headquarters of the NATO base as well as several foreign embassies in the area.

The incident is the latest in a string of terror attacks on civilian and military targets, which have left nearly 200 people dead and scores of others injured over the past days.

Afghanistan is still suffering from insecurity and violence years after the United States and its allies invaded the country as part of Washington’s so-called war on terror. The invasion removed a Taliban regime from power, but militancy continues to this day.

Taking advantage of the chaos, the Daesh terror group has also emerged in eastern Afghanistan.

## Saudi Crown Prince’s Visit to Israel Confirmed

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – An official with the Zionist regime has reportedly confirmed that a Saudi prince who was widely reported to have visited Israeli-occupied territories back in September was Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

In September, Zionist and Arab media reported that a Saudi prince had traveled to the occupied territories and had held consultations with senior Zionist officials over “regional peace.”

Some news outlets identified the Saudi prince in ques-

tion as Mohamed bin Salman, who was appointed as the first in line to the Saudi throne by his father, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, in June. However, there was no official confirmation of the news at the time.

On Friday, however, an Israeli official, who was speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP Arabic that Mohammed bin Salman had in fact been the prince who visited the occupied territories in September.

This is while Saudi Arabia and the Zionist regime do not have formal diplomatic rela-

tions. And while there had already been reports that the Zionist and Saudi regimes have been tilting toward one another in recent years, a confirmed visit by an official as high in ranking as bin Salman takes the matter to a completely new and potentially explosive level as anti-Israeli sentiments are high on the Arab street.

While the Zionist regime and Riyadh may be fine with cozying up to one another, many ordinary Arabs, in Saudi Arabia and other Arab states, are firmly opposed to the establishment of ties with the Tel Aviv

regime because of its occupation of Palestinian lands and atrocities against the Palestinian population.

Zionist Transportation and Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz has urged the Saudi king to invite Zionist Prime Minister Netanyahu to Riyadh to establish full diplomatic relations. Back in June, Avigdor Lieberman, Zionist war minister, called for a deal with Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, as a prerequisite for any agreement to resolve the decades-long conflict with the Palestinians.

## Tillerson in Riyadh at Start of Persian Gulf, South Asia Tour

RIYADH (Dispatches) – U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson arrived in Riyadh on Saturday at the start of a six-day trip which will also take him to Qatar, a fellow Persian Gulf Arab state which is in a diplomatic dispute with Saudi Arabia.

Tillerson flew into King Salman Air Base and will later meet with Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir.

Back in June, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, and the UAE imposed a trade and diplomatic embargo on Qatar, accusing Doha of supporting terrorism, an allegation strongly denied by Doha.

They presented Qatar with a list of demands, among them downgrading ties with Iran, and gave it an ultimatum to comply with them or face consequences. Doha, however, refused to meet the demands and said that they were meant to force the country to surrender its sovereignty.

### Turkish President:

## U.S. Not a Civilized Country

ISTANBUL (Xinhua) – Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday said he would not call the United States “a civilized country” after detention warrants were issued for his bodyguards over a brawl during his visit in May.

“If America issues detention warrants for my 13 bodyguards in a country where I went upon invitation, sorry but I cannot call this country civilized,” Erdogan said at a forum in Istanbul.

More than 10 people were injured in a brawl with protestors in May outside the Turkish embassy in Washington D.C. that involved Erdogan’s bodyguards. In June, the U.S. authorities issued detention warrants for a total of 16 people including the bodyguards over the incident, sparking repeated denunciations from the president and others.

Erdogan noted that two of the bodyguards in question were responsible for the protection of his wife and were not even on the scene at the time.

The president had said that the protest was organized by members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and a network led by Turkish cleric Fetullah Gulen, who is living in the United States and accused by Ankara of orchestrating a failed coup in Turkey last year.

Washington has refused to extradite Gulen and continues arming Syrian Kurdish militia seen by Ankara as terrorists, moves that have chilled relations between the two NATO allies.

Erdogan has been denouncing the U.S. and some European countries over their support for the PKK and the Gulen network in recent days.