

DUBAI (AP) -- A U.S. Air Force general is warning that a major annual military exercise with Persian Gulf Arab countries is at risk over the ongoing diplomatic crisis engulfing Qatar.

Lt. Gen. Jeffrey L. Harrigan said American officials are still looking at options over the annual Eagle Resolve exercise. This year's Eagle Resolve exercise, held in Kuwait in March, involved 1,000 U.S. troops. Harrigan, the top official at U.S. Air Force Central Command in Qatar, told journalists in Dubai on Friday that already a leadership course was cancelled over the crisis.

TEHRAN (Tasnim) -- A senior MP on Friday slammed French President Emmanuel Macron for his recent comments against Tehran and reiterated that the Islamic Republic's missile program is not negotiable.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has repeatedly and clearly announced that it will not engage in any kind of dialogue with any country about its missile program within the framework of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or any other deal," Hussein Naqavi Husseini said. He said Macron's remarks against Iran and its defense capabilities are tantamount to intervention in Tehran's internal affairs.

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By: Kayhan Int'l Staff Writer

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Riyadh Inciting Israel to Attack: Nasrallah: Saudis Have Declared War on Lebanon

BEIRUT (Dispatches) -- Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said in a televised speech on Friday that Saudi Arabia had declared war on Lebanon, stating that the kingdom had incited the occupying regime of Israel to strike Lebanon.

"Saudi Arabia is inciting Israel to launch a war against Lebanon," said Nasrallah.

"I speak here about facts not analysis. Saudi Arabia is ready to pay tens of billions of dollars to Israel for that," he added. Nasrallah also drew parallels between the current situation and the 2006 war.

"We know now through Israeli media that the 2006 war on Lebanon was prolonged by Saudi Arabia when Israel wanted it to end."

Nasrallah went on to say that Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri, who announced his surprise resignation on Saturday while in Riyadh, is being detained in the kingdom and barred from returning to his country.

He called Hariri's resignation an "unprecedented Saudi intervention" in Lebanese politics, while adding that it was "illegal and unconstitutional because it was made under coercion."

Reaffirming earlier reports that Hariri had been placed under house arrest in Riyadh, Nasrallah said that the humiliation of Hariri is considered a humiliation to every Lebanese person.

"Lebanon has witnessed foreign interventions before but it never reached the level of forcing the prime minister to resign," he said.

"We may have disputes with the Future Movement, but we condemn Saudi Arabia's humiliation of Prime Minister Hariri," he added.

Nasrallah said that Saudi Arabia had been trying to "oust Hariri from his position as the leader of the Future Movement, and to impose a new leadership without consulting the figures of the movement."

He went on to say that there has been a Saudi attempt to impose a new prime minister on Lebanon.

"Saudi Arabia is trying to incite the Lebanese against one another. They want us to humiliate and fight each other," he said.

Hariri, who was born in Saudi Arabia, did not say when he would return to Lebanon, where President Michel Aoun has yet to formally accept his resignation.

In a statement issued on Friday after a meeting with the Saudi envoy to Lebanon, Aoun insisted Hariri should return to Lebanon but did not elaborate on the premier's current situation in Riyadh.

"President Aoun met Saudi charge d'affaires Walid Bukhari and informed him that the circumstances in which Mr. Hariri's resignation took place were unacceptable," the statement said.

The president "called for the return to Lebanon of the head of the government."

Aoun, whose political ally Hezbollah is a fierce critic of Saudi Arabia, also "voiced his concern over what is being said" about Hariri's current status in Saudi Arabia and demanded a "clarification."

French President Emmanuel Macron, whose country has close ties with both Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, visited Riyadh on Wednesday.

Macron's foreign minister said on French radio Friday he thought Hariri's freedom of movement was not impeded, despite most of the Lebanese political class implying he was virtually under house arrest.

Commenting on Saudi Arabia's call on its citizens in Lebanon to return home, Nasrallah said: "This is a war on Lebanon not on Hezbollah."

Nasrallah warned the Lebanese people from allowing the state to collapse as in other Arab countries such as Libya and Syria. "Look around you and learn the lessons. Saudi Arabia is asking you to sabotage the state and its institutions."

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Millions Mark Arba'een in Karbala:

Resurrection on Earth



Mourners throng the shrine of Imam Hussein (AS) in Karbala, Nov. 9, 2017.

KARBALA (Dispatches) -- An estimated 25 million pilgrims thronged Iraq's holy city of Karbala on Friday to mark the annual Arba'een commemoration, as Baghdad looks to wipe out Daesh that has targeted the country.

Arba'een is one of the biggest religious occasions on earth and marks the end of the 40-day mourning period for the seventh-century martyrdom of Imam

Hussein (AS) by the forces of the Caliph Yazid.

Under tight security, thousands of worshipers crowded into the golden-domed mausoleum where Prophet Muhammad's grandson is buried, Karbala's religious authorities said, beating their chests in unison against a background of religious elegies.

Tens of thousands of security personnel were deployed, as in

past years, around the perimeters of the sanctuary as well as on all roads leading to Karbala, about 80 kilometers southwest of Baghdad.

The expulsion of Daesh from Iraqi cities has added an extra dimension to this year's pilgrimage, as the Takfiri group has repeatedly targeted pilgrims. Last year, a terrorist bombing left at least 70 mainly Iranian worshippers returning from the commemoration

martyred.

Believers from across the Middle East and beyond have made the pilgrimage to Karbala. Ahead of the peak of the commemorations, local governor Aqil Tourihi told AFP that over 10 million Iraqis had arrived.

More than 2.3 million Iranian pilgrims also crossed the border into Iraq for Arba'een, an Iranian official said.

Others came from Azerbaijan, Yemen, Turkey, Oman, Bahrain, India, Pakistan and Lebanon.

"The conditions are perfect, above all in terms of catering for pilgrims and security," Kuwaiti pilgrim Fadel Yaqoub told AFP.

Helicopters flew overhead to ensure security in the city, located some 300 kilometers southeast from where Iraqi forces are battling to snuff out Daesh.

Bandar al-Hamami said he had walked some 350 kilometers with his family from their home in the southern city of Nasiriyah. "Thanks be to God, we are finished with Daesh," he said.

Large groups of black-clad mourners reached Karbala after trekking at least 76 kilometers from Najaf.

Imam Hussein (AS) is a highly-venerated figure not only among Shia Muslims but also Sunnis, Christians and the people of other faiths.

UAE Plan for Financial War on Qatar Revealed

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- A plan for the United Arab Emirates to wage financial war against its Persian Gulf rival Qatar was found in the task folder of an email account belonging to UAE Ambassador to the United States Yousef al-Otaiba and subsequently obtained by The Intercept.

The economic warfare involved an

attack on Qatar's currency using bond and derivatives manipulation. The plan, laid out in a slide deck provided to The Intercept through the group Global Leaks, was aimed at tanking Qatar's economy, according to documents drawn up by a bank outlining the strategy.

The outline, prepared by Banque Havilland, a private Luxembourg-based bank owned by the family of controversial British financier David Rowland, laid out a scheme to drive down the value of Qatar's bonds and increase the cost of insuring them, with the ultimate goal of creating a currency crisis that would drain the country's cash reserves.

Rowland has long had close relationships with UAE leadership, particularly with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Zayed, known as MBZ. The bank is currently in the process of creating a new financial institution in cooperation with the UAE's sovereign wealth fund, Mubadala, according to contracts and correspondence obtained by The Intercept outlining the terms of the deal. That project is separate from the Qatar operation, but it reflects the close relationship between the bank and the UAE.

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Report: Senior Saudi Figures Tortured Amid Purge

LONDON (Middle East Eye) -- Some senior figures detained in last Saturday's purge in Saudi Arabia were beaten and tortured so badly during their arrest or subsequent interrogations that they required hospital treatment, Middle East Eye can reveal.

People inside the royal court also told MEE that the scale of the crackdown, which has brought new arrests each day, is much bigger than Saudi authorities have admitted, with more than 500 people detained and double that number questioned.

Members of the royal family, government ministers and business tycoons were caught up in the sudden wave of arrests orchestrated by Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, known as MBS, under the banner of an anti-corruption drive.

Some, but not all, of the top figures arrested were singled out for the most brutal treatment, suffering wounds to the body sustained by classic torture methods. There are no wounds to their faces, so they will show no physical signs of their ordeal when they next appear in public.

Some detainees were tortured to reveal details of their bank accounts. MEE is unable to report specific details about the abuse they suffered in order to protect the

anonymity of its sources.

The purge, which follows an earlier roundup of Muslim clerics, writers, economists and public figures, is creating panic in Riyadh, the Saudi capital, particularly among those associated with the old regime of King Abdullah, who died in 2015, with power then passing to his half-brother, King Salman.

Many fear the primary purpose of the crackdown is a move by MBS to knock out all rivals both inside and outside the House of Saud before he replaces his 81-year-old father.

On Wednesday night, seven princes were released from the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Riyadh, where they had been held since Saturday. The top royals have been moved to the king's palace, sources told MEE.

The crown prince's cousin, Muhammad bin Nayef, who continues to be under house arrest, has had his assets frozen, the Reuters news agency reported. Sons of Sultan bin Abdulaziz have also been arrested and had their assets frozen.

One of the most famous is Prince Bandar bin Sultan, a former Saudi ambassador to Washington and confidant of former U.S. president George W Bush.

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Study: U.S. Spent \$5.6 Trillion on Mideast Wars

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- U.S. wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Pakistan have cost American taxpayers \$5.6 trillion since they began in 2001, according to a new study, a figure more than three times that of the Pentagon's own estimates.

The Defense Department earlier this year estimated that the total cost of the conflicts since the 2001 attacks has amounted to about \$1.5 trillion.

But a study by the Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs at Brown University puts the total cost of foreign wars at \$5.6 trillion, or \$23,000 per taxpayer.

The study examines not only the money spent by the U.S. military, but also by the Department of

Veterans Affairs, the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department, for resources dedicated to the so-called "war on terrorism."

Combat operations since 2001 "have been largely paid for by borrowing, part of the reason the US went from budget surplus to deficits after 2001," study author Neta Crawford said.

As for the costs of specific conflicts, the study notes that the "two largest categories of expenses have been for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan."

Harvard researchers said in 2013 that the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will cost taxpayers \$4 trillion to \$6 trillion, taking into account the medical care of wounded veterans and expensive

repairs to a force depleted by years of fighting.

The U.S. war in Afghanistan has endured for 16 years and is set to persist after President Donald Trump announced in September that he would expand American military presence in the war-torn country.

The U.S. withdrew from Iraq in 2011 after nearly a decade of occupation but has continued a mission to "support and advise" Iraqi forces in the fight against the Daesh terrorist group.

Former U.S. president George W. Bush, who was in the White House between 2001 and 2009, has been accused of war crimes for ordering the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan under false pretexts.