

French President Touts Warship Deal With UAE

ABU DHABI (Dispatches) – France is set to sell a number of warships to the United Arab Emirates, French President Emmanuel Macron announced in Abu Dhabi, during a high-profile Middle East tour that also involved a surprise stop in Saudi Arabia.

Wrapping up his two-day visit to the UAE, Macron said that the tiny Persian Gulf country would get at least two French-made Gowind navy corvettes under the deal for an undisclosed price.

Developed by French military firm Naval Group, the warships are designed for missions in littoral zones, including coastal surveillance and anti-submarine warfare.

Macron also toured a French naval base in Abu Dhabi, where he hailed the military cooperation between the two nations.

The Camp de la Paix (Peace Camp), which is located at Abu Dhabi's Port Zayed, sits across the waters of the Persian Gulf and is home to some 700 French military personnel.

A symbol of France's deepening military ties with the UAE, the naval base was inaugurated in 2009



A French-made Gowind navy corvette is seen in this file photo.

by then French head of state Nicolas Sarkozy. The UAE reportedly funds the base's operation costs of up to \$60 million a year.

"France's military capacity is at the heart of my ambitions for our country," the French president said

before walking through the French frigate Jean Bart.

French military forces and aircraft are also stationed at the UAE's al-Dhafra Air Base, which houses some of the 5,000 American troops deployed to the country.

International rights group such as Human Rights Watch have censured Western nations' rush for profiting from arms sales to the UAE and other Arab countries that are key contributors to a Saudi-led war against the people of Yemen.

Riyadh ...

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Nasrallah said that Lebanon had been stable and secure over the past year and since Hariri formed a national unity government after he was sworn in as prime minister in November 2016, the country had been in a state of "security and stability."

It was "a new era for Lebanon" after two years of deadlock between political parties in Lebanon, said Nasrallah as he recounted what had been achieved during that time.

Nasrallah credited Lebanon's recent stability which allowed "nine million people to visit Lebanon since the beginning of 2017" to the willingness of Lebanese political factions to collaborate and compromise.

Nasrallah also warned that his movement, which fought a devastating war with the occupying regime of Israel in 2006, was stronger than ever.

"We are stronger today, we warn them again misguided calculations, against any knee-jerk initiative," he said, adding however that his party saw any Israeli attack as being unlikely at this stage.

UN chief Antonio Guterres on Friday voiced serious concern about escalating tensions between Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, warning of "devastating consequences" if a war breaks out between the two countries.

"We are indeed very worried, and we hope we won't see an escalation," the UN chief told reporters in New York. "It is essential that no new conflict erupts in the region, it could have devastating consequences."

Report: ...

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There is no word on his fate, but Saudi authorities said that one of the corruption cases they are looking at is the al-Yamamah arms deal, in which Bandar was involved.

Bandar bought an entire village in the Cotswolds, a picturesque area of central England, and a 2,000-acre sporting estate with part of the proceeds from kickbacks he received in the al-Yamamah arms deal, which netted British manufacturer BAE \$56.5 billion in contracts for fighter aircraft.

As much as \$30 million is alleged to have been paid into Bandar's dollar account at Riggs Bank in Washington and the affair led to corruption probes in the US and UK, although the case was dropped in the UK in 2006 after an intervention by then-prime minister Tony Blair.

Also among those arrested is Reem, the daughter of Al-Waleed bin Talal, the only woman to be targeted in the latest roundup.

To prevent others from fleeing, MBS has ordered a freeze on private bank accounts. The number of account closures and those banned from travel is many times the number of people who have been arrested, sources in Riyadh told MEE.

No one expected a crackdown of this scale and against princes of such seniority in the House of Saud, which is why so many of those detained were caught red-handed and had no time to flee.

The purge against other members of the royal family is unprecedented in the kingdom's modern history. Family unity, which guaranteed the stability of the state since its foundation, has been shattered.

The last event of this magnitude was the overthrow of King Saud by his brother Prince Faisal in 1964. At one point in that saga, Prince Faisal ordered the National Guard to surround the king's palace, but the king himself was never vilified.

UAE ...

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The Qatar debt project would be grandiose in its ambitions. "Control the yield curve, decide the future," reads the planning document, referring to a standard financial-industry graph showing a country's borrowing costs for debt that is due at different dates. The height and shape of the yield curve is thought to be a reflection of how healthy an economy is and influences what financing options are available to a country.

Targeting a nation's economy using financial manipulation would be a dramatic break from traditional norms of diplomacy and even warfare.

The plan the document presents is far-fetched and appeared to have been put together by someone with little or no experience trading in credit and currency markets, two industry veterans who reviewed the plan for The Intercept said. Both were granted anonymity because speaking to the press could jeopardize their employment. "I can't believe they put this on paper," one of the credit veterans added. "They are talking about colluding to manipulate markets."

Zarif: ...

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He noted that the strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based on the development and boosting of cooperation in various fields, making efforts to establish and maintain peace and stability in the region, as well as convergence and cooperation with regional institutions and international organizations.

"We have always been considering the security and stability of our neighbors and neighboring regions as our own security and stability," he told the International Conference on Security and Sustainable Development in Central Asia.

"Contributing to the resolution of disputes and tensions, bilateral security collaborations to counter the common threats of Takfiri terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking and illegal immigration are the most important manifestations of the active and effective participation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in boosting and strengthening stability and security in the Central Asian region," he said.

Zarif also underlined that effective confrontation with extremism and Takfiri terrorism, which poses a serious threat to the security and stability of the region in West Asia, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Indian subcontinent, and even the regions in North Africa and Southeast Asia, needs the all-inclusive and multilateral cooperation, interaction, synergy, and consultation of regional countries.

He said establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia is a move that shows a good understanding of security.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, he said, is not only religiously opposed to the development, production, and use of such weapons, but also seriously believes that these weapons per se undermine stability and security, and must be eliminated from the world.

"Since 1974, when Iran proposed a nuclear-weapon-free and WMD-free zone for the Middle East, the country has pursued the issue, but to no avail because of the aggressive and hegemonic policies of the Zionist regime of Israel in acquiring nuclear weapons, and the U.S. support for Tel Aviv," Zarif said.

"By clinching the nuclear deal and fulfilling all our commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), we have in action proved our compliance with the principle of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament," added Iran's foreign minister.

Amano ...

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The lawmakers mandate to Haley is for her to get the IAEA to inspect Iranian military facilities and strengthen reporting and verification requirements.

"When unveiling the JCPOA, President Obama promised that, 'inspectors will also be able to access any suspicious location,'" the senators said in their letter to Haley.

Haley traveled to Vienna in August to try to ratchet up pressure on Tehran over its continued ballistic missile tests. There, she met with some of the technical experts who monitor nuclear activities, including those in Iran governed by the nuclear pact signed by the U.S., a handful of its allies, Russia and Iran.

Now, the stakes are higher. Amano is starting to push back against the allegations -- including by the U.S. senators -- that the IAEA's inspection regime in Iran is too soft.

"Some people believe that our verification activities are weak. This is not true," Amano said this week.

Talking to CBS News, Amano said, "Nuclear activities of Iran have reduced a lot after the JCPOA, so we have a more powerful verification regime to monitor and verify the reduced nuclear activities. That is why we say this is a significant gain for verification."

In Iran, he said, the agency is collecting millions of pieces of information every month, taking hundreds of thousands of images by installed cameras in nuclear facilities, and has installed 2,000 seals in nuclear plants.

"This is a very strong verification regime by any standard," he said.

The U.S. has imposed sweeping new unilateral sanctions under Trump, pointing to Iran's missile launches, human rights record and its support of resistance groups abroad.

The heart of the matter is the monitoring and verification of the deal that is found in a provision that lays out access to Iran's military sites, known as "Section T," in Annex I of the JCPOA. That section prohibits Iran from activities related to nuclear weapons.

Iran flatly rejects any inspection of its military sites, because its activities are not related to nuclear weapons, something which the IAEA has verified repeatedly.

Zionist Troops Attack Palestinian Students Planning to Mark Arafat Death Anniv.

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Zionist troops have attacked a group of Palestinian students, who planned to hold a ceremony to mark the death anniversary of Yasser Arafat, the former leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), in the occupied West Bank.

Zionist troops stormed several schools in Ramallah and prevented Palestinian students from entering their schools, where they were scheduled to mark the 12th anniversary of Arafat's death, the Palestinian Ma'an news agency reported.

According to Aref Jaber, an activist in the Israeli human rights organization

B'Tselem, several students were hurt, mainly suffering respiratory problems when Zionist troops fired tear gas at them.

Arafat, who led an armed struggle against the Zionist regime in the late 1960s, died of unknown causes at a hospital near the French capital, Paris, on November 11, 2004. He was 75.

In 2012, Arafat's widow, Suha, filed a legal complaint in France, claiming that her husband had been assassinated while staying at the Mercy military hospital near Paris in 2004. He had been moved to the hospital the previous month for diarrhea and vomiting.

According to French doctors, he

died of a massive stroke, although the origin of his illness was unknown.

Arafat's tomb in Ramallah was opened the same year so that three teams of French, Swiss, and Russian investigators could collect samples for investigation.

A subsequent French investigation found no proof of poisoning. However, separate probes from Swiss and Russian experts found that Arafat had been poisoned to death with polonium.

Many Palestinians believe that the Zionist regime poisoned Arafat. However, Abbas and his longtime rival Mohammed Dahlan have accused each

other of complicity in Arafat's death in the past.

In another development, Zionist troops raided Palestinian homes in the occupied West Bank, detaining 11 people over the past 24 hours.

The occupied Palestinian territories have witnessed new tensions ever since Zionist troops introduced restrictions on the entry of Palestinian worshippers into the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in East Jerusalem al-Quds in August 2015.

More than 300 Palestinians have lost their lives at the hands of Zionist troops in the ongoing tensions since the beginning of October 2015.

Netanyahu Interrogated in Corruption Probe

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime's police investigators have questioned Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at his residence in occupied al-Quds over suspicions he illegally accepted valuable gifts from a number of wealthy businessmen for advancing their business interests.

Interrogators from the so-called Lahav 433 anti-corruption unit arrived at Netanyahu's home to question him over his involvement

in police cases 1000 and 2000.

Case 1000 revolves around alleged illicit gifts given to Netanyahu and his family by different businessmen, most notably the Israeli-born Hollywood producer Arnon Milchan.

The Zionist prime minister and his wife, Sara, have denied wrongdoing in the case, claiming that the value of the items was significantly lower than reported, and that they were only "trifles"

exchanged between close friends.

Case 2000 focuses on an alleged clandestine deal made between Netanyahu and Yedioth Ahronoth publisher and owner Arnon "Noni" Mozes, in which the 68-year-old chairman of the Likud party promised Mozes he would support a bill to reduce the circulation of Yedioth's main commercial rival, the Hebrew-language freebie Israel Hayom, in exchange for favorable coverage

of himself in Yedioth.

This is the fifth time that Israeli police investigators are grilling Netanyahu for corruption.

Reports emerged earlier this year that the president of the World Jewish Congress and Netanyahu's long-time ally, Ronald Lauder, had given the premier and his son gifts, including expensive suits. The accounts prompted Israeli police to interrogate the prime minister.

Iraqi Central Bank Orders Private Banks to Close Branches in Kurdistan

BAGHDAD (Press TV) – The Central Bank of Iraq has ordered private banks to halt their branches' operations in the country's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region within a week to avoid a ban on dollar sales.

According to Iraqi banking sources on Thursday, the official directive, dated November 7, warned that any bank that ignored the new order would no longer receive foreign currency transfers from the central bank, a move

apparently intended to control the flow of hard currency into the Kurdistan region.

The central bank's deadline expires on November 14 and until then all banks have to report back to Iraq's financial regulator with confirmation that they have closed their branches in order to avoid penalties.

The directive also cited instructions from the Iraqi parliament sent on October 12 that stipulate the central bank must "not

sell foreign currencies to the banks working in [Kurdistan] Region or those who have branches there."

The fresh punitive measure is part of financial restrictions imposed by Baghdad on the northern region in retaliation for a highly controversial referendum on independence that the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) held on September 25, despite strong opposition from the central government, the international community, and Iraq's neighboring

countries.

Following the contentious vote, Baghdad imposed a ban on direct international flights to and from the Kurdish region and called for a halt to its independent crude oil sales. The KRG has described such measures as "collective punishment."

On October 16, Iraqi federal forces also retook control of the Kurdish-held city of Kirkuk and many disputed territories in response to the Kurdish plebiscite.