

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – Tehran’s Provisional Friday prayers leader Ayatollah Kazem Seddighi condemned a recent move by U.S. president Donald Trump to declare Jerusalem al-Quds as the so-called capital of the occupying regime of Israel, saying the Palestinians should be armed in their resistance against Tel Aviv. Addressing worshipers here, Ayatollah Seddighi said Trump’s “foolish words” have spared a new intifada and caused Muslim countries to unite. “As the intifada has begun... all the oppressed people of Palestine should be supplied with arms so that they can continue the armed resistance (against Israel),” he said.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – A senior IRGC commander praised great headways made in Iran’s military industries, saying the country is now at the cutting edge of missile, drone and air defense technologies. Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Aerospace Force Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh said the road to success is not an easy one. He also lauded Iran’s youths for helping the country’s progress in various scientific and industrial fields.

**Viewpoint**

By: S. Nawabzadeh

**Muslim World’s Disunity Emboldening Enemies of Islam to Hatch New Plots**

**Gaza Children Writings, Paintings Published**



**Iran, Qatar Football Federations Ink Agreement**



**Lebanon, Turkey Mull Embassies in Al-Quds**



## Saudi, U.S. Weapons Ended Up With Daesh: Study

LONDON (Dispatches) – Weapons provided by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia to militants in Syria ended up in the hands of the Daesh group, a new report has revealed.

According to Conflict Armament Research, an organization that tracks arm shipments, military equipment including anti-tank weapons that were secretly transferred by CIA to what the U.S. calls “moderate” militants fighting Bashar al-Assad were in Daesh possession within two months of leaving the factory.

The study, which was funded by the European Union and Germany, examined 40,000 weapons and equipment recovered from Daesh in the last three years, as the group’s “caliphate” continues to shrink in the face of losses in Raqqa and Mosul.

It concluded that projects to provide weapons to militant groups had “significantly augmented the quantity and quality of weapons available to (Daesh) forces.”

“Supplies of materiel into the Syrian conflict from foreign parties - notably the United States and Saudi Arabia - have indirectly allowed Daesh to obtain substantial quantities of anti-armor ammunition,” read the report. “These weapons include ATGWs and several varieties of rocket with tandem warheads, which are designed to defeat modern reactive armor.

“These systems continue to pose a significant threat to the coalition of troops arrayed against IS (Daesh) forces.”

It added that it could not confirm whether the weapons had ended up with Daesh as a result of them being sold or because they had been seized.

U.S. weaponry has been used by Daesh since at least 2014 when the group swept across Iraq and seized large swathes of territory.

As the U.S.-trained Iraqi army collapsed in their wake, much of their equipment was appropriated.

The covert program to funnel weaponry and equipment to militants fighting the Assad government began under Barack Obama in 2013, but was ended in July by Donald Trump.

Attempts to train certain groups across the border in Turkey also saw weaponry end up in the hands of militant groups - the CIA-trained Division 30, a group of roughly 70 fighters sent into northern Syria to purportedly fight Daesh, were attacked by the al-Qaeda-linked al-Nusra Front who captured their weapons.

On Thursday, Syria’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates censured the so-called U.S. coalition purportedly fighting Daesh, saying the military alliance is indeed targeting civilian facilities and

providing the extremists with cover.

In two separate letters addressed to United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the rotating president of the UN Security Council Koro Bessho, the ministry said the U.S. has been pretending to fight Daesh, but it has in fact been transporting the terrorists from one part of Syria to another and securing them.

The letters noted that Daesh terrorists have been purged from most regions in Syria only through counter-terrorism operations conducted by government troops and allied fighters from popular defense groups.

They also criticized the so-called advocates of human rights and rule of law for turning a blind eye to the atrocities the U.S. is perpetrating in Raqqa and Dayr al-Zawr provinces.

Syria’s official news agency SANA reported on Thursday that U.S. air raids had claimed the lives of at least 23 civilians, mostly children and women, in the al-Jurze Sharqi village of Dayr al-Zawr province the previous evening.

The U.S. has been conducting airstrikes against what are said to be Daesh targets inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from the Damascus government or a UN mandate.

In October 11, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem said the U.S. and its allies were trying to destroy the Arab country and prolong the armed conflict there.

## U.S.-Saudi Show to Distract From Al-Quds



U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley speaks in front of allegedly recovered segments of an Iranian rocket during a news conference at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling in Washington, DC, Dec. 14, 2017.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – Iran’s foreign minister accused the United States on Friday of trying to divert attention from its own responsibility for the deadly war in Yemen with claims of Iranian weapons shipments.

Muhammad Javad Zarif was responding to claims by U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley on Thursday that a missile fired by Yemeni fighters at Riyadh airport on November 4 was “made in Iran”.

“While Iran has been calling for ceasefire, aid and dialogue in Yemen from day one, the U.S. has sold weapons enabling its allies to

kill civilians and impose famine. No amount of alternative facts or alternative evidence covers up U.S. complicity in war crimes,” Zarif tweeted.

The minister compared Haley’s allegations against Iran to those of former U.S. secretary of defense, Colin Powell, who alleged in 2003 that former Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein, was hiding weapons of mass destruction in order to make a case for attacking the country.

Zarif shared a link in his tweet to report a post on Iran’s UN mission website titled “A refutation of alternative evidence – Case Study: Yemen”.

The six-page report acknowledges that the UN has found Iranian components in the fragments of the missiles in the November 4 attack – but also highlights that American components were found as well.

“On the basis of the logic presented by Saudi Arabia and the Trump administration, both the United States and Iran are thus apparently aiding Yemenis in their missile development,” the report argues.

The report also says that the UAE and Saudi Arabia have “instigated a humanitarian catastrophe of Biblical proportions” in Yemen which

“constitute war crimes” – but particularly focuses on U.S. arms sales, under both the Trump and Obama administrations, to Saudi Arabia.

On Friday, Saudi Arabia, which has led a military intervention in Yemen with U.S. backing since March 2015, demanded immediate action against Iran over the alleged missile deliveries.

Haley claimed Washington had “undeniable” evidence that at least two missiles fired at Saudi Arabia by the Yemeni fighters and other weaponry had been manufactured in Iran.

But her comments went beyond the findings of a UN investigation which reached no firm conclusion on whether the missiles came from an Iranian supplier, saying only that they had a “common origin” to some Iranian designs.

“There’s no conclusive evidence about the provenance of those missiles,” Farhan Haq, the deputy spokesman for the UN secretary general told reporters.

Asked about Haley’s claims that the evidence was irrefutable, Sweden’s ambassador to the United Nations, Olof Skoog, said: “She may be in possession of evidence that I have not seen. The information that I have up to now is less clear.”

France also reacted cautiously to U.S. allegations, saying it was still studying information at its disposal and the United Nations had yet to draw any conclusions.

When asked whether Paris believed that evidence was irrefutable, foreign ministry deputy spokesman

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## Ayatollah Sistani Opposes Calls to Disband Hashd al-Shaabi

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Iraq’s most revered Shia cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, on Friday opposed calls to disband a paramilitary force which was instrumental in defeating the Daesh group in the country.

Iraq is “always in desperate need of heroic men who have backed up the army and federal police and who fought alongside them on different fronts,” said Abdel Mahdi al-Karbalai, the top cleric’s representative.

“We need to continue to benefit from this important source of energy, within the constitution and judicial framework,” he said in a sermon at weekly prayers in the holy city of Karbala, south of the capital.

Ayatollah Sistani also said that the paramilitary groups should be incorporated into state security bodies while all weapons used in fighting Daesh should be brought under the control of the Iraqi government.

Commenting on the move, Hashd spokesman Ahmad al-Assadi, who is also a member of parliament, told AFP on Friday that Ayatollah Sistani had stood up for the units to be retained as part of Iraq’s security system.

Karbalai stressed that the Hashd al-Shaabi’s arms belonged to the state and its mission was to defend national security.

The force was established in 2014 after Ayatollah Sistani urged Iraqi citizens to take up arms against Daesh which had swept aside government forces and seized control of much of northern Iraq.

Known in English as the Popular Mobilization Units, the various forces within the Hashd can field a total of between 60,000 and 140,000 fighters.

Iraq’s parliament has classed it as a state force operating within the constitution.

Calls have been growing from the West for the Hashd to disband, with French President Emmanuel Macron proposing “a gradual demilitarization” of the group and for all militias in Iraq to be “dismantled”.

Last month a U.S. senator introduced a bill to designate two Hashd brigades - Asaib Ahl al-Haq and Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba - as terrorist organizations. The leader of the latter, Akram al-Kaabi, was already designated as such in 2008.

Hadi al-Ameri, the leader of the Badr Brigade, one of the Iraq’s longstanding militias and now part of the Hashd, accused the U.S. of double standards.

“The U.S. says it is essential for American forces to stay in Iraq, while saying the

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## U.S. House Passes Bill to Hamper Plane Sales to Iran

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – The House passed legislation Thursday that would require Treasury Department officials to report to Congress on Iranian purchases of U.S. aircraft and how those sales are financed, and certify that they would not aid Iran’s effort to distribute weapons.

The bill passed 252-167 — all but four Republicans supported it, and they were joined by 23 Democrats.

But the debate over the bill reflected dueling views of whether the legislation would break U.S. commitments under the Iran nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Republicans emphasized that the legislation does not bar any aircraft sales to Iran. Instead, it requires the Treasury Department to notify Congress about the activities of the Iranian company that purchases the planes, as well as the financing used for the deal.

The bill doesn’t create a mechanism for blocking the sales, lawmakers emphasized. The most immediate practical effect of the legislation might be felt in the courts rather than the national security arena, according

to one observer. It might create an avenue for Americans of victims of acts attributed anyway to Iran to collect money held in seized accounts.

“By identifying the financiers of the sale it helps them identify where they can swoop in and potentially seize assets (which is to say, seize the planes), and then sell them in order to get some of the compensation they deserve,” a Middle East foreign policy expert who works with Republican lawmakers suggested in an email.

House Democrats maintained that the bill might provoke Iran to abandon the nuclear agreement, however, by interfering with their ability to work with U.S. corporations as promised under the pact.

“(This bill) would impose a new condition,” Rep. Jim Himes, D-Conn., said on the House floor. “A new condition which would require certification by (the executive branch) and all of the process which would ensue. It is not a stretch, in fact it is fairly clear, that if (this bill) were to pass, the Iranians and others could credibly claim that we have violated our obligations under the JCPOA.”