

Condolences on the Martyrdom Anniversary of Imam Musa al-Kazem (AS)

U.S. Still Assessing Intel on Douma Attack: Mattis

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- The United States is still assessing intelligence about last weekend's suspected chemical weapons attack in Syria, U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Wednesday, striking a cautious tone hours after President Donald Trump threatened missile strikes. "We're still assessing the intelligence - ourselves and our allies. We're still working on this," he said. Moscow is in direct contact with the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff about the situation in Syria, Vladimir Shamanov, head of the lower house of parliament's defense committee, told the Interfax news agency.

Kayhan International

New Explosions Over Riyadh

RIYADH (Dispatches) -- Saudi Arabia claimed its air defenses on Wednesday "intercepted" a ballistic missile fired from Yemen at Riyadh, adding two others were shot down in southern Saudi Arabia. Witnesses cited explosions and three blasts over the capital, which has previously been targeted by Houthi fighters in Yemen. The attacks were claimed by the rebels via their news outlet Al-Masirah. "The missile force carried out a large-scale ballistic missile attack on various parts of Saudi Arabia," Al-Masirah said.

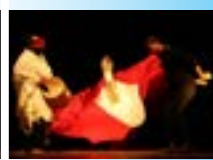
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Viewpoint

Trump Tumbling Towards His Waterloo in Syria

'Macbeth Zar' to Open Azerbaijan Theater Festival



Iranian Karateka Gets Gold in Legend International Karate Club Championship



Yemeni Drones Target Saudi Airport, Aramco Facility



Martyrdom of the Gateway of Guidance

By: Seyyed Ali Shahbaz

Heartfelt condolences to all readers of this column on a very tragic day. Today the 25th of Rajab is the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Musa al-Kazem (AS), the 7th Infallible Heir of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA). Let us cast a glance at the meaningful life of the person whose shrine in Kazemain, north of Baghdad is overflowing today with millions of pilgrims from Iraq and all over the world.

Born in 128 AH (745 AD) in Abwa between the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, he was named "Musa" in honour of another Prophet - Arabic for Moses.

During the 35 years of his imamate that coincided with the reigns of four Pharaohs of the usurper Abbasid regime - Mansour Dawaniqi, Mahdi al-Abbasi, Hadi al-Abbasi, and Haroun ar-Rasheed - he displayed such remarkable patience in controlling his emotions that he is known till this day as "Kazem".

If his God-given knowledge was a byword amongst the people, his wisdom exceeded that of Prophet Solomon, and so dedicated was he in worship that he acquired the epithet "Abd Saleh" (most pious servant of God).

In addition, he has been immortalized as "Bab al-Hawa'ej" (Gateway of Boons), a title by which he is addressed universally by one and all from all over the world, who reverently bow towards his holy shrine in Kazemayn, the northeastern suburb of Baghdad, where no traces remain of the magnificent palaces built by his assassin, Haroun Rasheed.

Once, Haroun in trying to show off to Imam Kazem (AS) his palace, asked him about the owner of such a majestic building. The Imam without being the least impressed said: "this is the home of a corrupt person, it is about such people that God says in the Qur'an - in ayah 146 of Surah A'raaf:

"Soon I shall turn away from My signs those who are unduly arrogant in the earth: [even] though they should see every sign, they will not believe in it, and if they see the way of rectitude they will not take it as [their] way, and if they see the way of error they will take it as [their] way. That is because they deny Our signs and are oblivious to them."

At the recitation of these words of God, the self-styled caliph became so incensed that he lost his composure.

This was not the only instance when the boastful Haroun had lost face vis-à-vis the Prophet's rightful successor.

Another famous encounter between the two took place in Medina at the Prophet's shrine, where to deceive the people Haroun saluted the sacred tomb with the words: Greetings to you O Messenger of God; greetings to you O Cousin." Soon Imam Musa Kazem (AS) entered the holy shrine and saluted the Prophet's tomb with the words: "Greetings to you O Messenger of God; greetings to you O Grandfather."

The tyrant was dumbfounded and left the Prophet's Mosque. Some years later, he devised a plan, and after kidnapping the Imam, arranged two canopied litters atop a string of camels, sending one in the direction of Baghdad and the other in the direction of Basra.

To be brief, the 7th Imam was confined to the house of the governor of Basra, who refused to do any harm to the Prophet's venerable descendant. Haroun then had the Imam transferred to Baghdad to the custodianship of Fadhl ibn Rabi', who also treated Imam Kazem (AS) with respect. Haroun went mad with rage and ordered the flogging of Fadhl ibn Rabi'. He then gave charge of the Prophet's heir to the despicable Sindi bin Shahik, who poisoned the Imam's food.

As a result, after three days of writhing in pain, Imam Musa Kazem (AS) achieved martyrdom on the 25th of Rajab 183 AH (799 AD).

Today, it is the sprawling twin-domed shrine of Kazemayn that majestically towers over the former Abbasid capital, Baghdad, with both Sunnis and Shi'ite Muslims saluting the Prophet's 7th Infallible Heir, and thronging the shrine despite the bomb blasts triggered by the dastardly terrorists.

As for the tyrant Haroun, his rotten bones lie at the feet of son of his victim in Khorasan, where pilgrims to the shrine of Imam Reza (AS) invoke the curse of God on the tyrannical caliph, while sending blessings on Prophet Mohammad (SAWA) and the Infallible Ahl al-Bayt.

Here are some wise words from the 7th Imam on which we ought to properly ponder upon:

"Indeed, God has two authorities over the people; an apparent one and a hidden one. His apparent authority are the Apostles, Prophets and Imams; and the concealed authority is the intellect of the people."

These words are indeed food for thought. They clearly point out to the proper paths of guidance. These dynamic words are indeed a safeguard against the pitfalls that the devil has set up to trap the children of Adam, both apparent and concealed - such as kings, presidents, dictators, pseudo scholars, caliphs, and the mindless pursuit of carnal pleasures.

U.S., Allies Cannot Brook Defeat of Terrorists:

War Clouds Gathering Again Over Mideast



Smoke rises from the terrorist-held Douma district of Eastern Ghouta, on the outskirts of Damascus, on April 7, 2018.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) -- The Russian military said Wednesday it was closely watching the situation around Syria and was aware of the movements of a U.S. naval strike force headed for the Persian Gulf.

The U.S. Navy said Tuesday that the strike group, headed by the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman, would set sail for the Middle East and Europe on Wednesday.

The Russian military said the U.S. strike force was due to arrive in the Middle East at the start of May.

"We are attentively tracking the situation unfolding around Syria and in the whole region," the Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement.

It also reacted to a warning of imminent military action in Syria from U.S. President Donald Trump.

"Instead of talking about the coalition's readiness to fire missiles at Syria, the United States would do better to rebuild the destroyed city (of Raqqah) and provide wide-ranging help to its suffering population," the ministry said in a statement.

It repeated its assertion that a suspected chemical weapons attack carried out in the Syrian town of Douma had been faked by the White Helmets organization, rejecting Western allegations that Syrian government forces were responsible for it.

A Britain-based war monitor said government forces in Syria were emptying main airports and military air bases over possible U.S. strikes.

Trump said in a Tweet on Wednesday that American missiles "will be coming" to Syria. He was reacting to a warning from Russia on Tuesday that any U.S. missiles fired at Syria would be shot down and the launch sites targeted.

His comments raised fears of direct conflict over Syria for the first time between the two world powers backing opposing sides in the country's protracted war, which has aggravated instability across the Middle East.

"Russia vows to shoot down any and all

missiles fired at Syria. Get ready Russia, because they will be coming, nice and new and 'smart!'," Trump boasted in a post on Twitter.

In response, Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a Facebook post that "smart missiles should fly towards terrorists, not towards the lawful government".

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said any U.S. missile salvo could be an attempt to destroy evidence of the reported gas attack in the Syrian town of Douma, for which Damascus and Moscow have denied any responsibility.

Oil prices jumped to their highest level in more than three years on Wednesday after Trump's missile warning, and U.S. stock index futures fell sharply amid alarm over possible Russian-U.S. conflict over Syria.

Moscow and Washington blocked attempts by each other at the United Nations Security Council on Tuesday to set up international investigations into chemical weapons attacks in Syria.

Moscow's threat to down U.S. missiles came from its ambassador to Lebanon, Alexander Zasyupkin, who said it was based on previous statements by President Vladimir Putin and the Russian armed forces chief of staff.

The Russian military said on March 13 that it would respond to any U.S. strike on Syria by targeting any missiles and launchers involved.

Zasyupkin also said a clash between Russia and the United States over Syria "should be ruled out and therefore we are ready to hold negotiations".

Both Russia and Iran have warned Syria's enemies against military action in recent days, underlining their commitment to the Syrian government.

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Military Plane Crash Kills 257 People in Algeria

BOUFARIK, Algeria (AFP) - An Algerian military plane crashed and caught fire on Wednesday killing 257 people, mostly army personnel and members of their families, officials said.

AFP photographer at the scene saw the charred wreckage of the plane in a field near the Boufarik airbase from where the plane had taken off.

Hundreds of ambulances and dozens of fire trucks with their sirens wailing rushed to the scene of the crash about 25 kilometers (15 miles) southwest of Algiers.

The defense ministry said in a statement that 247 passengers and 10 crew were killed without mentioning any survivors.

Deputy Defense Minister General Ahmed Gaid Salah visited the site and ordered an investigation into the circumstances of the crash, the defense ministry said.

Map locating Boufarik airbase in Algeria, where a military transport aircraft crashed on Wednesday.

The Ilyushin Il-76 transport plane was bound for Tindouf in southwest Algeria. Algeria has suffered a string of military and civilian aviation disasters.

Two military planes collided mid-flight in December 2012 during a training exercise in Tlemcen, in the far west of the country, killing the pilots of both planes.

In February 2014, 77 people died when a military plane carrying army personnel and family members crashed between Tamanrasset in southern Algeria and the eastern city of Constantine.

Only one person survived after the C-130 Hercules transport aircraft came down in the mountainous Oum El Bouaghi region.

The defense ministry blamed that crash on bad weather.

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U.S. Welcomes Planned EU Sanctions on Iran

WASHINGTON (Press TV) -- The U.S. has welcomed European plans to impose new sanctions on Iran in violation of a nuclear agreement with the Islamic Republic.

France, Britain and Germany have said the new sanctions are a way to persuade U.S. President Donald Trump to stick to the 2015 nuclear agreement which he has threatened to leave.

"We understand that the EU, it's been reported in the press, is considering new Iran-related sanctions. This is a good and important step that we support," U.S. Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Sigal Mandelker said on Tuesday.

She made the remarks in London at the start of a tour of European signatories to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - the official

name of the nuclear agreement with Iran.

France, Britain and Germany are seeking to persuade their EU partners to back new sanctions on Tehran over Iran's missile program.

Mandelker, who will travel next to Berlin and Paris, warned international firms against doing business with the Islamic Republic.

"We say any company thinking about doing business in Iran or with Iranian companies face serious risks that they will be doing business with those, like the IRGC (Islamic Revolution Guards Corps)," she said.

"The onus of responsibility lies in Iran and we're going to continue to highlight the risks of doing business there because they haven't taken the actions that they have promised they would take," she claimed.

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