

MOSCOW (Dispatches) -- Russian President Vladimir Putin told his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani Sunday that further Western missile strikes on Syria would lead to chaos in international relations. Putin and Rouhani spoke by phone to discuss the situation in Syria after the United States, France and Britain launched missile strikes on the country over a suspected poison gas attack. "Vladimir Putin, in particular, stressed that if such actions in violation of the UN Charter continue, then it will inevitably lead to chaos in international relations," the Kremlin said.

BEIRUT (Dispatches) -- Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said Sunday that the U.S.-led strikes on Syria over the weekend will "complicate the political solution" to the conflict. While saying the strikes would obstruct progress toward a political solution to the 7-year-long war, Nasrallah downplayed the impact of the attack on the ground. He reiterated a statement issued by the group Saturday in the wake of the pre-dawn strikes that the attack did not achieve its goals and that they would make the axis of the resistance more confident.

Viewpoint

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Iranian Judokas Get Three Medals in Junior Asian Cup



'Western Strikes on Syria Act of Aggression'



Iran's Parliament Speaker: Muslims Will Not Forget 'Betrayal' of Certain States

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iran's Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani on Sunday described as an act of "betrayal" the silence of certain Islamic countries toward a tripartite missile attack on Syria and expressions of support by some others.

Addressing an open session of parliament, Larijani said some Islamic states happily stood by the U.S., France and Britain in their missile attack on Syria.

"Is it not ignominious and shameful for them that on the day of Maba'ath which is the day of Muslim unity, these countries stood with the leaders of blasphemy and the Zionists and declared their betrayal with great joy?" the speaker asked.

Maba'ath marks the descent of Allah's divine commandment through Archangel Gabriel to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him), formally entrusting him the universal mission of Islam. Muslims mark the event with prayers and supplication to the Almighty as thanksgiving.

Saudi Arabia, along with Bahrain and Qatar, were among a few Muslim countries which joined the occupying regime of Israel and the West to express

full support for the strikes on Syria.

Larijani said some Muslim countries claim to be supporters of Muslim unity and human rights, but behind the scenes they support terrorists and make their resources available to aggressors to target Muslim nations.

"The Iranian parliament condemns this brutal and illegal attack, and announces to these three countries and the contemptible countries supporting them that gone are the days of such false postures, and such savage acts will only shed light on the path where supporters of terrorism and hypocrites are treading," said Larijani.

Saudi Arabia is fresh from a slew of deals that came out of the Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman's visit to the U.S. earlier this month and those signed during Trump's visit to the kingdom last May.

Larijani said such attacks will only further strengthen the Syrian nation's resolve to wipe out terrorists.

(Continued on Page 7)

'Mission Accomplished': Cancer Drugs Center Hit



The destroyed Scientific Research Centre is seen in Damascus, April 14, 2018.

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) -- Western powers claim their missile attacks struck at the heart of Syria's chemical weapons program but what they destroyed included a scientific research institution producing cancer drugs.

The Pentagon said three chemical weapons facilities, including a research and development center in Damascus' Barzeh district and two installations near Homs, were hit in the early hours of Saturday.

The blasts left the Syrian Scientific Research Centre compound, standing hard against

the steep, dry hills that hem in northeastern Damascus, little more than a ruin.

Standing near the rubble, Saeid Saeid, head of the center's polymers department, said that the buildings had been used to research and make medicine components that could not be imported, including ones for cancer treatment and anti-venom.

U.S. Marine General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, claimed in Washington that it had been a center for research, development,

production and testing of chemical and biological weapons.

Pentagon spokesman Lieutenant General Kenneth McKenzie said that 76 missiles had been fired at the facility and "successfully destroyed three buildings in metropolitan Damascus, one of the most heavily defended aerospace areas in the world".

The smell of fire and smoke wafted across the remains of five destroyed buildings during a media tour arranged by the government to show that the U.S. and its allies were lying.

Amid the rubble on the edge of the compound were the scattered remains of its contents: charred books, laboratory masks and gloves, files, tables, cardboard packets marked with the names of medicines, chairs and wind-blown sheets of paper, Reuters reported.

The institute in Barzeh specialized in producing specific drugs which are direly in short supply in the face of Western sanctions on Syria.

"Since the Syria crisis broke out, the country has been short of all kinds of medicines due to the sanctions from Western countries. Foreign companies stopped exporting high-quality medicines to Syria, especially anti-cancer medicines. So we have been conducting researches on anti-cancer medicines here, and three cancer drugs have been developed," he said.

Saeid noted that he could not have stayed at the research center after the strikes if it had contained chemical weapons, as claimed by the U.S. and its allies.

"If there were chemical weapons in the building, we would not be here. My colleagues and I came here at 05:00 this morning. If there were chemical weapons, we would need to wear masks and take other protective measures to be staying here," he said.

The fresh strikes by the US marked the second time that President Donald Trump has authorized attacks on Syria.

(Continued on Page 7)

Morocco Pulls Out of Saudi-Led Coalition

RABAT (Dispatches) -- Morocco is reportedly to pull its warplanes out of a Saudi Arabia-led coalition, which has been pounding Yemen for more than three years now, citing a need for military buildup at home.

The coalition invaded the Arab world's most impoverished nation in March 2015 to put its Riyadh-allied former government back in the saddle. It has fallen short of the objective, while thousands have been killed and displaced as a result of the invasion.

The F16 aircraft are to be repatriated as the army has been placed on high alert over heightened militancy in Western Sahara, the regional English-language North Africa Post newspaper said on Saturday.

The Polisario Front militants aim to end Morocco's presence in the Saharan region. They recently said they sought to set up a "capital" in the region, prompting Rabat to caution it would respond with force.

The announcement violates a 1991 United Nations-brokered truce between the militants and Moroccan forces. In line with the agreement, the final status of the disputed territory is to be decided by a referendum, which has never gone underway.

Moroccan media have, meanwhile, been speculating about future airstrikes by the military to contain the militancy.

The news about the upcoming withdrawal of the warplanes from the coalition came as anti-war and rights groups around the world are urging the United States and its allies to stop their arms sales to the countries waging the war on Yemen.

Germany, Sweden, Norway, and Belgium have almost halted their weapons exports to Saudi Arabia over the invasion. The U.S., Britain, and France have, however, kept the arms flow, with Washington and London even beefing up their Saudi weapons deals since the onset of the warfare.

Protests Erupt Around World Against Syria Strikes

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- Protests erupted in parts of the world, including U.S. and Britain, against the U.S.-led missile attack against Syria.

Angry demonstrators held a protest outside the White House in Washington, DC as they chanted "hands off Syria" and called for peace, not war.

Thousands of Greeks turned up at a rally and march in central Athens to protest the airstrikes against Syria.

The protesters gathered at Athens' central Syntagma Square before marching to the U.S. Embassy, chanting anti-U.S. slogans and carrying banners. Some wrote on the pavement in red paint: "Americans, murderers of people."

Police vehicles barricaded access to the embassy and protesters left peacefully.

Dimitris Koutsoumbas, the Communist Party's leader,

blasted Greek politicians for believing "flimsy excuses about a use of chemical weapons" by Syria. He also criticized their "subservience" to the EU and NATO, as well as their support for the occupying regime of Israel.

He told the crowd "the imperialists once again spill the blood of the local people. They destroy and splinter states by using fabricated evidence."

Major media outlets in the West questioned the attack and what it had accomplished.

"Full of sound and fury -- contrary to Donald Trump's 'mission accomplished' tweet -- the strikes may not signify much in Syria's wider war," the British daily the Guardian wrote.

"By most accounts, the strike essentially left in place the status quo on the ground," the New York Times said.

(Continued on Page 7)

Saudi Crown Prince Repeats Accusations Lebanon, Iraq Back Iran at Arab League Meeting

DHAHRAN (Dispatches) -- Lebanon and Iraq have supported Iran at a preliminary foreign ministerial meeting of an Arab League summit in this Saudi city.

The representatives of Beirut and Baghdad opposed an anti-Iran provision in a preliminary statement issued at the end of the meeting that accused Iran of interfering in Arab affairs.

The reactions came as the Saudi government sought to align members against Iran.

On Sunday, Saudi Arabia's King Salman opened a summit of Arab leaders by accusing Iran of terrorist acts and blatant interference in the internal affairs of Arab countries, without making any reference to missile strikes by Western powers on Syria.

Saudi Arabia and its allies expressed support for the strikes on

Saturday, but Iraq and Lebanon have condemned them. Other countries like Jordan and Kuwait refrained from taking a position.

Qatar did not send a senior official to the summit in a sign that its 10-month dispute with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt is still a long way from being resolved.

The four countries severed diplomatic and transport ties with Doha in June 2017, accusing it of supporting terrorism. Doha denies the charges and says the boycott is an attempt to impinge on its sovereignty.

President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem al-Quds as the so-called capital of Israel and his plan to move the U.S. embassy to the occupied city had also been weighing down on the summit's agenda.

(Continued on Page 7)