

In Talks With Macron: Putin Presents Data on Staged Chemical Provocations in Syria

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – Information about false flag operations by terrorists was mentioned during phone talks between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron on Saturday.

The presidents discussed the situation in Ukraine and Syria, including the convening of the Syrian Constitutional Committee and the “peace process” in the Middle Eastern country.

Putin also provided Macron with information about terrorists’ attempting to carry out provocations with the use of chemical weapons in the Idlib de-escalation zone.

The reports about new false flag operations in Syria come after BBC producer Riam Dalati earlier this week said that footage of people being treated following an alleged chemical weapons attack in the Syrian city of Douma was staged.

Back in April, the footage was used as a pretext for missile strikes against the Syrian government, carried out by the U.S., Britain, and France, despite a lack of evidence.

Syria denounced the statement by the U.S., Britain and France on the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Damascus government, saying the trio is leading a campaign of misinformation against the Arab country in line with their support for terrorists.

An official source at the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates told SANA news agency that the fresh Western threats against Damascus came amid the Syrian army’s territorial gains against foreign-backed terrorists.

Washington, London and Paris claimed that they “shared resolve to preventing the use of chemical



Syria found a chemical weapons workshop in Ghouta that belongs to terrorists in this file photo.

weapons” by the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

They also noted that their position on the Damascus’ “use of chemical weapons is unchanged. As we have demonstrated, we will respond appropriately to any further use of chemical weapons” by the Syrian government.

The statement was published on the fifth anniversary of the deadly chemical attack in the Damascus suburb of Ghouta in August 2013.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry source stressed that the Western countries had once again resorted to “a

campaign of threats, hypocrisy and misinformation against the Syrian Arab Republic as part of the continued declared support for the armed terrorist groups, particularly Jabhat al-Nusra and its affiliated groups.”

“Syria has repeatedly asserted that it considers the use of chemical weapons immoral and condemns its use anywhere, under any circumstance and against anyone. Syria reiterates that it has no chemical weapons,” he added.

Syria surrendered its entire chemical stockpile in 2013 to a mission led by the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the UN.

Turkey Slams U.S. Stance on Gulen Extradition Case

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has accused U.S. authorities of acting insincerely over Washington’s reluctance to extradite cleric Fethullah Gulen, who is considered by Ankara as the main person behind a 2016 coup attempt.

“Unfortunately, the United States is still acting insincerely”, Erdogan told the broadcaster A Haber, expressing his regret

over “Washington’s unconstructive position” concerning the extradition of Gulen.

After a failed coup that occurred in mid-2016, Ankara detained thousands of journalists, diplomats, judges, members of the military, and human rights activists, accusing them of having a role in the attempted government overthrow and having ties to Gulen. The cleric, living in self-imposed exile in the

United States, said he was not involved.

The Turkish authorities have repeatedly sent extradition requests to the US, but Washington has refused to hand over Gulen, who has been residing in the United States since 1999.

In December, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said that during a G20 summit in Argentina, US President Donald Trump told Erdogan that the

US authorities were working on Gulen’s extradition. However, the White House subsequently argued that Washington had not agreed to extradite the cleric during the high-level conversation.

According to Ankara, the movement of cleric Fethullah Gulen, which Turkish authorities refer to as the Fethullah Terrorist Organisation (FETO), played a key role in the military takeover attempt in 2016.

‘Daesh Downfall May Result in al-Qaeda Resurgence’

LONDON (Dispatches) – The chief of Britain’s foreign intelligence service MI6, said that Daesh’s setbacks in Syria may contribute to the strengthening of al-Qaeda.

“Al-Qaeda, which has always been in a rivalry, and almost zero sum relationship with Daesh, has, I think, undergone a certain resurgence as a result of the degradation of Daesh. It is definitely not down and out”, Reuters cited Alex Younger as saying.

The MI6 head further elaborated that the UK has enhanced its security cooperation with its European allies to deal with such issues as terrorists and their brides flooding back to Europe after Daesh suffered territorial losses in Syria and Iraq.

“We are very concerned about this because all experience tells us that once someone has put themselves in that sort of position they are likely to have acquired the skills and connections that make them potentially very dangerous. The reality is that so far, it has been a completely manageable problem. I can’t predict accurately what will happen in future, but it’s a very complex environment”, he said.

Younger also pointed out that Daesh has morphed and is proving

“adept at inspiring at attacks rather than directing them”.

Last month, Britain’s counter-terror police chief Neil Basu told The Independent that U.S. President Donald Trump had handed Daesh a “propaganda victory” that could boost the group’s efforts to recruit and radicalize people in the UK when he announced the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria.

According to UK Home Office estimates, some 300 British Daesh recruits could still be alive in Syria and Iraq, while several are in the custody of the U.S.-backed Kurdish so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The British government seeks to deprive all dual nationals who joined Daesh of UK citizenship, although Basu said that there is no “legal pathway” to repatriate them for trial.

Daesh broke away from Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda after the group’s rignleader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi decided to pursue the idea of creating a “caliphate”.

Having taken advantage of the chaos in Syria, fomented by the war, Daesh, which previously operated in Iraq, managed to capture vast territories in both Middle Eastern countries, including major cities, such as Mosul, Fallujah, Raqqa and many others.

backed Hariri and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, as well as the Hezbollah resistance movement.

The reforms the government plans to pursue could be “difficult and painful,” but are required to avoid a worsening of economic, financial and social conditions, its statement of policy said.

Lebanon has one of the largest public debt-to-gross domestic product (GDP) ratio in the world. The figure stands at around 150 percent, and much of it has been accumulated through the cost of servicing existing debt. The economy has suffered from years of low growth.

Hariri said on Friday that his government would prioritize economic reforms needed to

bring the country’s huge public debt under control.

In a statement issued about its policies, the government said that perusing its reform plans could be “difficult and painful,” but they are required to avoid a deteriorating of economic, financial and social conditions.

It has pledged a “financial correction” equal to at least one percent of GDP a year over five years, commencing with 2019’s budget, a daunting task that could be achieved by increasing revenues and cutting spending.

The measures would begin with transfers to the state-run power company, which the World Bank describes as a “staggering burden” on public finances.

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Jafari said the Pakistani government knows where the attackers are harbored, adding Pakistan security forces are supporting them.

“Why do Pakistan’s army and security body give refuge to these anti-revolutionary groups which are dangerous to Islam? Pakistan will no doubt pay a high price,” Jafari said.

Tehran has linked Wednesday’s attack to a U.S.-led conference in Warsaw largely focused on Iran, just two days after the nation marked the 40th anniversary of its 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The bomb struck a bus traveling on a road between the cities of Khash and Zahedan, a mountainous region along the Pakistani border that is also near Afghanistan. Images after the blast published by news agencies showed the explosion tore the bus apart.

“The enemies must be sure that the comrades of these martyrs and all those who have made covenants with the people to establish security, are even more determined to defend them and deal a yet stronger blow to the enemies,” General Jafari said.

The IRGC issued a statement saying a vehicle loaded with explosives targeted a bus carrying border guards affiliated with its force.

“Just in the past year, six or seven suicide attacks were neutralized but they were able to carry out this one,” General Jafari told the mourners.

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armed combatant units from poor countries who come to improve their standard of living to a role filled with extensive activities including setting up combat units, commanding them, planning war moves, purchasing equipment and managing budgets.

According to Haaretz, the senior mercenaries have not ruled out the need for the cannon fodder recruited by the fighting states from the ever available stock in poor states.

Many Yemenites have avoided joining the Saudi campaign to fight the Houthi fighters and their allies in the Yemeni army.

The most expensive mercenaries are from elite American units like the Navy Seals, army rangers and the Marines, the paper said.

The Israeli war ministry or Mossad, Haaretz said, may claim people who served in their ranks and are now private contractors of the UAE or South American states are not working in Israel’s name.

MbS...

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security adviser John Bolton expressed Washington’s support for New Delhi after Modi vowed a “heavy price” for the deadly bombing.

In a telephone conversation with his Indian counterpart Ajit Doval, Bolton said the Trump administration supported New Delhi’s right to self-defense against cross-border terrorism, Indian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Saturday.

The Pakistan-based JeM militant group claimed responsibility for Thursday’s car bomb attack. India accused Pakistan of harboring militants behind the attack, which was the deadliest bombing in three decades of bloodshed in Indian-controlled Kashmir. India says it has incontrovertible evidence of Pakistan’s involvement, a charge Islamabad dismisses.

The Indian ministry said Bolton and Doval “vowed to work together to ensure that Pakistan cease to be a safe haven for JeM and terrorist groups that target India, the US and others in the region.”

“They resolved to hold Pakistan to account for its obligations under UN resolutions,” said the statement.

Modi said on Friday that “the terrorist groups and their masters” will have to “pay a heavy price,” over the Kashmir bombing. Pakistan has condemned the attack and denied any involvement.

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are in Syria to fight Daesh, but the Arab country and its allies fighting the terrorist group dispute the claim.

Daesh militants have been boxed into a small area as the group battles over its remaining patch of territory in northeastern Syria.

On Saturday, U.S.-backed militants reportedly captured the last enclave held by Daesh in Syria under a deal with the terrorist group, a UK-based monitoring group said.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said the last few hundred Daesh elements, many of them foreigners, had surrendered in the past two days to SDF militants. The SDF, it added, is currently conducting

sweeping operations in the farms near the town of Al-Baghuz Fawqani in Syria’s eastern Dayr al-Zawr province in search for Daesh militants hiding in tunnels.

Retaking the last Daesh enclave completely ends the terrorists’ presence at the eastern bank of the Euphrates River.

Under the deal, 200 militants have surrendered to the SDF and 240 more are expected to surrender in the future, it said.

Over the past months, there have been numerous reports of the U.S. airlifting Daesh amid fresh sweeping advances by Syrian army soldiers and allied fighters against the takfiri terrorists.

Iranian officials and other sources have warned that the U.S. is relocating the militants from Syria to Afghanistan.

Europe...

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Merkel also questioned whether it’s good for the U.S. to withdraw troops quickly from Syria “or is that not also strengthening the possibilities for Iran and Russia to exert influence there?”

Merkel’s speech was warmly received.

“This was a big and say-it-as-it-is Merkel speech,” Daniela Schwarzer, the director of the German Council on Foreign relations think tank, wrote on Twitter. “Minutes of applause and standing ovations for a powerful commitment to picking up the pieces of a shattered (world) order and working on a European and (international) order that creates win-win situations.”

U.S....

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Britain sent its foreign minister to the conference, but France and Germany, apparently reluctant to be part of such a bellicose bashing, sent lower level diplomats. China sent no one, nor did Russia, which was busy conducting a meeting on Syria with Turkey and Iran. Even Poland, which hosted the Warsaw conference at the request of the administration, believes in the Iran nuclear agreement.

Major European companies left the Iranian market after President Trump withdrew from the pact and reinstated American sanctions. But European governments, struggling to keep the deal alive in defiance of Trump, last week began a barter system that could enable some smaller companies to continue to do business with Iran. That drew an aggressive response at the conference from Vice President Mike Pence, who denounced the Europeans for trying to break American sanctions against Iran.

According to the Times, the administration undercuts its credibility when one of its chief allies in its campaign against Iran is Saudi Arabia, whose de facto ruler is believed to have ordered the murder of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi and has directed a war in Yemen that Congress has denounced for its toll in innocent lives.

Kharrazi...

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this is in the hands of the U.S. policy-makers.

“There is animosity between Iran and the United States,” says Kharazi. “They’re using all their instruments to put pressure on Iran.”

“They have to change their policies. They have to come up with a new policy. Unfortunately, the United States is trying to materialize financial imperialism. If, in the past, imperialism was dependent on arms and wars, today Americans are dependent on financial instruments,” Kharazi said.

Closer to home, regional tensions were discussed. On the GCC blockade and how it affects his country, Kharazi said Iran is unhappy with the way the political impasse has progressed.

“We are not happy that disputes are developing in the region,” he said. “That does not help the development of security and peace in the region. We are ready to talk to everyone in the region, even Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates... all other parties. And we believe, eventually, that is the final solution. Out of intervention of foreign countries. If we sit together and talk to each other for the benefit of the region, I believe something will come out of that.”

Asked if Iran had been able to reach the goals set forth by the Iranian Islamic Revolution 40 years ago, Kharazi says that, although not everything may have been achieved, great improvements have been made.

“I don’t think that all the aims of the revolution have been achieved, but there has been a great development in Iran,” he said. “What is most important is that all of these (developments) have happened without the support of foreigners. It has been based on self-reliance, by the resources that we have internally. That is why Iran is inspiring.”