

Car Bomb Kills Soldier Near Iraq's Kirkuk

KIRKUK (Dispatches) – A car bomb killed one soldier and injured at least two in a northern Iraqi town near the oil-rich city of Kirkuk on Wednesday, the military and a security source said.

The military said in a statement that a member of the security forces was killed. A security source told Reuters that at least two others were wounded.

A bomber drove the rigged car into a security checkpoint at the entrance of the town of Riyadh, 40 kilometers (25 miles) southwest of Kirkuk, the military said.

Thought for Today

Whoever keeps in order his affairs with Allah, Allah will also put his affairs with men in order. Whoever makes arrangement for his salvation, Allah will arrange his worldly affairs; whoever is a preacher for himself, Allah will also protect him.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

VOL NO: LV 10807 TEHRAN / Est.1959

Thursday, January 24, 2019, Bahman 4, 1397, Jamadi al-Awwal 17, 1440

Palestinian Authority Asks U.S. to Drop All Aid



A Palestinian man walks past the building of the UNRWA headquarters in Gaza City on January 8, 2018.

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The Palestinian Authority says it will refuse American aid in its entirety after Washington cut humanitarian funds to Palestinians, adding that accepting such help could carry unwelcome legal consequences for the Ramallah-based administration.

The Authority “sent an official letter to the U.S. administration requesting it stop all aid to the PA,

including assistance to the Palestinian security services,” senior negotiator Saeb Erekat said.

US President Donald Trump has already pledged to cut almost all humanitarian aid to Palestinians. American-funded projects are being phased out gradually.

Erekat further said the decision was made due to concerns over the so-called Anti-Terrorism Clarifi-

cation Act (ATCA), approved by President Trump in October 2018, which makes it possible for U.S. citizens to sue foreign entities that receive U.S. aid.

This may prompt U.S. families to start exposing the PA to “costly” lawsuits over alleged “past Palestinian attacks,” AFP said.

American authorities have, in the past, blamed Palestinians for “po-

litical violence” targeting American interests inside and outside the occupied territories. This is while Washington provides an annual military aid of around \$3 billion to Israel, which engages in routine deadly acts of aggression against Palestinians.

Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah wrote in the letter sent to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo back on December 26, 2018 that “as of January 31st, 2019, it fully disclaims and no longer wishes to accept any form of assistance referenced in ATCA.”

The U.S. aid features roughly \$50 million in annual support for Palestinian security services, including support for security coordination with the Zionist regime. The occupying regime claims that the coordination is “crucial” for maintaining calm in the occupied West Bank, where Israeli acts of aggression are a daily occurrence.

Relations between the PA and the U.S., already strained due to Washington’s unwavering support for Israel, took an unprecedented dip in late 2017, when Washington recognized al-Quds as the regime’s “capital” in the face of the Palestinians’ internationally-recognized claims to the occupied city.

The PA, in response, stopped recognizing any mediation role by Washington in the decades-long conflict with the Zionist regime.

‘Yemen Prisoner Swap Terms Expected in Coming Days’



Foreign minister of Yemen’s former government, Khaled al-Yamani (L), and Houthi negotiator Mohammed Abdulsalam shake hands under the eyes of United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres during peace consultations at Johannesberg Castle in Rimbo, north of Stockholm, Sweden, on December 13, 2018.

ADEN (Dispatches) – Yemen’s warring parties are expected to agree on the terms of a prisoner exchange in around 10 days, a representative of the former Yemeni government said on Wednesday.

Talks between the two sides took place in Jordan last week. Both parties need to agree on lists of prisoners to be swapped.

“We expect that in 10 days’ time the final signing will have happened,” the head of the former government delegation to the prisoner-exchange talks, Hadi Haig, told Reuters by telephone.

The United Nations is pushing for the exchange and a peace deal in Yemen’s main port, Hudaydah. That could open the way for more talks between Houthi movement and the Saudi-backed government on ending the country’s war.

The swap was one of the least contentious confidence-building measures at December’s UN-

sponsored talks in Sweden, held amid Western pressure to end the conflict. The Saudi-led fight has lasted nearly four years, killed tens of thousands and brought 10 million people to the brink of famine.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said on Wednesday that it hopes to see “progress in the coming days” and urged the warring parties not to let the opportunity slip away.

“This is a crucial moment for the people of Yemen,” Red Cross regional director Fabrizio Carboni said in a statement issued at a press conference in the Houthi-held capital, Sana’a.

The ICRC said it was preparing for the swap by increasing staff numbers and arranging medical support. It was also preparing two planes to carry detainees between Sana’a and Sayoun, a town under the control of the Hadi former regime.

Kurdish Forces Capture Last Daesh Redoubt in Eastern Syria

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – The Kurdish-led so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) captured on Wednesday the last Daesh-held town in eastern Syria, a war monitor reported.

The SDF managed over the early hours of Wednesday to capture the Baghuz Foqani town, which was the last Daesh-held town in the eastern Euphrates region, said the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The UK-based watchdog group said the SDF forces are combing the farms and areas around the town in search for remnants of the Daesh terrorists.

This comes as thousands of civilians and hundreds of Daesh terrorists fled the last Daesh-held pocket

in the eastern Euphrates over the past 24 hours.

After combing the farms, the SDF will have controlled the entire eastern Euphrates region, said the Observatory.

The progress comes after 18 weeks of a continuous military campaign against Daesh in that part of the country.

Meanwhile, several civilians have lost their lives and sustained injuries when the U.S.-led coalition purportedly fighting the Daesh terrorist group carried out a number of aerial attacks in Syria’s troubled eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr.

Local sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Syria’s official news agency SANA that the airstrikes targeted vehicles car-

rying civilians fleeing from areas controlled by the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group in the town of al-Baghuz early on Wednesday.

The U.S.-led coalition 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.

The military alliance has repeatedly been accused of targeting and killing civilians. It has also been largely incapable of achieving its declared goal of destroying Daesh.

Syria has on numerous occasions condemned airstrikes by the U.S.-led coalition, asking the UN to force Washington and its allies to put an end to their military inter-

vention in the Arab country.

The Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, in two separate letters addressed to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the rotating president of the Security Council, Francisco Antonio Cortorreal, on Saturday, censured the latest U.S.-led coalition strikes against al-Baghuz al-Tahtani village in Dayr al-Zawr province, saying the U.S.-led warplanes had targeted dozens of families, who were fleeing from areas controlled by Daesh.

Local sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, told SANA on January 18 that 20 people were killed when U.S.-led warplanes bombed residential buildings in the village.

Mastermind of Attack on Afghan Military Base Killed

KABUL (Dispatches) – Afghanistan’s intelligence agency announced that it has killed a Taliban commander who masterminded a recent deadly terror attack on a military base in the central province of Maidan Wardak, which reportedly killed some 126 security forces.

Afghanistan’s National Directorate for Security (NDS) said in a statement on Wednesday that the terrorist commander, who was only identified as Noman, had been killed in an air raid on Tuesday night, Asia News reported.

“Noman, along with seven others, was targeted after being identified by the NDS forces in an operative task,” the statement noted, adding, “NDS will follow the terrorist group and kill them all.” The Taliban militants attacked the military base

in Maidan Wardak on Monday.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military has announced the death of one of its service members in a combat mission in Afghanistan.

The U.S. Department of Defense made the announcement, saying that the soldier had been killed “as a result of enemy small arms fire,” without disclosing the name of the service member or the branch of the military.

“In accordance with U.S. Department of Defense policy, the name of the service member killed in action is being withheld until 24 hours after notification of next of kin is complete,” the Pentagon said in a statement.

The NATO mission in Afghanistan – Resolute Support Mission (RSM) – said the incident was

under investigation, declining to provide further details.

This is the second US service member killed in military operations in Afghanistan in 2019.

U.S. Army Sergeant Cameron Meddock died last week at a medical facility in Germany of injuries sustained during a combat operation on January 13 in the northwestern Afghan province of Badghis.

More than 2,400 American forces have been killed in the country since the United States and its allies invaded Afghanistan as part of Washington’s so-called war on terror in October 2001. The offensive removed the Taliban regime from power, but after more than one and a half decades, the foreign troops are still deployed to the country.

Qatari Emir Hosts Bashir, Backs ‘Unity’ in Restive Sudan

DOHA (Dispatches) – The ruler of Qatar offered support for Sudan’s “unity and stability” on Wednesday at a meeting with President Omar al-Bashir on his first foreign visit in more than a month of protests against him, a statement said.

The tiny but wealthy Persian Gulf state vies with regional rivals for influence in Sudan, strategic in part for its access to the Red Sea, and last year agreed a \$4 billion deal to jointly develop Suakin port.

But no new financial assistance was announced on Wednesday.

Bashir arrived in Qatar on Tuesday as protests raged at home. Anger at inflation and shortages has coalesced into calls for an end to his 30-year rule.

“President Bashir briefed the

Emir on the latest updates regarding the situation and challenges facing the country,” said a statement from the court of Qatar’s Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

“The Emir affirmed Qatar’s firm stance on Sudan’s unity and stability, and they discussed the latest developments in the Darfur peace process.”

Bashir has blamed the unrest on foreign “agents” and rebels from the western region of Darfur.

Qatar was among the first countries to express support after protests broke out on Dec. 19, with Sheikh Tamim calling Bashir to offer “all that was necessary”, according to Sudan.

The official death toll from the unrest stands at 26, including two security personnel. Rights groups say at least 40 have died.