

Several Killed, Wounded in Bombing North of Baghdad

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Several people were killed or wounded north of Baghdad on Wednesday when a man wearing an explosive belt blew himself up in the middle of a group of people receiving condolences. Iraqi security services said. The attack took place in the region of Tarmiya, 25 km (15 miles) north of Baghdad, they said. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack yet. Iraq declared victory in December over Daesh, which had seized control of nearly a third of the country in 2014, but it continues to carry out attacks and bombings in Baghdad and other parts of Iraq. The group claimed responsibility for a deadly gun attack near Tarmiya two weeks ago.

The world is like a serpent, so soft to touch, but so full of lethal poison. Unwise people are allured by it and drawn towards it, and wise men avoid it and keep away from its poisonous effects.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

# Syrian Terrorists Pull Out of Last Besieged Area

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – The remaining terrorists started to withdraw from the last terrorist-held enclave in central Syria on Wednesday, state television reported, sealing the government’s control over the area and opening a major stretch of the country’s most important highway.

It further cements President Bashar al-Assad’s dominant position over the most populated parts of Syria after years of fighting, but means any new military campaign might risk direct conflict with foreign powers.

The withdrawal may also be the last in a series of agreed evacuations used by the government to defeat besieged insurgents by forcing them to surrender territory in return for safe passage to opposition areas in the north.

Often brokered by Assad’s Russian allies, such agreements have in recent years become a defining characteristic of Syria’s seven-year



Syrian security forces raise the government flag in the main square of the town of Rastan in the central Homs province on May 16, 2018 after they took control of it as militants and their relatives were evacuated.

war. They have displaced over 100,000 people – terrorists and civilians.

The Syrian government has said nobody is forced to leave and those who stay must accept state rule.

The last besieged terrorist area, being fully evacuated on Wednes-

day, is the large enclave located between the cities of Hama and Homs around the towns of Rastan, Talbiseh and Houla.

Assad focused on the remaining besieged terrorist pockets last month after taking back Eastern Ghouta, the biggest terrorist en-

clave near Damascus, in a weeks-long offensive.

Eastern Ghouta, a besieged area on the outskirts of Damascus with some 400,000 people, has witnessed deadly violence over the past few weeks, as terrorist outfits have launched mortar attacks on the Syrian capital in the face of an imminent humiliating defeat, killing around 20 civilians in two weeks.

The Syrian army is making steady advances in the enclave, but it is facing a hostile West, which is threatening airstrikes to stop the push. President Bashar al-Assad vowed last week that Syrian forces would continue the campaign until the whole area is retaken.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Israeli regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding terrorist groups that are wreaking havoc in the country.

## Turkey-Zionist Regime Ties Sour Over Gaza Bloodshed



A protester holds a placard reading “Al-Quds belongs to the Muslims” as he shouts slogans among people holding Palestinian flags while they all take part in a protest march at the Istiklal avenue in Istanbul on May 14, 2018.

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) – Turkey has ordered the Zionist regime’s consul general in Istanbul, Yossi Levi Sfari, to leave the country, the Foreign Ministry confirmed, a further volley in a round of diplomatic expulsions that has seen them kick out each other’s ambassadors as relations soured over deadly clashes on the Gaza Strip border.

Earlier in the day, the Zionist regime expelled Turkey’s consul in al-Quds amid an increasingly acerbic war of words between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

A Turkish Foreign Ministry source said that the regime’s Ambassador to Ankara Eitan Naeh had been told that it would be “appropriate” if he returned to the occupied territories “for some time.”

Hours later, the regime’s ministry for foreign affairs said that Turkish Consul General in al-Quds al-Quds Husnu Gurcan Turkoglu had been summoned and told to return to Turkey “for consultations for a period of time.”

In response, the Turkish government summoned the regime’s Consul General in Istanbul and asked him to leave the country.

Turkey had already recalled its ambassadors to Tel Aviv and Washington in the wake of the inauguration of the U.S. embassy in al-Quds on Monday.

Additionally on Tuesday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Ne-

tanyahu traded barbs over the recent carnage in Gaza.

Zionist troops killed at least 62 Palestinians during protests near the Gaza fence on the eve of the 70th anniversary of the Nakba Day (the Day of Catastrophe), which coincided this year with Washington’s embassy relocation.

More than 2,700 Palestinians were also wounded as the Zionist troops used snipers, airstrikes, tank fire and tear gas to target the demonstrators.

The Israeli military blamed Hamas for the Gaza violence, claiming that the Palestinian resistance movement “is coercing Gazans to risk their lives.” Erdogan took to Twitter to defend Hamas and slam the regime’s decades-long crimes against the Palestinian people.

“Reminder to Netanyahu: Hamas is not a terrorist organization and Palestinians are not terrorists. It is a resistance movement that defends the Palestinian homeland against an occupying power. The world stands in solidarity with the people of Palestine against their oppressors,” he tweeted.

The Turkish leader further said that Netanyahu had the blood of Palestinians on his hands.

“Netanyahu is the PM of an apartheid state that has occupied a defenseless people’s lands for 60+ yrs in violation of UN resolutions. He has the blood of Palestinians on his hands and can cover up crimes by attacking Turkey,” he added.

## OPCW: Chlorine Likely Used in February Attack in Syria’s Idlib

AMSTERDAM (Dispatches) – Banned chlorine munitions were likely dropped on a Syrian neighborhood in February, an international body on chemical weapons said on Wednesday, after laboratory tests confirmed the presence of the toxic chemical.

In its latest report on the systematic use of banned munitions in the war in Syria, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) did not say which party was behind the attack on Saraqib, which lies in the terrorist-held territory in the province of Idlib.

An OPCW fact finding mission for Syria “determined that chlorine was released from cylinders by mechanical impact in the Al Talil neighborhood of Saraqib”, the organization said in a statement.

Several people were treated at local medical facilities for breathing difficulties after the attack on Feb. 4.

The Hague-based global arms watchdog also confirmed that environmental samples had “demonstrated the unusual presence of chlorine in the local environment.”

The OPCW, however, did not say which side to the Syria

conflict had used the banned munitions in Saraqib.

At least eleven people were treated for breathing difficulties in the Syrian city on February 4, the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at the time.

U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert blamed the incident on the Damascus government.

Syria’s Ambassador to the UN in Geneva Hussam Edin Aala rejected the accusation, saying, “Syria cannot possibly be using chemical weapons because it very simply has none in its possession.”

A separate OPCW fact-finding team is currently awaiting the results of a mission to the Damascus suburb town of Douma.

An alleged gas attack in Douma on April 7 was used as a pretext by the U.S., Britain and France to launch a coordinated missile attack against sites and research facilities near Damascus and Homs with the purported goal of paralyzing the Syrian government’s capability to produce chemicals.

Syria and Russia accused volunteer rescue workers of staging the Douma attack at the behest of the U.S. and its allies.

## Afghan Forces Kill Taliban Militants in Farah

KABUL (Dispatches) – About 300 Taliban militants have been killed in the Farah province in western Afghanistan in clashes with the country’s security forces, local media reported, citing the provincial governor.

The Taliban movement launched a large-scale attack on the Farah province’s capital city on Tuesday morning, and the militants were pushed back by national security forces early on Wednesday, according to the TOLO news broadcaster.

“First 1,000 Taliban insurgents attacked Farah districts on Tuesday and after the first attack over 1,000 other insurgents also joined the attack. Fifteen army soldiers, 10 policemen and five civilians were killed in the clashes,” provincial governor, Abdul Basir Salangi, was quoted as saying by the news channel.

The Taliban has not yet confirmed its death toll, according to

the media outlet.

Local residents of the province reportedly said that Taliban militants still remained in a number of districts and posed a threat to the city.

In late April, the Taliban announced its annual “spring offensive” and has conducted over 2,700 attacks around the country since then. The group has rejected Afghan President Ashraf Ghani’s offer to participate in parliamentary and local elections, while urging the Afghan nation to boycott the elections and saying that the country is “occupied” by foreign forces.

Afghanistan is in a state of political and social turmoil, with government forces fighting the continuing Taliban insurgency, while other extremist groups, such as the Daesh terrorist group, have also expanded their activities both in the country and neighboring states.

## Report: U.S. Weapons Handed Over to al-Qaeda in Syria

WASHINGTON (Press TV) – U.S. military equipment and ammunition, sent to Syria as part of a failed effort to arm “moderate” forces to battle Daesh, were instead handed over to an al-Qaeda group in the country, according to a report.

“I communicated with al-Qaeda’s branch, Al Nusra, to protect and safely escort me and my soldiers for two hours from North Aleppo to West Aleppo,” Maj. Anas Ibrahim Obaid, who said he brokered the deal, told Fox News from his home in the western Aleppo area.

“In exchange, I gave them five pickup trucks and ammunition,” said the man, who is better known on the battlefield as Abu Zayd.

The U.S. issued those trucks and ammo to him in 2015 under the administration of for-

mer President Barack Obama, as part of a \$500-million program to “train and equip” a new “ideologically moderate” force to fight Daesh terrorists.

Zayd said the program, one of at least two designed to funnel arms to terrorist groups in Syria, was rigged with inconsistencies and incompetency.

Zayd, who said he defected from the Syrian Army to the opposition in 2012, said that in order to be included in the program, he had to show proof of association with a group that had fought Daesh.

After receiving training in Turkey, the first group of 54 trained terrorists crossed back to Syria in July 2015 where they were almost instantly ambushed by al-Nusra terrorists, who kidnapped several of them and stole their U.S.-issued weapons.

Zayd said he was part of a second batch to be dispatched into Syria, but this time without proper firepower.

The U.S. trainers “wanted us to go into Syria without weapons because of the ambush, and said we could get the weapons inside instead. This was crazy,” Zayd recalled. “We refused.”

After the weapons issue was worked out, the terrorists began their journey to Syria on September 19, but were stopped by Turkish border guards, who found something else in their bags: Syrian government flags, rather than the flags of militants.

Zayd said terrorists charged back to their base in Turkey, demanding answers and U.S. trainers took the blame for the “flag mistake.” He added that the following day the terrorists continued back to Syria.