

Iraqi Forces Strike Daesh Terrorist in Diyala

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Iraqi security forces have launched a clean-up operation against the sleeper cells of the Daesh terrorist group in the country’s eastern province of Diyala as government troopers and allied fighters from Popular Mobilization Units are trying to flush the extremists out of the war-ravaged Arab country.

Captain Habib al-Shammari said the offensive targeted Daesh terrorists in al-Mukhisa area, and three terrorists were arrested during the operation.

“Daesh terrorist cells have recently become active in carrying out attacks against security personnel in deserted roads and areas,” Shammari said.

Over the past few months, Daesh terrorist attacks against Iraqi security forces, pro-government volunteer fighters – better known by the Arabic word Hashd al-Sha’abi – and civilians have been on the rise in areas northeast of Diyala province.

However, two reports have suggested that civilian death



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toll from violence in Iraq has dropped significantly this year, a sign the country is emerging from years of terrorist-led bloodshed.

The two reports published on Saturday by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Iraq Body Count database showed that the toll from incidents involving

civilians in Iraq in the first five months of 2018 had dropped by almost 80 percent.

The report by UNAMI showed 477 Iraqi civilians were killed in Iraq in acts of violence since the start of this year, a drop of 76.3 percent compared to 2,014 people killed in the same period in 2017. The report also shed light on a 68.4-percent decrease in

the number of wounded as a result of political and terrorist-led violence, saying 939 people had been injured in the studied period compared to 2,977 last year.

The Iraq Body Count, a London-based database which tracks violent deaths in the Arab country, also confirmed the decrease in the number of civilian fatalities, saying in its report that some 1,818 people had been killed in the beginning five months of 2018 compared to 7,708 in the same period in 2017, a drop of 76.4 percent.

Iraq announced late last year that it had managed to fully purge the Daesh terrorist group from almost a third of its territory that the group used to control. Iraqis went to the polls last month with no security incidents, a first since the US invasion in 2003. No major attacks have been reported in Iraq during the holy month of Ramadan, which started in mid-May, again a significant difference compared to past years.

To Weather Economic Crisis Jordan Pins Hopes on Persian Gulf Aid Package

AMMAN (Dispatches) – Jordan is pinning hopes on oil-rich Persian Gulf states led by Saudi Arabia committing to a multi-billion dollar aid package to help it weather an economic crisis that sparked rare street protests over austerity plans, officials said.

A palace statement said King Abdullah left for Jeddah to attend a summit called by Saudi King Salman who invited leaders of Kuwait and the UAE to discuss ways of helping the kingdom overcome deepening economic strains that sparked last week’s peaceful protests.

Officials are hopeful the Jeddah meeting will approve a ma-

jor package in line with a previous \$5 billion fund allocated to Jordan by Persian Gulf monarchies in December 2011 to contain pro-democracy unrest that spread across the region.

The funds that were tied to development projects had helped spur its aid-dependent economy.

An official who requested anonymity told Reuters a deposit to cushion dwindling existing reserves of \$11.5 billion would have a significant impact on easing pressures on a deficit-ridden budget where spending goes mainly to covers public salaries.

Jordanians have been protesting over tax increases and sub-

sidy cuts pushed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to reduce the country’s big public debt.

Crowds have taken to the streets to demand the government drop the unpopular reforms.

The protesters staged repeated night-time demonstrations after breaking the Ramadan fast to demand the bill be withdrawn altogether.

On Wednesday, Jordanian unions representing tens of thousands of employees in the public and private sectors staged a general strike against the government’s economic policies and tax hikes.

Erdogan: Austria’s Anti-Muslim Measures Leading to Religious War

ANKARA (Press TV) – Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has slammed Austria’s decision to shut down mosques and deport imams, warning that the measure could trigger a religious war.

Earlier this week, Chancellor Sebastian Kurz announced plans to order the closure of seven mosques and the expulsion of up to 60 imams, including 40 members of the Union of Turkish-Islamic Cultural Associations in Europe (ATIB).

“These measures taken by the Austrian prime minister are, I fear, leading the world towards a war between the cross and the crescent,” Erdogan said in Istanbul as he warned of the repercussions of Austria’s new anti-Islam policies. “They say they’re going to kick our religious men out of Austria. Do you think we will not react if you do such a thing? That means we’re going to have to do something,” he added.

On Friday, Erdogan’s spokesman Ibrahim Kalin denounced Austria’s decision to close mosques and expel imams as “a reflection of the Islamophobic, racist and discriminatory wave in this country.”

The right-wing coalition government of Austria, home to around 600,000 Muslims, has been accused of fanning anti-Islamic sentiments in the European state.

Vienna passed a law in May 2017, banning Muslim women from wearing full-face veils such as burqas and niqabs in public.

Under the law, which came into effect in October 2017, violators face a fine of 150 euros (nearly \$180) and police are authorized to use force with people who resist showing their faces.

Similar restrictions, known as the “Burqa Ban,” have been adopted in other European Union countries like, France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Denmark also banned garments that cover the face late last month. Those violating the law risk a fine of 1,000 kroner (£118).

The Austrian chancellor insists that the European Union should cease negotiations about Ankara joining the bloc.

Irked by Kurz’s stance, Turkey vetoed NATO’s cooperation with Austria in May 2017.

Saudi Arabia Arrests More Female Activists

RIYADH (Dispatches) – Saudi security forces detained two more female activists who protested at the Arab country’s improper human rights situation.

The Arabic-language al-Quds al-Arabi newspaper reported that Mia al-Zahrani, a female activist in legal fields, was arrested after writing an essay in support of Nouf Abdulaziz.

Abdolaziz was another female activist who was detained on Wednesday and transferred to an unknown place.

Saudi Arabia’s prosecutor said last Sunday that 17 people had been detained on suspicion of what he called trying to undermine secu-

rity and stability, a case activists say has targeted prominent women’s rights campaigners just weeks before the country lifts its ban on women driving.

The statement from the Public Prosecutor’s office did not name those detained, and said eight have been temporarily released.

The United Nations has accused Riyadh of misusing its anti-terror law to crush peaceful dissent, denying freedom of expression, imprisoning critics and allegedly subjecting some of them to torture

The UN has urged Saudi authorities to bring the law in line with international norms and halt what it called “barbaric and public execu-

tions.”

According to the UN report by Ben Emmerson, who visited the kingdom last year as UN special rapporteur on counter-terrorism, said the definition of terrorism in laws enacted in 2014 was “objectionably broad”.

International human rights groups have long urged the kingdom to improve its treatment of human rights advocates and end the death penalty.

In early June, the European Parliament issued a resolution calling for their unconditional release and that of all human rights defenders. It also called for a more vocal European response.

G7... (Continued From Page One)

Trudeau’s office responded to the tweets with a written statement, saying the prime minister’s comments in public and in private with Trump were “nothing he hasn’t said before” and that he was “focused on everything we accomplished here at the G7 summit.”

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said Trump’s decision to back out of the communique has destroyed trust and Europe’s answer must be to stick even closer together.

“It’s actually not a real surprise, we have seen this with the climate agreement or the Iran deal,” Maas said when asked to comment on Trump’s decision to back out of the G7 declaration.

“In a matter of seconds, you can destroy trust with 280 twitter characters,” Maas said, adding it would take much longer to rebuild the lost trust.

France also denounced Trump’s decision not to sign the final communiqué, warning that international cooperation “cannot be dictated by fits of anger and throwaway remarks.”

A senior UK government official said Theresa May’s government stands by commitments made in the communiqué. “I think they’ll all come down on Trudeau’s side” with the possible exception of Japan’s Shinzo Abe, Kirtson said. “This is clearly six versus one.”

Even before Trump’s shock reversal, French President Emmanuel Macron bemoaned the lack of G7 unity, giving a hint that the tensions hadn’t been put to rest. Trump had at one point proposed that G7 nations eliminate all tariffs, barriers and subsidies.

“I heard President Trump say he wants maximum trade and minimum tariffs for G7 members. Be my guest,” Macron told reporters Saturday. “We need seven to dance that tango, and the next move needs to be made by the one who first took a step backward.”

Trump left the summit early Saturday to head for a meeting in Singapore with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on June 12. “This bodes very poorly for the North Korea summit because it basically underlines the fact that Trump’s word means nothing,” said Jacob Kirkegaard, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

Trump’s about turn came hours after he claimed the meeting had been “tremendously, tremendously successful,” rating his relationship with the leaders of Canada, France and Germany as a “ten.” But as he left Quebec he also lashed out at “ridiculous and unacceptable” tariffs on American exports, claiming that the United States had been a “piggy bank” for everyone else.

Trump’s tariff hikes and threats to proceed with new duties on Chinese goods have raised the prospect of a trade war — and of congressional intervention. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker, a Republican, introduced legislation this month that would curb the president’s executive powers to impose tariffs.

Kirkegaard said he hopes Congress takes back trade powers from the president.

The G7 summit included ample discussion on Nafta — Trump said any new agreement will include some kind of sunset clause, which would kill the deal after five years unless all three countries agree to change or renew it. Trudeau repeated that Canada won’t accept a sunset clause.

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has actually been supporting Daesh by attacking the Syrian military.

“The Russians were invited by the Syrian government, their existence in Syria is a legitimate existence, the same for the Iranians,” he said.

Assad said there is a “big difference” between Russian President Vladimir Putin’s handling of the issues in the Middle East and those of U.S. President Donald Trump and British Prime Minister Theresa May.

“The Russians were invited by the Syrian government, their existence in Syria is a legitimate existence, the same for the Iranians. While for the United States, the UK, it is illegal, it is an invasion, they are breaching the sovereignty of Syria — a sovereign country. So, their existence is not legal at all, it is an illegitimate existence,” he said.

In his interview, Assad also vowed to “liberate every inch of Syria” and stressed that the conflict in the coun-

try could be resolved “in less than a year.”

The crisis “is not very complicated. What has made it complicated is the external interference,” he said.

“So, we think the more advances we make politically and militarily, the more the West, especially U.S., UK, and France, will try to prolong it and make the solution farther from the Syrians. But in spite of this, we are closing the gap between the two.”

Asked about a suspected gas attack in the town of Douma in the Eastern Ghouta region on April 7, Assad said the incident “was staged” by the U.S., the UK and France “together.”

“The UK publicly supported the White Helmets that are a branch of Al-Qaeda and Al-Nusra in different areas of Syria. They (the British) spent a lot of money, and we consider the White Helmets to be a PR stunt by the UK,” he added.

Assad said the Douma chemical attack was “a lie.”

“There was no attack; this is where the lie begins. Again, it wasn’t about the attack; the crux of the issue is that they need to undermine the Syrian government, as they needed to change and topple the Syrian government at the beginning of the events of the war in Syria. They keep failing, they keep telling lies, and they continue to play a war of attrition against our government.”

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to new areas out of an estimated 200,000 people at very high risk of landslides and flood, who need to be moved to safer areas.

There are fears that heavy flooding could also cause latrines to overflow and spread disease in the crowded camps. Around 700,000 Rohingya Muslims have poured in from Myanmar since August, fleeing an army crackdown.

They joined hundreds of thousands of earlier refugees from mainly Buddhist Myanmar, where the Rohingya are a persecuted and stateless minority.

Many of the hillsides were cleared of trees to make way for shelters, making the land highly unstable.

Majlis... (Continued From Page 2)

deal - Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia - are working to salvage the deal and maintain trade ties, but most international banks already refuse to work with Iran for fear of U.S. penalties.

On Sunday, politicians voted 138 to 103 (with six abstentions) on suspending the discussion around the Terrorism Financing Convention for two months, while they wait to see how the nuclear deal discussions play out, according to ISNA.

The lawmakers instead unanimously approved an amended version of a bill on Iran’s accession to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC).

As many as 136 MPs voted for the bill, 89 voted against it, and 11 abstained.

The previous version of the bill was amended after the Guardian Council announced that there were some mistakes in the document. The newly passed bill, which was approved despite the criticism of some lawmakers, still needs to be approved by the Guardian Council to be signed into law.

According to a report by Jam-e-Jam Online, the final approval of the Palermo Convention bill will allow Iran to join the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

The UNTOC, adopted by the UN General Assembly in November 2000, along with its protocols, is the main international instrument in the fight against transnational organized crime.

States that ratify this instrument commit themselves to taking a series of measures against transnational organized crime.

As per the convention, the signatories commit to follow outside orders regarding domestic criminal offences, such participation in an organized criminal group, money laundering, corruption and obstruction of justice.

They should also adopt new and sweeping frameworks for extradition, mutual legal assistance and law enforcement cooperation.