

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – The number of the U.S. drone strikes on Libya, since the start of its campaign in the North African nation in 2011, reportedly exceeds the number of U.S. airstrikes since 2001 in Yemen, Pakistan or Somalia, media reported. “Our Predators shot 243 Hellfire missiles in the six months of OUP [NATO Operation Unified Protector], over 20 percent of the total of all Hellfires expended in the 14 years of the system’s deployment,” retired Lt. Col. Gary Peppers, the commander of the 324th Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron during the OUP, told The Intercept. The findings were made by the Intercept media outlet and Italy’s La Repubblica newspaper after carrying out an investigation, based on interviews with U.S. military officials and an analysis of open-source data.

# Kayhan International

MOSCOW (AP) – Syrian President Bashar Assad has told a Russian television station that he thinks it would be pointless to have talks with the United States. Fragments of the interview with the NTV station appeared on a messaging app site of Assad’s office, Russian state news agency Tass reported Friday. In it, Assad said “Negotiations with the U.S. now will not lead to anything, it’s an empty waste of time. We are not going to talk to Americans just because they are Americans.” “We are ready to talk to anyone with whom we can achieve results, but we consider that U.S. policy will not change in the future,” he was quoted as saying.

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## OPEC Agrees to ‘Nominally’ Increase Production

VIENNA (Dispatches) – OPEC ministers agreed on Friday to boost output by about 600,000 barrels a day, according to people familiar with the matter, moving more modestly than many producers had hoped to curb higher oil prices.

A meeting of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries ended Friday afternoon in Austria. Ministers went into the meeting with an official, nominal target for boosting production by one million barrels a day, split between OPEC members and a group of non-OPEC allies, led by Russia. They agreed on that nominal increase.

Each country will in theory share out a portion of that one million barrel boost, but some countries can’t raise production at all right now. That will reduce the one million barrels a day into something closer to 600,000 real barrels hitting markets.

That is less than what some participants had wanted. Russia was pushing for 1.5 million barrels a day of extra oil.

The 600,000 barrels a day of new oil amounts to just about a half percent of global demand. It is also less than what some traders had expected.

The deal announced at a press conference in Vienna is aimed at easing fears of a global supply crunch and helping to bring down prices that had spiked by as much as 20% this year.

Suhail Mohammed Faraj Al Mazrouei, the energy minister of the United Arab Emirates, said that OPEC would increase its output to the maximum allowed under the terms of a 2016 production agreement.

Iranian Minister of Petroleum Bijan Zangeneh and Saudi counterpart Khalid al-Falih held talks in Vienna just before the OPEC group met to decide on policy, the Shana news service reported. “We are cooking something,” Zangeneh told reporters after meeting the Saudi energy minister.

The Friday morning meeting came after Zangeneh on Thursday abruptly walked out of a meeting chaired by Falih, saying that the discussions had not gone well and doubting whether OPEC could reach any consensus. Saudi Arabia is pushing for a hike in oil output, putting the fate

of an 18-month-old supply-cut deal between OPEC members and allied countries credited with clearing a global oil glut and lifting crude prices in jeopardy.

The Saudi push is viewed as a bid to appease the United States which is on course to reimpose sanctions on the Islamic Republic, including on its oil sales.

Riyadh has said it is ready “to mitigate the effects of any supply shortages” from US sanctions on Iran’s oil.

Saudi Arabia is reportedly under pressure from its U.S. ally to open the spigots as Trump hopes for lower pump prices ahead of November’s mid-term elections.

Zangeneh, speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a Vienna seminar earlier this week, accused Trump of trying to politicize OPEC and said it was U.S. sanctions on Iran and Venezuela that had helped push up prices.

Reuters, quoting unnamed OPEC sources, said Iran had demanded that U.S. sanctions be mentioned in the group’s post-meeting communiqué.

Zangeneh has insisted the members don’t overstep their quotas and infringe on the market share of Venezuela and Iran.

The 14-nation OPEC and its 10 non-member partner nations, known as OPEC+, are in the midst of an agreement that runs through the end of the year, under which they have trimmed production by 1.8 million barrels per day.

Saudi Arabia claims that production restraints and geopolitical factors have actually seen output fall by far more, to around 2.8 million bpd.

Reports said the Saudi proposal, backed by Russia, would allow several hundred thousand more barrels of oil to come to the market without amending the milestone pact -- paving the way for a face-saving compromise with Iran.

But Iraqi Oil Minister Jabbar al-Luaibi suggested it was far from a done deal, stating that the proposal was not approved by “everybody”.

OPEC needs the agreement of all members to clinch a deal and Iran’s potential veto has support from Iraq and Venezuela.

Zangeneh also said on Friday OPEC would change the structure of the current deal, but did not elaborate.

## JCPOA in ICU, Iran May Pull Out of Deal



Senior Iranian diplomat Abbas Araqchi has said Iran might withdraw from the landmark nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA.

VIENNA (Dispatches) – Iran has warned it might withdraw from the 2015 nuclear deal in the coming weeks, saying the multinational agreement is now in the “intensive care unit.”

“I told the conference today it is in the intensive care unit because it has lost its balance as a result of U.S. withdrawal from the deal,” Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi told Euronews.

“So, if Europeans and other remaining participants of the JCPOA are interested that Iran remains in the deal, they should compensate for the absence of

the U.S. and the reimposition of U.S. sanctions,” he said in Vienna where he was for talks about the fate of the deal.

President Donald Trump walked out of the deal, which was signed between Iran and the P5+1 group of nations -- the U.S., the UK, France, China, Russia and Germany.

Trump pledged to re-impose all anti-Iran sanctions lifted as part of the deal and institute “the highest level of economic” bans against Iran.

The Europeans are scrambling to protect their businesses from

new American sanctions, with Washington warning to punish all foreign companies that engage in trade with Iran after the end of a three-month period to leave the country.

Russia and China have reaffirmed their support for the deal, stressing that they would continue to do business with Iran.

The UK, France and Germany have, however, failed to make a decision that guarantees the deal’s future and protects their financial interests in Iran.

“What matters for us is the dividends of the deal. So, we don’t

care how Europeans would protect their companies but we care that their companies work with us,” Araqchi said.

He urged the Europeans to guarantee that Iran’s oil will be completely sold after the sanctions and the banking channels to receive the money will remain in place.

“We care that Iran’s crude oil should be sold and the money should come back, so there should be banking channels,” he said.

“How they create them, it is up to the Europeans. Now that ‘few weeks’ are almost over or is going to be over very soon,” Araqchi added.

Noting that the European countries didn’t have much time, Araqchi said there was still hope for a solution to salvage the JCPOA.

“I cannot say that the prospect is bright and clear that we can have a good package, but we are still waiting and keep hoping that the package could be good enough to stay in the deal.”

On May 8, the U.S. president pulled his country out of the JCPOA, which was achieved in Vienna in 2015 after years of negotiations.

Following the U.S. exit, Iran and the remaining parties launched talks to save the accord.

Meanwhile, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has underlined that any decision to keep the JCPOA running without the U.S. should be conditional on “practical guarantees” from the Europeans.

## ‘U.S. Training Terrorists in 19 Camps in Syria’

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – The Pentagon is training dozens of terrorists at 19 military camps inside war-ravaged Syria, a military expert at a diplomatic school run by the Russian Foreign Ministry says.

The camps were receiving weapons, munitions, fuel, food and other supplies from 22 U.S. military bases outside Syria, and that Americans were training terrorists at their al-Tanf military base in the south of Syria, Vladimir Kuzin with the prestigious Moscow State Institute of International Relations told RT Arabic television news network.

He added that the U.S. military had closed the airspace over this region within a radius of 50 kilometers, without

obtaining any approval from the Damascus government.

Kuzin then pointed out that Washington’s military and technical support to terrorist and armed groups was in contravention of the UN Charter, and contradicted agreements to stop the escalation of the Syrian crisis.

He stressed that Washington supported terrorists in a bid to maintain its influence in the political and military arenas of Syria.

Late last year, Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces General Valery Gerasimov told Russia’s Komsomolskaya Pravda daily in an exclusive interview that the U.S. had turned its military (Continued on Page 7)

## Trump’s Tariff War With World Intensifies

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted another tariff threat Friday, this time targeting imported autos from the European Union.

The president said on his feed that if the EU does not remove duties on U.S. cars, then the U.S. will have no choice but to act.

The threat comes just two days after Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said no decision had been made on whether the U.S. would extend the volley of tariffs it has imposed on other goods to the automobile industry.

Trump’s tweet rippled through the financial markets. The president has railed against unfair tariffs slapped on U.S. goods in

other countries and has vowed to reduce the trade deficit the country has with other nations, particularly China.

China escalated its war of words with the U.S. over trade tariffs with the country’s commerce ministry warning that the interests of U.S. workers and farmers would be hurt by what it described as Washington’s desire to brandish “big sticks.”

Ministry spokesman Gao Feng accused Washington of trying to “blackmail” Beijing by threatening to impose further tariffs on Chinese products.

He said Beijing was not hopeful about negotiations with the U.S. because the U.S. government – as he put it – was being (Continued on Page 7)