

BEIRUT (Reuters) – Lebanese army preparations for an Independence Day parade next week brought parts of Beirut to a standstill on Friday, as road closures caused delays lasting hours for many of the capital's commuters. A huge traffic jam stretching far out of the city snarled up the main coastal highway - the chief road running from north from the capital - and caused chaos in the districts alongside. Even by Beirut's congested standards, Friday's gridlock was exceptional. Television stations ran live coverage, including comments of angry motorists - some in very colorful language.

*If you overpower your enemy, then pardon him by way of thankfulness to Allah, for being able to subdue him.*

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

## 'Saudi Paused Raids on Yemen's Hudaydah to Buy Time'

SANAA (Dispatches) – A pause in Saudi airstrikes against Hudaydah is not a submission to international pressure but a bid to buy time and reinforce the military strength for a fresh offensive, a Houthis spokesman says.

"In every round of aggression against Yemen, the escalation begins and then dies down, mostly without declaring a truce," Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdulsalam wrote in a tweet.

"Given the recent developments in the battle on the ground, the aggressive coalition is trying to pretend that it has halted its attacks [on Hudaydah] in response to global pressure or to allow the dispatch of humanitarian aid, but that's a big lie," he said.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have deployed about 10,000 new troops to Yemen's west coast after repeated campaigns to seize Hudaydah were thwarted by Houthis and their allies in the Yemeni army.

The invaders have hit a stiff wall of resistance put up by the city's protectors who have pushed back the militants and mercenaries.

The truth, Abdulsalam said, "is that the coalition is preparing for a new round of aggression, which



Saudi-backed militants patrol a road as smoke billows in the port of Hudaydah.

needs additional time."

Meanwhile, U.S. President Donald Trump's Republican allies in the House of Representatives have blocked a vote on a measure that sought to end Washington's support for Saudi Arabia's brutal war on Yemen.

The still Republican-led lower chamber of Congress voted 201-187 on Wednesday afternoon to approve a rule for floor debate on a bill that aimed to take the gray wolf off the endanger species list.

Also included in the measure, however, was an unrelated clause that barred debate on the U.S. mil-

itary's involvement in the conflict.

The House Rules committee snuck the extraordinary clause in the wildlife bill on Tuesday, in order to block voting on a resolution by Democratic Representative Ro Khanna which invoked the 1973 War Powers Resolution to "remove U.S. armed forces from hostilities in the Republic of Yemen that have not been authorized by Congress".

Since it was introduced under the War Powers Resolution, Khanna's measure should have had privileged status meaning the committee could not hold it up by the ma-

majority for more than 15 days and after that the measure had to be subject to floor vote.

Furthermore, the European Parliament (EP) says the European Union's arms exports to Saudi Arabia are stoking the deadly war on Yemen, calling for sanctions on the countries that refuse to respect the EU's rules on weapons sales.

"In Yemen, European weapons are fundamentally responsible for the war taking place," German EU lawmaker Sabine Losing, who is leading efforts to hold EU governments accountable, said on Wednesday.

EU lawmakers said that arms sales to Saudi Arabia by EU member states undermined the European arms export control effort, calling for tougher checks on the bloc's sales of weapons.

The EU's Common Position on arms exports includes eight criteria that governments must apply when deciding on an arms export license. The lawmakers said arms sales to Saudi Arabia violated six out of the eight criteria.

"The Common Position on arms exports must be implemented effectively. That includes, among others, a sanctions mechanism," Losing said.

## Zionist PM to Take Over as War Minister



Palestinians run for cover from tear gas fired by Zionist troops in the southern Gaza Strip on November 9, 2018.

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) – Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will take over the war ministry portfolio in his regime after war minister Avigdor Lieberman resigned this week, a spokesman for his Likud Party said on Friday, fuelling speculation of an early election.

Earlier Netanyahu met with key coalition partner Naftali Bennett of the Jewish Home Party who had sought the post for himself, but the two men emerged without an agreement.

Netanyahu's right-wing coalition cabinet was rocked by Lieberman's resignation on Wednesday in protest at a ceasefire reached between the regime and the Hamas resistance movement in the Gaza Strip.

After Bennett and Netanyahu's meeting, a spokesman for the PM's Likud Party said that for now Netanyahu would take over the defense portfolio himself.

The political leader of the Hamas resistance movement says Lieberman's resignation in the aftermath of an Egypt-brokered truce with Gaza constitutes "an admission of defeat" and a "political victory" for the Palestinian resistance in the besieged territory.

Head of Hamas Political Bureau Ismail Haniyeh made the remarks hours after Lieberman stepped down from his post in protest at Tel Aviv's ceasefire with Gaza-based

resistance factions only days after the regime sparked the worst flare-up of violence in the coastal enclave since its 2014 war there.

"We achieved a political victory with the resignation," Haniyeh told Lebanon's al-Mayadeen TV channel. "Lieberman's resignation announcement is an admission of defeat for him and the usurping entity."

The resignation followed an Israeli commando raid and a spate of deadly airstrikes against Gaza, which triggered retaliatory rocket attacks by Palestinian resistance groups into the southern parts of the occupied territories.

Lieberman cited "differences" with Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu – who had backed the truce -- as the reason for his departure.

He described the truce as "a capitulation to terror" and pulled his political party out of the coalition administration in Tel Aviv, a move that left Netanyahu with a single-seat parliamentary majority and could bring about early elections in the occupied land.

Netanyahu, however, tried to defend his decision to accept the truce and said, "In times of emergency, when making decisions crucial to security, the public can't always be privy to the considerations that must be hidden from the enemy."

## Washington Discusses Plan to Create 'Arab NATO' With Qatar

DOHA (Press TV) – U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo meets with Qatari Defense Minister Khalid al-Attiyah in Washington over a U.S. plan to create a NATO-like Arab military alliance as Washington pushes for an end to a diplomatic rift between Doha and a Saudi-led quartet in favor of an alliance against Iran.

U.S. State Department said in a press release on Wednesday that Pompeo and al-Attiyah "discussed working toward a Middle East Strategic Alliance, anchored by a united [P]GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council), to advance prosperity, security, and stability in the region."

Prior to U.S. President Donald Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia last year, reports said he was expected to lay out his vision for what White House officials called an "Arab NATO," com-

prised of six Persian Gulf Arab countries, Egypt and Jordan.

The goal of creating such an alliance is said to be countering the growing influence of Iran in the Middle East.

Informed sources said in July that Washington would play an organizing and supporting role while staying outside the anti-Iran alliance.

Additionally, sources from some of the Arab countries involved in the planned alliance confirmed, back then, renewed efforts to activate the initiative.

However, a diplomatic standoff between Qatar and a Saudi-led quartet of countries seems to have already hampered the formation of the so-called "Arab NATO."

One of the informed sources said the U.S. administration was concerned the Qatar rift could

be an obstacle to the Arab alliance plan.

In June 2017, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, and the UAE imposed a land, naval and air blockade on import-dependent Qatar, accusing Doha of supporting terrorism, an allegation strongly denied by Doha.

The Saudi-led bloc presented Qatar with a list of demands – among them cutting ties with Iran and Turkey -- and gave it an ultimatum to comply with them or face consequences. Doha, however, refused to meet the demands and stressed that it would not abandon its independent foreign policy.

At that time, Bruce Riedel, a former CIA, Pentagon, and NSC staffer, said the dispute had damaged the prospect for the anti-Iran alliance.

The concept of an "Arab

NATO" is now "falling apart," he said, adding that Riyadh's aim was actually a "regime change in Qatar."

During their meeting in Washington, Pompeo and Attiyah "re-affirmed their commitment to the strong bilateral relationship between the United States and Qatar, as well as their mutual interest in promoting security and stability in the region."

The two officials also discussed an ongoing project to expand Qatar's al-Udeid Airbase, Washington's already largest military base in the Middle East region.

The project to expand the base, which hosts more than 10,000 US and coalition forces, was launched in July.

The facility also houses warplanes, equipment, and ammunition.

## Following Latest Escalation of Violence

## Zionist Regime Expands Gaza Fishing Zone

GAZA STRIP (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime's navy has expanded the Palestinian fishing zone off the northern portion of the Gaza Strip as the latest spate of the regime's military aggression against the besieged coastal enclave saw 14 people killed and several others injured in 48 hours.

The development came following the latest escalation of violence by the Tel Aviv regime against the coastal enclave in which Israeli airstrikes and shells reduced Palestinian buildings to rubble and sent fireballs and plumes of smoke into the sky.

Nizar Ayyash, secretary of the Gaza fisher-

men's syndicate, said in a statement that Zionist troops allowed Palestinian fishermen to carry out their fishing work within six nautical miles in northern Gaza and nine nautical miles in southern Gaza.

On Wednesday, Zionist naval forces killed a fisherman after opening fire on a Palestinian fishing boat northwest of the coast of Beit Lahia city, located about five kilometers north of Gaza City.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society said the fishermen, identified as 23-year-old Nawaf Ahmed al-Attar, was taken to hospital in a critical condition, and succumbed to the grave

gunshot wounds he had suffered in his abdomen shortly afterwards.

According to Palestinian estimates, roughly 50,000 Gazans earn their living from fishing.

The fishing zone is supposed to extend to 20 nautical miles under the Oslo Accords. The Oslo Accords were signed between the regime and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) during the early-mid 1990s to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Over the past few years, Zionist troops have carried out more than a hundred attacks on Palestinian boats, arresting dozens of fishermen and confiscating several boats.

## U.S. Allows \$300mn Arms Sale to Bahrain

MANAMA (Dispatches) – The Bahraini regime on Friday welcomed a decision of the U.S. Senate that rejected to block on an arms sale worth around 300 million U.S. dollars to the kingdom.

The Bahraini Foreign Affairs Ministry said the U.S. Senate's decision reflects the strong ties between the two nations.

U.S. Senator Rand Paul managed to secure a vote to proceed with a resolution to block the sale of weapons to Bahrain, which is a member of the Saudi-led coalition fighting Houthis in Yemen.

However, on Thursday, the White House issued a veto threat against the Bahrain resolution, saying the sales of 120 Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System pods and 110 Army Tactical Missile System pods are intended to defend Bahrain.

Bahrain is home to the Fifth Fleet that has over 7,800 U.S. navy personnel.

The kingdom signed an agree-

ment with a U.S. aerospace manufacturer to buy 12 twin-engine attack helicopters after the Senate voted down a draft resolution to block arms sales.

The agreement with Bell Helicopter Textron Inc. for the purchase of the AH-1Z Viper aircraft is worth \$912 million, the official Bahrain News Agency reported.

The first batch of the aircraft will be delivered to Bahrain by the end of 2022.

The contract came amid continuing criticism of the regime of a 2011-present crackdown it has been carrying out against peaceful protesters, and its ongoing membership of a Saudi Arabian-led coalition, which has been bombing Yemen for more than three years.

The war, which seeks to restore Yemen's former Saudi-allied officials, has killed upwards of 15,000 people, according to Yemen's Health Ministry, although various other reports put the death toll far higher.