

‘U.S. Using Daesh Terrorists to Attack Iraqi Forces’

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – The U.S. military forces stationed in occupied bases in al-Anbar province use the Daesh terrorists in disguise of ordinary people to target the Iraqi forces in desert areas of the region.

Head of Badr Organization’s Office in al-Anbar Qusai al-Anbari was quoted by the Arabic-language al-Ma’aloumeh news website as saying that the U.S. forces deployed in Ein al-Assad and al-Habaniyeh bases in al-Anbar deserts in Western Iraq are using a new method to attack the Iraqi security forces.

He added that they disguise the ISIL terrorists as shepherds and tribesmen to launch on against the Iraqi security forces, Hashd al-Shaabi (Iraqi popular forces) and civilians in al-Anbar desert.



In this file picture, members of the Iraqi security forces arrest a number of men they suspect of being affiliated with the Daesh terrorist group.

Al-Anbari said that the U.S. forces have even prepared livestock

them as shepherds. The head of Badr organization’s office in al-Anbar province

had also last month warned of the American forces’ suspicious moves in the Western deserts of the province, saying that the U.S. was aiding the terrorists stationed in the region.

Al-Ma’aloumeh quoted al-Anbari as saying at the time that the Americans were assisting a terrorist group called Ghosts of Desert in desert areas of al-Anbar, adding that they had been airdropping foodstuff packages for the Daesh from helicopters hovering over the region in the past few days.

He also warned that the U.S. army was training hundreds of Daesh terrorists in al-Anbar province after relocating them from Syria to Iraq to prepare them for a new round of insecurities in the country.

Syrian Kurdish Forces to Hand 15 Daesh-Affiliated Russians to Moscow

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – The Kurdish-led so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) will hand over 15 Russian nationals, who are families of Daesh terrorists, to the Russian government within the next few hours, a war monitor reported Sunday.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the Russians were captured during the SDF operations against the Daesh in the eastern Euphrates River region.

People of several foreign nationalities, including French and British citizens, were among the Daesh family members who surrendered to the SDF in east-

ern Syria. The SDF succeeded in dislodging the Daesh from its last redoubt in eastern Syria last month.

Thousands of people, mainly Daesh terrorists and their families, have surrendered to the SDF and been taken to the al-Hol camp in the Kurdish-controlled part of Hasakah Province in northeastern Syria.

In an earlier development, more than two dozen women and children from the Izadi minority group have been repatriated to Iraq’s northern province of Nineveh after years of captivity at the hands of Daesh ter-

rorists in neighboring Syria. “Today, we will hand over 25 people -- 10 women and 15 children -- to the Izadi Council in Sinjar,” Ziyad Rustam, an official with a Kurdish-run group that reunites rescued Izadi children with their relatives, told AFP on Saturday, adding, “They will be sent to their families.”

The SDF last month announced the defeat of Daesh after tens of thousands of people streamed out of the last vestige of the terror group’s territorial rule in the eastern Syrian village of Baghouz near the Iraqi border.

The media bureau of Iraqi pro-government Popular Mobilization Units – better known by the Arabic name Hashd al-Sha’abi – announced in a statement on March 12 that a dozen Izadi children had been reunited with their families after a delicate intelligence operation.

On March 2, a group of Izadi women and children, who had been freed a week earlier from the clutches of Daesh terrorists, were reunited with their families in Iraq.

Overjoyed families met their loved ones at a rural truck stop on the road linking Sinjar to Dohuk city.

‘Egypt, Zionist Regime Inch Closer to Resolving Gas Arbitration’

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime’s energy minister said on Sunday that an arbitration case with Egypt over a defunct natural gas deal could be solved in the coming months, but that the issue was not holding back cooperation in the sector.

In 2015, the International Chamber of Commerce ordered Egypt to pay regime-owned Israel Electric Corp about \$1.8 billion in compensation after a deal to export gas to the occupied territories via pipeline collapsed in 2012 due to attacks by militants in Egypt’s Sinai peninsula.

Egypt appealed the decision and a final agreement has yet to be reached, though earlier this month Israel Electric said they were close to reaching an agreement in which Egypt would pay it \$500 million over eight and a half years.

“I think there is already a final understanding, but it needs approval of the Israeli electric authority and maybe also of someone on the Egyptian side,” Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz said in an interview with Reuters. “Probably it’s an issue of a few months.”

Egypt had once sold gas to the Zionist regime, but the deal was termi-

nated by Egypt’s state-run gas company EGAS following the ouster of the country’s dictator Hosni Mubarak in 2011.

Cairo has also been accused of acting as the regime’s proxy in maintaining Tel Aviv’s years-long blockade on the Palestinian territory of the Gaza Strip.

Relations between Cairo and Tel Aviv have improved since the 2013 toppling of Egypt’s first democratically-elected president Mohamed Morsi.

Jordan and Egypt are the only two Arab states to have full diplomatic ties with the regime, but the relations remain limited and taboo among the general populations.

The last time a Zionist minister visited Egypt was in November 2017 when Social Equality Minister Gila Gamliel took part in a conference on the promotion of gender equality in Mediterranean states.

Relations between the regime and some Arab countries have warmed in recent months, with Zionist ministers last year visiting the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

Israeli Lawmakers Mull Switching to Presidential System to Save Netanyahu

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Zionist PM Benjamin Netanyahu’s allies in the Knesset are reportedly considering modifying the political system to that of a presidential one as a means of saving the PM from criminal prosecution, Channel 13 news reported.

According to the report, a fundamental change of the political system would ease legislation that will prevent legal action against Netanyahu, who is currently facing indictment on three corruption charges.

However, the report does not state how exactly switching to presidential governance would ease the lawmaking process or who raised this option in the Knesset.

The Times of Israel report notes, however, that there was speculation that, following his victory in the parliamentary election this week, Netanyahu may condition his reen-

try into the new government on the adoption of a so-called French Law, legislation that would shelter him from criminal prosecution for as long as he remains the prime minister.

“Netanyahu has publicly given mixed signals about whether he will seek such legislation,” the report says.

On Wednesday, Likud lawmaker Miki Zohar argued that Israeli prosecutors should drop charges against the prime minister, suggesting that indicting the newly-elected PM would amount to subverting the will of the people.

The prime minister is currently facing three separate cases, known as case 1000, 2000 and 4000.

Case 1000 accuses Netanyahu of receiving gifts and benefits from billionaire benefac-

tors in exchange for political favors. Case 2000 accuses the PM of conspiring with the Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper so as to weaken a rival daily in exchange for favorable political coverage for Netanyahu.

Case 4000 — the most serious — accuses Netanyahu of making “advanced regulatory decision” that benefitted the controlling shareholder of the telecom giant Bezeq: Shaul Elovitch. Elovitch’s alleged illicit gains amount to hundreds of millions of dollars in exchange for positive coverage of Netanyahu by Elovitch’s Walla news site, according to The Times of Israel.

In February, Tel Aviv Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit announced his intention to indict Netanyahu on all three cases with charges of breach of trust, fraud and bribery.

Iran... (Continued From Page One)

Earlier this week, Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi said Iraq had tried in vain to stop the U.S. blacklisting of the IRGC. He warned that the measure could have “negative impacts on Iraq and the entire region.”

A senior IRGC commander on Saturday blasted the United States for the “foolish decision”.

Brigadier General Hossein Salami said the U.S. itself is a main sponsor of terrorism and has always supported tortures around the world despite laying claims on democracy.

Salami, the second-in-command of the IRGC, said Iran has been a victim of terrorism since the victory of Islamic Revolution in the country in 1979.

General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic General Muhammad Hussein Baqeri has vowed that Iran will “spare no effort” in fighting “terrorist” American forces operating in West Asia region.

U.S.... (Continued From Page One)

normal relationships with a country that has not behaved normally over the last few years,” Dunford said. “There are major issues that affect our bilateral relationship that have to be addressed, to include where Russia has violated international laws, norms and standards.”

Dunford said he speaks regularly with Gerasimov, his Russian counterpart, and the two sides talk on other levels.

“I’m satisfied right now with our military-to-military communication to maintain a degree of transparency that mitigates the risk of miscalculation,” he said. “I think we have a framework within to manage a crisis, should one occur, at the senior military-to-military level.”

James Stavridis, a retired Navy admiral who was the top NATO commander in Europe from 2009 to 2013, says the West must confront Russia where necessary, including on its interventions in Ukraine and Syria. But he believes there room for cooperation on multiple fronts, including the Arctic and arms control.

“We are in danger of stumbling backward into a Cold War that is to no one’s advantage,” he said in an email exchange. “Without steady, political-level engagement between the defense establishments, the risk of a true new Cold War rises steadily.”

No one is predicting a deliberate Russian act of war in Europe, but the decline in regular talks is a worry to many.

Moscow says it is ready to talk.

“Russia remains open for interaction aimed at de-escalating tension, restoring mutual trust, preventing any misinterpretations of one another’s intentions, and reducing the risk of dangerous incidents,” the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement last week in response to NATO’s 70th anniversary celebration.

Sam Nunn, who served in the Senate as a Democrat from Georgia from 1972 to 1997, argues that dialogue with Russia is too important to set aside, even if it carries domestic political risk.

“You can’t call time out,” he said in an interview. “The nuclear issues go on, and they’re getting more dangerous.”

Nunn co-wrote an opinion piece with former Secretary of State George Shultz and former Defense Secretary William Perry arguing that the U.S. and its allies and Russia are caught in a “policy paralysis” that could lead to a military confrontation and potentially the first use of nuclear weapons since the U.S. bombed Japan in August 1945.

“A bold policy shift is needed,”

they wrote in the Wall Street Journal on Thursday, “to support a strategic re-engagement with Russia and walk back from this perilous precipice. Otherwise, our nations may soon be entrenched in a nuclear standoff more precarious, disorienting and economically costly than the Cold War.”

A group of U.S., Canadian, European and Russian security experts and former officials in February issued a call for talks with Russia on crisis management.

“The risks of mutual misunderstanding and unintended signals that stem from an absence of dialogue relating to crisis management ... are real,” the Euro-Atlantic Security Leadership Group said in a statement.

It said this could lead to conventional war with Russia or, in a worst case scenario, “the potential for nuclear threats, or even nuclear use, where millions could be killed in minutes.”

Unpredictable... (Continued From Page One)

Iran exported 1.70 million barrels per day (bpd) of oil in March, the highest since October when shipments fell to 1.08 million bpd, data from shipping sources compiled by S&P Global Platts showed on Tuesday.

According to the energy and commodities information provider, Iran’s exports volumes have recovered by 60% since November, “surprising many on the market.”

That is because November was the month when U.S. President Donald Trump’s most extensive sanctions ever went into effect against Iran’s oil industry.

Trump eventually aims to halt Iranian oil exports, choking off Tehran’s main source of revenue.

OPEC and its allies meet in June to decide whether to continue withholding supply. Saudi Arabia is considered keen to keep cutting, sources within the group said it could raise output from July if disruptions continue elsewhere.

The producer group’s supply cuts have been aimed largely at offsetting record crude production in the United States.

French... (Continued From Page 2)

Initially dubbed the SPV, France, Germany and the UK ultimately set up INSTEX on January 31 following the U.S. withdrawal from the deal with Iran in 2018 to help Tehran with limited trade despite U.S. sanctions.

Iran has also set up its own parallel mechanism, the Special Trade, and Finance Institute (STFI). The two trade vehicles are planned to work in tandem, avoiding the use of the U.S. dollar and traditional banking transactions.

On Sunday, Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif complained that the EU was dragging its feet on bringing the non-dollar direct payment channel with Tehran into operation, saying the Europeans now have “no excuse” for further postponement of the project.

The Europeans introduced INSTEX as “a preliminary measure”, Zarif said, adding they “lagging behind” in fulfilling their commitments. The EU “should not believe that the Islamic Republic will continue to wait for them,” he added.

“I wonder how much time do the Europeans need to set up a preliminary mechanism?” he said.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has repeatedly called INSTEX a “meaningless” measure and “a bitter joke,” adding that “Europeans should have stood up to the U.S. after it left the JCPOA and should have lifted all sanctions against Iran.”

Dismissing the new EU initiative, Ayatollah Khamenei insisted that Europe has practically pulled out of the nuclear agreement with Iran and betrayed the Islamic Republic.