

Projectiles Hit Near U.S. Air Force Base in Iraq

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – At least five shells have struck a military base housing U.S. troops in Iraq’s northern province of Nineveh, the Iraqi military says.

The attack took place late on Friday when the shells landed on al-Qayyarah air base in south of the provincial capital city of Mosul, the media office affiliated with the Iraqi Joint Operations Command said in a statement.

There were no human or material casualties by the attack, the statement claimed.

The attack came a week after thousands of demonstrators took to the streets in Baghdad



American armored vehicles are seen at the Qayyarah military base in Nineveh Province, about 60 kilometers (35 miles) south of the northern Iraqi city of Mosul.

upon the request of the Iraqi prominent Shia leader Moqta-

da al-Sadr, in which he called for a scheduled withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq through peaceful means.

The Iraqi parliament passed a resolution requiring the government to end the presence of foreign forces in Iraq on Jan. 5, two days after a U.S. drone strike assassinated Iranian top commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy chief of Iraq’s popular Hashd Sha’abi forces.

Over 5,000 U.S. troops have been deployed in Iraq.

Scores of Palestinians Injured in Attacks by Zionist Troops

GAZA STRIP (Dispatches) – Zionist troops have attacked Palestinians taking part in protests against U.S. President Donald Trump’s plan on the Zionist-Palestinian conflict seen favoring the regime in the occupied West Bank, leaving tens of them injured.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society reported that 48

Palestinians were injured during clashes that erupted with Zionist troops in the cities of Tubas, Nablus, Qalqilya, Ar-aha, and Ramallah on Friday.

According to the statement, some of the wounded were hit by rubber-coated bullets while others suffered suffocation due to inhaling the tear gas fired by Zionist troops.

The clashes erupted as Zionist troops fired bullets and tear gas to disperse the demonstrators who took to the streets on Friday to protest against Trump’s so-called peace plan. The protesters responded by throwing rocks at the Zionist troops and setting tires on fire.

Trump unveiled the plan

alongside Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House on Tuesday.

The so-called “Deal of the Century” would, among other contentious things, enshrine al-Quds as “Israel’s undivided capital” and allow the regime to annex settlements in the occupied West Bank and the Jordan Valley.

After Welcoming U.S. Mideast Plan

India Hails ‘Strong’ Ties With Zionist Regime

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) – India has hailed relations with the Zionist regime as “very strong” days after it urged Palestinians to consider a contentious U.S.-devised Middle East plan.

In a tweet posted in Hebrew language, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his satisfaction with New Delhi’s cooperation with the occupying regime of Israel.

“Thank you very much, my friend Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. India-Israel relations are very strong... We share common values,” Modi tweeted in response to his Zionist counterpart’s congratulation on the 28th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between India and the regime.

“Today, 28 years ago, Israel and India established formal diplomatic relations. I congratulate my friend Narendra Modi for his warm friendship. Between Israel and India, a deep friendship has emerged that is evident in our many collaborations,” the Zionist premier tweeted on Wednesday.

Netanyahu had also attached to his tweet an image of himself talking to Modi in shallow waters.

The exchange of pleasantries between Modi and Netanyahu came days after India called on Palestinian to consider U.S. President Donald Trump’s self-proclaimed “deal of the century,” which all Palestinian groups have unanimously rejected.

Indian Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar also underlined the need for “direct negotiations” between the Palestinians and the Zionists.

“We urge the parties to engage with each other, including on the recent proposals put forward by the United States, and find an acceptable two-state solution for peaceful coexistence. We will continue to follow developments in the region and engage with the parties concerned,” he said.

Trump released his proposed deal during an event at the White House alongside Netanyahu in Washington on Tuesday. The Palestinians were not involved in the scheme’s development.

The so-called ‘Vision for Peace’ largely meets the regime’s demands in the decades-old conflict while creating a Palestinian state with limited control over its own security and borders.

Over Coronavirus

Iraq’s Erbil Airport Denies Entry to Three Chinese

ERBIL (Dispatches) – Erbil International Airport in the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq has denied entry to three Chinese citizens over fears about the coronavirus outbreak in China, authorities say.

The three passengers were sent back to Dubai, from where they had flown to Erbil, a statement from Kurdistan’s airport authority said.

Several countries tightened travel curbs on Friday, a day after the World Health Organization declared a global health emergency.

Iraq’s Basra International Airport said on Friday it was denying entry to passengers of any nationality traveling to Iraq from China.

Originating in the Chinese city of Wuhan, the flu-like virus first identified earlier in January has resulted in 213 deaths in China,

according to local health authorities. Wuhan and the surrounding region of Hubei are in virtual quarantine.

More than 9,800 people have been infected in China and more than 130 cases reported in at least 25 other countries and regions, with Russia, Britain, Sweden and Italy all reporting their first cases on Thursday or Friday.

World...

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flights between the United States and China. Other carriers including British Airways, Finnair and Hong Kong’s Cathay Pacific also have canceled or cut back service to mainland China. Vietnam suspended all flights to China.

The U.S. order followed a travel advisory for Americans to consider leaving China. Japan and Germany also advised against non-essential travel to China and Britain did as well, except for Hong Kong and Macao.

A plane carrying Indians from Wuhan landed Saturday in New Delhi. The government said they would be quarantined in a nearby city, Manesar. Sri Lanka also pulled out 33 more of its citizens and promised to bring out the remaining 204 students.

A special flight brought 312 Bangladeshis back from Wuhan, including eight who were hospitalized with high temperatures. The government says about 5,000 Bangladeshis study in China.

A Turkish military transport carrying 42 people left Wuhan for Ankara on Saturday. They reportedly showed no signs of infection.

The Kremlin said starting Saturday, Russian air force planes will be used to evacuate Russians from areas of China most seriously affected by the virus.

Germany’s defense minister said a plane taking 102 citizens back to Germany was refused permission to land and refuel in Moscow due to what the Russians said was lack of capacity and had to divert to Helsinki.

An EU evacuation flight from Wuhan was scheduled for Saturday.

South Korea’s second evacuation flight landed in Seoul with 330 people from Wuhan. They were to be screened for fever before being taken to two quarantine centers.

South Korea also reported its 12th virus case, which appeared to be a human-to-human transmission.

At least 24 countries have reported cases since China informed WHO about the new virus in late December.

The death rate in China is falling but the number of confirmed cases will keep growing because there are thousands of specimens from suspected cases yet to be tested, WHO’s Galea said.

“The case fatality ratio is settling out at a much lower level than we were reporting three, now four, weeks ago,” he said.

Both the new virus and SARS are from the coronavirus family, which also includes those that cause the common cold. Experts say there is evidence the new virus is spreading among people in China.

Although scientists expect to see limited transmission of the virus between people with family or other close contact, they are concerned about cases of infection spreading to people who might have less exposure.

In Japan, a tour guide and bus driver became infected after escorting two tour groups from Wuhan. The country reported four new cases, including a woman in her 20s who worked on the same tour bus, and another person who was asymptomatic, for a total of 20.

In Germany, five employees of a German auto parts supplier became ill after a Chinese colleague visited, including two who had no direct contact with the woman. She showed no symptoms until her flight back to China. On Friday, Germany confirmed a sixth case, a child of one of the people already infected.

Vietnam confirmed one more case for a total of six, and Australia counted its ninth infection.

Spain reported its first detected case, a German man who had close contact with an infected person in Germany and then traveled to the Canary Islands with some friends. Four friends who were hospitalized with him have not shown symptoms.

In the United States, health officials issued a two-week quarantine order for the 195 Americans evacuated this week from Wuhan.

It was the first time a federal quarantine has been ordered since the 1960s, when one was enacted over concern about smallpox, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said.

None of the Americans being housed at a Southern California military base has shown signs of illness, but infected people don’t show symptoms immediately and may be able to pass on the virus before they appear sick.

Syrian...

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Turkey has intervened militarily in Syria three times to date in cross-border operations with the declared aim of eradicating Kurdish militants and Daesh terrorists near borders.

Damascus has strongly condemned Turkish military operations against Kurdish forces in northeastern Syria, saying the offensive is a violation of the United Nations Charter and Security Council resolutions.

Syria has vowed to confront “brutal” Turkish aggression by all legal means.

Palestinians ...

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Foreign ministers from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon, among others, said there could be no peace without recognizing Palestinian rights and a comprehensive solution.

After Trump unveiled his plan, some Arab powers had appeared, despite historic support for the Palestinians, to prioritize close ties with the United States and a shared hostility towards Iran over traditional Arab alliances.

Three Persian Gulf Arab states - Oman, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates - attended the White House gathering where Trump announced his plan alongside Netanyahu.

On Tuesday, Netanyahu said he would ask his cabinet this week to approve the application of Israeli law to Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

Such a move could be a first step towards formal annexation of the settlements and the Jordan Valley - territory the Zionist regime has kept under military occupation since its capture in 1967.

The international community views Israeli settlements on land captured in war to be a violation of international law. Trump has changed U.S. policy to withdraw such objections.

Brain Injury...

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Shaif said Washington is seeking to conceal the true casualty count from the American public in order to cover its vulnerability towards probable future retaliatory strikes after the Ain al-Assad attack, which was considered only a “first slap”.

“Surely as we approach the U.S. presidential election, more numbers and names related to the dead will be leaked along with the competition among the parties,” he added.

Speaking on Friday, senior spokesman for Iranian Armed Forces Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi said Washington has to anticipate harsher responses from Iran if it continues with its policy of “maximum pressure” against Iran.

Underlining the significance of the Ain al-Assad attack, Shekarchi said that the missile strikes marked Iran’s first ever formally announced operation against the U.S.

The spokesman added that Iran’s approach in countering foreign provocations has shifted to offensive measures and is no longer limited to defensive action.

Official...

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The White House has disputed that, but had also struggled to highlight any successful humanitarian efforts.

U.S. sanctions have had a heavy impact on ordinary Iranians. Roughly 1,000 Iranian entities are now sanctioned.

A senior trade official in Switzerland said Saturday the country’s newly-launched financial channel meant to bring humanitarian items to Iran would guarantee that Tehran receives some of the badly-needed medicines whose delivery have been hampered by the American sanctions on the country.

Erwin Bollinger, a senior official at Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), said many companies and businesses have declared their readiness to engage in trade of humanitarian items with Iran since the Swiss channel was launched earlier this week.

The Swiss Humanitarian Trade Arrangement (SHTA) was launched on Thursday with a first trade for delivery of cancer and organ transplant drugs to Iran worth 2.3 million euros (\$2.54m).

Reports have suggested that the transaction was processed via Swiss lender Banque de Commerce et de Placements (BCP) using credits belonging to the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

Bollinger told Iran’s official IRNA agency that there was no cap on the size and volume of SHTA transactions and that Switzerland had finalized the details of the mechanism with US authorities.

“As long as there is sufficient (Iranian) credit in Swiss banks, there would be no restrictions,” he said, adding, “The significance of this mechanism is that it can guarantee transfer of medicine to Iran.”

Iranian authorities on Friday welcomed a first transaction through the SHTA which came after more than a year of direct consultations between SECO and US Department of Treasury. However, Central Bank of Iran Governor chief Abdolnasser Hemmati said it was obvious that Washington was still opposed to more inclusive trade of such items with Iran despite repeated claims that its sanctions do not affect the supply of food and medicine to the country.

“If the Americans are really claiming to be supportive of delivery of medicine and agri-food, they should facilitate the banking mechanism for transfer and supply of credit for purchasing basic goods,” said Hemmati on Thursday.

Egypt Detains Doctor, Parents as Girl Dies After Genital Cutting

CAIRO (Reuters) – Egypt has detained a retired doctor after the death of a 12-year-old girl on whom he performed female genital mutilation (FGM) sparked anger among women’s rights activists.

The victim’s parents and aunt took her to a private clinic where she underwent the illegal procedure, also known as female circumcision, the public prosecutor’s office said in a statement.

“After she left, she suffered complications. The doctor tried to save her, but she passed away,” said the statement, pledging “firm action” against anyone carrying out the

procedure in the future.

The girl’s relatives are also being held for a period of four days while the authorities investigate her death, said the statement.

Genital cutting of girls was banned in Egypt in 2008, but the practice remains a rite of passage and is often viewed as a way to promote chastity.

A 2016 survey by the UN Children’s Fund showed that 87 percent of women and girls aged 15-49 in Egypt have undergone the procedure.

Villagers say husbands prefer wives to be cut and often ask young

brides to undergo the procedure before their wedding.

In 2016 the practice was made a felony, meaning doctors who perform the procedure can be jailed for up to seven years. Anyone requesting the operation - usually relatives - faces jail of up to three years.

However, activists say the law has not been strictly enforced and even those found guilty are often given a lighter penalty.

Entessar el-Saeed, a human rights lawyer at the Cairo Foundation for Development and Law, said the persistence of the practice showed more needed to be done to raise

awareness, particularly in rural areas.

“Medicine, the law and religion are against this practice and yet it is still widespread,” she told Thomson Reuters Foundation.

World leaders have pledged to eradicate the practice by 2030, but campaigners say the ancient ritual remains deeply entrenched in many places.

Reda Eldanbouki, a lawyer who works to hold those responsible accountable, said that authorities including judges and police often treated female circumcision cases with leniency in Egypt.