

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Common borders between Iran and Iraq are among the world's safest frontiers, commander of the Iranian border police Brigadier General Qassem Rezaei said on Sunday.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a visit to the Chazabeh border crossing in southwest Iran, Rezaei said such high level of security results from close coordination between the border guards of the two countries and local residents of the border areas.

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – An Iranian lawmaker said Sunday the country has decided to examine flight recorders from a Ukrainian jetliner that was mistakenly shot down near Tehran on January 8.

Farajollah Rajabi, a member of parliament's development committee, said the black box of the Ukraine International Airlines Boeing 737-800 plane will remain and be analyzed inside Iran. The Ministry of Road and Urban Development is going to read the data from the Ukrainian plane's black box in the country, Rajabi added.

Viewpoint

Liberation of Idlib on the Horizon

'The Kites' Makes It to Berlin Festival



Iran's Abbasali Advances to Karate 1-Premier League Paris Final



Ahead of Potential Announcement Palestine Threatens to Quit Oslo Accords



Outcry Rises Over Trump Lies About Iran 'Slap'

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- A major veterans group has called for President Donald Trump to apologize for "misguided" remarks minimizing the severity of traumatic brain injuries suffered by U.S. forces in an Iranian airstack earlier this month.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars, the oldest major U.S. veterans group, appears to be the first large veterans organization to publicly chastise the president for dismissing the injuries as "headaches" and "not very serious."

Trump "minimized these troops' injuries," VFW National Commander-in-Chief William "Doc" Schmitz said in a statement, after a Pentagon announcement that the number of injured troops had risen to 34.

"The VFW expects an apology from the president to our servicemen and women for his misguided remarks," Schmitz said, adding that the White House should join with the organization to educate Americans about a serious injury that can cause depression, memory loss and other debilitating conditions.

The uproar marks the latest round of controversy over the Trump administration's handling of the Jan. 8 ballistic missile attack on a military base in Iraq that houses American forces, which Trump initially claimed had resulted in no U.S. casualties. The dispute also follows a report in "A Very Stable Genius," a book by two Washington Post reporters, documenting how Trump berated top military and diplomatic officials in 2017 as "dopes and babies" who did not know how to win wars.

Eleven missiles hit Ein al-Asad air base west of Baghdad, leaving wreckage and deep craters at a facility where more than 1,000 U.S. service members were stationed.

"I heard that they had headaches, and a couple of other things. But I would say, and I can report it is not very serious. Not very serious," Trump told reporters last week in Davos, Switzerland.

Asked whether he considered traumatic brain injury to be serious, the president said no.

"I don't consider them very serious injuries, relative to other injuries that I've seen," he said.

Jeremy Butler, chief executive of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, said traumatic brain injury is "the signature injury coming out of" those two conflicts.

"We were definitely troubled and disappointed to read and hear about the president's comments. I think an apology is the

first step that's needed here," Butler said in an interview Saturday.

As commander in chief, Trump should use the case of the troops wounded in Iraq as a way to publicly discuss wartime brain injuries "so that all members of the military understand the importance of these injuries and seek out treatment," Butler said.

The Pentagon has worked for more than a decade to highlight the insidious effect of traumatic brain injury, which can occur when troops are close to explosive blasts.

The Pentagon established an office to track the injuries and promote awareness of them among active-duty personnel and veterans, and it says about 413,000 service members have been diagnosed with traumatic brain injury since the first diagnosis in 2000.

On Friday, Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffman said 34 military personnel had been diagnosed with traumatic brain injury after the missile strikes, which were in retaliation for the U.S. targeted assassination of a senior Iranian military commander. The injuries were not apparent immediately, the Pentagon has claimed in explaining Trump's initial statement of no casualties.

The direct military attacks brought the United States and Iran close to the brink of war, despite Trump's frequent pledges to keep the United States out of Middle Eastern conflicts.

Last Terrorist Bastion on Brink of Liberation
Syrian Troops Reach Gates of Strategic City



Syrian troops flash victory signs on a road to terrorist-held regions in northwestern Idlib province.

BEIRUT (Dispatches) -- Syrian government forces have taken control of several towns in northwestern Idlib province, a war monitor and Syrian state media reported, amid a renewed push by President Bashar al-Assad to recapture the last militant stronghold.

The so-called Syrian Observatory, a war monitor, said on Sunday that six towns in the Idlib countryside had fallen to Syrian government forces in the past 24 hours.

The London-based Observatory said the government advance has brought Syrian forces to the outskirts of Maarat al-Numan, a

strategic urban center about 33 km (20 miles) south of the city of Idlib on a highway that connects Damascus to Aleppo.

Syria's Al-Watan newspaper reported that army forces were "just around the corner" from the city, whose "doors are wide open".

The push deeper into terrorist-held territory has taken place despite a deal between Turkey and Russia, which back opposing sides in the conflict, for a Jan. 12 ceasefire.

Syrian troops are fighting Takfiri terrorists who have stepped up attacks on civilians in Aleppo city in northern Syria.

"The army's response will not be limited to the origins of attacks by armed terrorist organizations and will include devastating field operations that will not cease until the remnants of armed terrorism is uprooted," a military source was quoted as saying by state news agency SANA.

Idlib and nearby areas of Hama, Aleppo and Latakia provinces are threatened by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) terrorist group, led by members of the former Al-Qaeda franchise.

Idlib remains the only large area in the hands of terrorists after the Syrian military managed to undo

militant gains across the country and bring back almost all of Syrian soil under government control.

SANA said the terror outfits occupying Idlib and Aleppo countryside use locals as human shields and prevent them from leaving to safe areas through Abu al-Dohour, Habit and Hader corridors.

Jabhat al-Nusra and affiliated terrorist groups have established a number of monitoring posts in the areas adjacent to the recently liberated areas in a bid to block the civilians' exodus, the report added.

On Saturday, Syria's Foreign Ministry wrote to the UN, stressing that the operation in Idlib and Aleppo against Takfiri elements "will not stop until the elimination of those terrorists, who threaten safety and security of Syrian civilians."

In two letters sent to the UN chief and the head of the Security Council, the ministry complained that armed terrorist groups, particularly Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and Jabhat al-Nusra, continue to target civilians and facilities such as hospitals, schools and places of worship in Idlib and Aleppo.

The militants prevent locals from leaving the occupied towns to safe areas, according to the letters.

"The precise and well studied military operations carried out by the Syrian Arab Army and its allies in Aleppo and Idlib come after the appeals from the Syrian citizens in these two governorates, and in

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Yemenis Oust Saudi Mercenaries From Sanaa Province

SANAA (Dispatches) -- Fighters from the Houthi movement and their allies in the Yemeni army have gain ground in the battle against Saudi mercenaries in Sanaa province, reports said on Sunday.

Commanders loyal to former Saudi-backed president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi acknowledged that the Houthis had retaken loyalist positions during renewed fighting east of Sanaa.

"Some of these positions had been under government control for three years," one of the commanders told AFP, referring to the self-proclaimed Hadi administration.

Another pro-Hadi commander said Saudi warplanes had attacked Houthi positions more than 30 times in the last three days to reduce the pressure on the loyalists.

On Friday, the International Crisis Group, a Belgium-based think tank, said Houthi fighters were making "the biggest gains" on the ground against militants.

"At the time of writing, the Houthis appeared to be making the biggest gains on the battlefield, reportedly controlling the important Nihm front north east of Sana'a after several days in which both sides claimed a series of largely symbolic victories while suffering

numerous casualties," it said in a report.

Self-proclaimed defense minister for Hadi fighters, Muhammad Ali al-Maqdishi, implicitly admitted Houthi advances in Nihm district.

At a meeting with loyalist commanders, he referred to what he called a "tactical withdrawal from some positions," Saba news agency reported.

Maqdishi said the Saudi-backed militants would be redeployed to open a new front against the Houthis.

Recently, a missile attack on a military training camp run by the Riyadh-backed elements in Maarib province killed as many as 116 militants.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE blamed the attack on the Houthis, a claim rejected by the Yemeni fighters.

Saudi Arabia and a coalition of its vassal states launched the war on Yemen in March 2015 in an attempt to reinstall the Hadi regime and eliminate the Houthis.

The military aggression, coupled with a naval blockade, has killed hundreds of thousands of people and plunged Yemen into the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Ahead of Trump Plan to Unveil 'Deal of Century': Zionists Allowed to Visit Saudi Arabia: Paper

TEL AVIV (Dispatches) – The occupying regime of Israel's interior minister Arye Dery signed a directive on Sunday that will permit Zionists to travel to Saudi Arabia for the first time, Haaretz reported.

The directive means residents of the occupied Palestinian territories will now be allowed to travel to visit Saudi Arabia for a business trip of up to nine days.

Visits to the Persian Gulf kingdom by Zionists will, however, be contingent on an invitation from a Saudi official, the report said.

Last year, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates backed an economic summit supporting U.S. President Donald Trump's "deal of the century" economic conference.

Clandestine relations have increased in recent years between Saudi Arabia and the Zionist regime.

In July, Zionist PM Benjamin Netanyahu hosted a Saudi Arabian national, Muhammad Saud, in his office, a day after the man was attacked by Palestinians angry with his

pro-Israel views.

The occupying regime of Israel's decision to allow Zionists to visit Saudi Arabia comes days before U.S. President Donald Trump reportedly plans to unveil his "deal of the century".

No Palestinian leaders have been invited to Washington to discuss the long-dormant scheme.

Israeli media reported on Thursday that, according to preliminary plans, the Zionist regime would claim sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and immediately annex all but 15 illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank, as well as the land linking them.

Under Trump's plan, the occupied Jerusalem Al-Quds would be declared the so-called capital of Israel, while the creation of a demilitarized Palestinian state would be agreed to at a later time.

According to Reuters, Trump discussed the timing of the plan's release with two architects of the plan, senior advisers Jared Kushner

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