

SHIBERGHAN (Xinhua) – Police in the northern Jawzjan province set on fire 35 tonnes of illicit drugs including heroin and hashish, Provincial Police Chief Abdul Wahid Wajdan says. The drugs had been seized over the past year, the official told Xinhua, adding that 47 people have been arrested on charge of involvement in drug smuggling. Wajdan also noted that police would spare no efforts to bring to zero the poppy cultivation and drug production in the relatively restive province.

Success is the result of foresight and resolution, foresight depends upon deep thinking and planning and the most important factor of planning is to keep your secrets to yourself.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Yemeni Forces Seize Major Military Base in Ma'rib



Supporters of Yemen's Ansarullah movement attend a rally in the Yemeni capital of Sana'a, December 5, 2017.

SANAA (Press TV) – Yemeni army soldiers, backed by allied fighters from Popular Committees, have reportedly seized control of a strategic military base in the country's central province of Marib from Saudi-sponsored militiamen loyal to former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi.

Local sources, requesting not to be named, said Yemeni troops and their allies established full control over Kofel camp in the Sirwah district, which lies

about 120 kilometers east of the capital Sana'a, on Tuesday morning after Hadi loyalist fled the area in the wake of the former's multi-pronged operation, Arabic-language al-Khabar al-Yemeni news website reported.

Moreover, the spokesman for Yemeni Armed Forces, Brigadier General Yahya Saree, said the country's air defense units had managed to thwart Saudi-led airstrike against areas in Ma'rib Province.

Saree said a squadron of Saudi-led fighter jets sought to bombard areas in the Sirwah district early on Tuesday, when the domestically-built and long-range Fater-1 (Innovator-1) surface-to-air missile defense system intercepted the jets and forced them off Yemeni airspace.

The high-ranking Yemeni military official noted that the aircraft left the area without carrying out any act of aggression.

The development came only a day after Fater-1 missile defense system foiled an airstrike by a squadron of Saudi F-15 fighter jets against areas in the northern Yemeni province of al-Jawf, located approximately 110 kilometers (68 miles) north of Sana'a.

Yemeni army air defenses had intercepted two Saudi-led F-16 warplanes in the skies of Jawf two days earlier, deterring the aircraft from carrying out any act of aggression.

Yemeni armed forces unveiled Fater-1 along with other domestically-built long-range, surface-to-air missile defense systems on February 23.

Minister of Defense Major General Mohamed al-Atefy, Chairman of the General Staff Major General Mohamed al-Ghammari and Brigadier General Saree were in attendance during the event.

The systems have entered service following successful tests, the official announced at the time.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched the devastating campaign against Yemen in March 2015, with the goal of bringing back to power a former Riyadh-backed government and crushing the Ansarullah movement.

Slamming U.S. Pressure Lebanese Outraged Over Court Acquittal of Zionist Agent



A former inmate of Khiam prison holds a placard in Arabic that reads, 'no to American intervention in the Lebanese judiciary,' during a sit-in near a military court where an arrest warrant was issued for Amer al-Fakhoury, who confessed he had worked for Israel during the occupation of Lebanon, in Beirut, Sept. 17, 2019.

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – A Beirut tribunal has dropped charges against a Zionist collaborator accused of overseeing the torture and killing of captives at a prison facility in southern Lebanon some two decades ago, in a verdict that the Hezbollah resistance movement and rights activists say was issued under pressure from the U.S.

Amer Fakhoury — a dual Lebanese-American national — was accused of murder, attempted murder, kidnapping and torture while presiding over Khiam Prison run by the Israeli-sponsored South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia group — formed by army defectors — during the regime's 1982-2000 occupation of southern Lebanon.

Widely known as the 'Butcher of Khiam,' he fled Lebanon along with hundreds of other SLA members after the Lebanese army, backed by Hezbollah, drove the Zionist regime out of the country in 2000.

Following southern Lebanon's liberation, the prison camp was preserved in the condition it had been abandoned by SLA militiamen and converted into a museum by the Lebanese government.

Fakhoury settled in the U.S. state of New Hampshire, but was arrested last September when he returned to Lebanon on vacation to visit his family.

On Monday, the Beirut court ordered his release, saying more than 10 years had passed since the defendant allegedly kidnapped, im-

prisoned and tortured the Lebanese held at the prison camp, the official National News Agency of Lebanon reported.

Lebanon's intelligence service said Fakhoury had confessed during questioning to being a warden at Khiam Prison.

Hezbollah condemned the ruling as a "miserable step for justice" and said the court had turned a blind eye to the crimes he had committed.

The movement added that the U.S. had exerted pressure on the Lebanese government since Fakhoury was taken into custody.

"It seems that the U.S. pressures have unfortunately paid off as the military tribunal has unexpectedly taken this wrong decision" while ignoring all the pain and wounds suffered by the victims, the statement added.

"This is a sad day for Lebanon and justice," said the movement, stressing that staff members of the military tribunal should have chosen to step down instead of submitting to American pressure.

"It was more honorable and more effective for the head and members of the military court to submit their resignations rather than to yield to the pressures that forced them to take this sinister decision," it said.

Hezbollah further urged the Lebanese judiciary to review its wrong decision "for the sake of the rights of the Lebanese, the tortured and oppressed, as well as everyone who sacrificed for the sake of his homeland and the liberation of his land."

Swarms of Voracious Locusts Predicted Heading for Middle East

RIYADH (Sputnik) – The most devastating plague of locusts in over 30 years is about to hit Africa and the Middle East, according to Rome-based Senior Locust Forecasting Officer Keith Cressman.

The officer, who is employed by Locust Watch, a division of the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization, cited the organization's most recent report forecasting that new "extremely alarming" swarms of the insects were forming in the Horn of Africa.

The current widespread breeding in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia represents "an unprecedented threat to food security and livelihoods at the beginning of the upcoming cropping season," writes the Locust Watch website.

The Rome-based officer was cited by The Times of Israel as admitting the last time the region faced such a threat was during the locust plague of 1987-1989.

"Starting in early 2020, the global Desert Locust situation

deteriorated, as favorable climatic conditions allowed widespread breeding of the pest in East Africa, Southwest Asia, and the area around the Red Sea," writes the website, pinpointing Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia, Iran, Pakistan, and Sudan as the hardest hit countries.

Not all regions of the Middle East will be affected, however, confirmed Cressman.

Locust Watch works in collaboration with affected countries to assess field data, information and reports in real

time, said Cressman, adding this is subsequently "combined with analysis of remote sensing (satellite) imagery, weather data and forecasts, and historical data in our geographic information system and database that go back to the 1930s."

Adding to the impending concerns of the organization, which is tasked with giving emergency assistance to countries struggling with the impact of desert locust invasions, is the current coronavirus pandemic.

Turkey to Receive Second Delivery of Russian Missiles

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – Russia and Turkey may soon sign a contract on the delivery of a second set of S-400 air defense missiles, the head of Russia's Federal Service for Military and Technical Cooperation, Dmitry Shugayev, said in an interview with Rossiya-24 TV.

"I believe we will conclude the second contract in the foreseeable future. It implies Turkish partners' certain participation in the production process," Shugayev said, according to the Russian TASS news agency.

The talks were on an additional batch of equipment, he said. "We are at quite a seri-

ous stage, and all the technical issues have been settled and so on."

According to Shugayev, this will be mutually advantageous cooperation without any damage to the Russian side. "We are looking out for our national interests," he stated.

The first S-400 air missile system is already in Turkish territory, and specialists have been trained to operate it, Shugayev said. "The question now is when Turkey makes a decision on placing them on combat duty. This is their priority."

Russia announced in September 2017 that it had signed a \$2.5 billion deal with Tur-

key on the delivery of an S-400 anti-aircraft missile system to Ankara. The deal also envisaged the partial transfer of production technology to the Turkish side.

Turkey is the first NATO member state to purchase such an air missile system from Russia. The deliveries of S-400 launchers to Turkey began on July 12, 2019.

The United States and NATO have attempted to deter Turkey from purchasing Russia's S-400 missile systems. Washington warned on many occasions that it might impose sanctions on Turkey if Ankara were to press ahead with the S-400 deal.

Ankara Detains 19 People Over 'Provocative' Coronavirus Posts

ISTANBUL (Reuters) – Turkey has identified 93 suspects who have made "unfounded and provocative" postings on social media about the coronavirus outbreak and has detained 19 of them, the Turkish Interior Ministry says.

The move came as Turkey closed cafes, entertainment and sports venues, suspended mass prayers in mosques and extended a flight ban to 20 countries to contain the coronavirus spread, as the number of confirmed cases rose to 47.

The interior ministry statement said there were social media posts which were targeting officials and spreading panic and fear by suggesting that the virus had spread widely in Turkey and that officials had taken

insufficient measures. "Nineteen of these suspects have been detained and the process of detaining others who have been identified is continuing," said the statement, issued late on Monday.

Last Wednesday, Turkey became the last major economy to report an outbreak of coronavirus and Health Minister Fahrettin Koca announced 29 newly confirmed cases late on Monday, bringing the total to 47. No deaths have been reported.

The Istanbul governor's office said on Monday that Turkish citizens who request to return from nine European countries would be brought back on condition that they are quarantined for 14 days.