

Syrian Army Finds U.S., Israeli Weapons in Quneitra

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – The Syrian army has found Israeli and U.S. weapons left by the terrorists in the southern Quneitra province, state news agency SANA reported on Tuesday.

The weapons were found stashed in formerly terrorist-held areas in the southern countryside of Quneitra, which is close to the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

Additionally, the army also found satellite communication devices and medication as well as stolen vehicles, according to the report.

The terrorists withdrew from Quneitra late last year to terrorist-held areas in northwestern Syria.

The Syrian government has repeatedly accused the terrorists of receiving support from the U.S. and the Zionist regime.

An informed source, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Syria's official news agency SANA that army troops had carried out clean-up operations in the southern countryside of the prov-

ince, which is close to the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, on Tuesday, and found a weapons depot left behind by terrorists.

The source added that the ammunition included 37mm and 23mm auto-cannons as well as man-portable anti-armor rocket launchers.

A Western-made mine and an improvised explosive device (IED) detection system, binoculars, Thuraya satellite phones, a portable satellite internet system in addition to Jordanian, Saudi and Kuwaiti medicine were recovered from the militant redoubt as well.

Meanwhile, Russian warplanes have conducted 12 airstrikes against militant positions in Syria's northwestern province of Idlib.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that the aerial attacks targeted areas in close proximity to Idlib's central prison besides the towns of Falioun, Korin, and Bakflon on



A picture taken on October 14, 2018, shows weapons seized by Syrian security forces during a military operation against foreign-sponsored Takfiri terrorists in the town of Yalda.

the western outskirts of Idlib early on Tuesday.

The Britain-based monitoring group added that the airstrikes caused heavy damage to militant positions.

Russian jets have been carrying out air raids against targets

belonging to the Daesh terrorist group and those of other terror outfits inside Syria at the Damascus government's formal request since September 2015.

The airstrikes have helped Syrian forces advance against anti-Damascus militants.

Demonstrators Call on UN to End Gaza Blockade



A picture taken on May 29, 2018 shows fishing boats carrying a group of Palestinian activists who are protesting and perhaps trying to breach Israel's naval blockade on Gaza, setting to sail from Gaza City harbor, May 29, 2018.

NEW YORK (Dispatches) – Palestinian demonstrators called on Tuesday on the United Nations to end the tight Zionist blockade that had been imposed

on the Gaza Strip for more than 11 years.

The demonstrators gathered in front of the UN headquarters in western Gaza City, waved

Palestinian flags and carried banners that condemned the occupying regime's blockades and called for an international intervention to end it.

The Highest Commission of the Great March of Return and Breaking the Siege, which organized the demonstration, said in a press statement that the siege must be lifted as immediate as possible.

The statement of the commission had also warned the regime over the postponement of implementing the recent calm understandings that had been brokered between the occupying regime and the Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip.

"The weekly marches of return will go on until the siege is immediately lifted," said the commission's statement.

Sami Ammassi, chairman of the Palestinian General Fed-

eration of Trade Unions, who joined the demonstration, told reporters that the rate of unemployment in the Gaza Strip exceeded 54 percent and poverty rates hit 80 percent.

"We call on the United Nations and the international organizations to pressure on Israel to lift the blockade that had critically affected all aspects of life," he said, adding "we also call on the Arab League to help end Gaza people's suffering."

The march of return event, which started at the end of March last year, calls on the Zionist regime to end the blockade and stresses the right of return for the Palestinian refugees.

Egypt, the UN and Qatar have been mediating a clam agreement in the Gaza Strip between the regime and Hamas movement.

Saudi Arabia Executes 37 Citizens

RIYADH (Dispatches) – Saudi Arabia executed on Tuesday 37 citizens convicted in "terror cases", the Ministry of Interior said.

The official Saudi Press Agency quoted the ministry as saying in a statement that the executions were carried out in the capital Riyadh, as well as in Mecca, Medina, Eastern Province and Asir region.

It claimed the executed were convicted of charges related to "forming terror cells, promoting sedition and sectarianism, security disturbance, attacking security buildings with Molotov cocktails, and killing police personnel."

Saudi Arabia is one of the top executioners in the world, with more than 2,000 people executed between 1985 and 2016.

Suspects convicted of terrorism, homicide, rape, armed robbery and drug trafficking face death penalty. Saudi Arabia carried out 153 executions across the kingdom in 2016.

In the most stunning case of executions, Saudi Arabia executed on January 2 that year Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr along 46 other people in defiance of international calls for the release of the prominent Shia cleric.

Saudi Arabia carried out 158 executions, including 71 foreign nationals, in 2015.

According to the London-based rights group Amnesty International, many people in Saudi Arabia are sentenced to death and executed following seriously flawed court proceedings that routinely fall far short of international fair trial standards.

It added that the defendants are often convicted solely on the basis of "confessions" obtained under torture and other ill-treatment, denied legal representation in trials which are held in secret, and are not kept informed of the progress of the legal proceedings in their case.

Sri Lankan government and military sources said a Syrian had been detained among 40 people being questioned over the bombs.

Most of the dead and wounded were Sri Lankans, although government officials said 38 foreigners were killed. That included British, U.S., Australian, Turkish, Indian, Chinese, Danish, Dutch and Portuguese nationals.

The UN Children's Fund said 45 children were among the dead.

Footage on CNN showed what it said was one of the bombers wearing a heavy backpack. The man patted a child on the head before entering the Gothic-style St. Sebastian church in Katuwapitiya, north of Colombo. Dozens were killed there.

Wijewardene said investigators believed revenge for the March 15

killing of 50 people at two mosques during Friday prayers in the New Zealand city of Christchurch was the motive.

"The initial investigation has revealed that this was in retaliation for the New Zealand mosque attack," he said.

He did not elaborate on why authorities believed there was a link to the New Zealand bloodshed, unleashed by a lone gunman.

The bombs brought a shattering end to a relative calm that had existed in the Buddhist-majority Indian Ocean island since a civil war against mostly Hindu, ethnic Tamil separatists ended 10 years ago, and raised fears of a return to sectarian violence.

Sri Lanka's 22 million people include minority Christians, Muslims

and Hindus. Until now, Christians had largely managed to avoid the worst of the island's conflict and communal tensions.

Pressure is likely to mount on the government over why effective action had not been taken in response to warnings from India about a possible attack on churches by the little-known National Thawheed Jama'at group.

Indian intelligence officers contacted their Sri Lankan counterparts two hours before the first attack to warn of a specific threat on churches, one Sri Lankan defense source and an Indian government source said.

Another Sri Lankan defense source said a warning came "hours before" the first strike.

A government minister had said on Monday that Wickremesinghe had not been informed about a warning and had been shut out of top security meetings because of a feud with President Maithripala Sirisena.

Wickremesinghe dismissed any suggestion that the rift with the president had hampered coordination on security, saying although they had differences they had been thrashed out.

Sirisena fired Wickremesinghe last year only to be forced to reinstate him under pressure from the Supreme Court.

Scientists estimate that Earth is today home to some eight million distinct species, a majority of them insects.

A quarter of catalogued animal and plant species are already being crowded, eaten or poisoned out of existence.

The drop in sheer numbers is even more dramatic, with wild mammal biomass -- their collective weight -- down by 82 percent.

Humans and livestock account for more than 95 percent of mammal biomass.

Population Growth

"If we're going to have a sustainable planet that provides services to communities around the world, we need to change this trajectory in the next ten years, just as we need to do that with climate," noted WWF chief scientist Rebecca Shaw, formerly a member of the UN scientific bodies for both climate and biodiversity.

The direct causes of species loss, in order of importance, are shrinking habitat and land-use change, hunting for food or illicit trade in body parts, climate change, pollution, and alien species such as rats, mosquitoes and snakes that hitch rides on ships or planes, the report finds.

Experts say up to a million species face extinction -- some within decades -- from human activity including habitat loss, over-consumption and illegal poaching

"There are also two big indirect drivers of biodiversity loss and climate change -- the number of people in the world and their growing ability to consume," said Watson.

Once seen as primarily a future threat to animal and plant life, the disruptive impact of global warming has accelerated. Shifts in the distribution of species, for example, will likely double if average temperature go up a notch from 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) to 2C.

So far, the global thermometer has risen 1C compared with mid-19th century levels.

The 2015 Paris Agreement enjoins nations to cap the rise to "well below" 2C. But a landmark UN climate report in October said that would still be enough to boost the intensity and frequency of deadly heatwaves, droughts, floods and storms.

U.S....

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go hardcore on Iran, but observers say the question is how they can really do it and for how long.

"We will be in uncharted territory. While Saudi Arabia has the capacity in theory, it takes time and money to bring these barrels online, possibly up to 1 year," Amrita Sen, chief oil analyst at Energy Aspects, says.

With a potential output fall in Iran and further outages in Venezuela and Libya, the world could be short of 2 million bpd of oil output without an increase in Saudi oil output by the end of the year.

"The Saudis do not have 2 million bpd of spare capacity as it would imply production of 12 million bpd. They can likely produce a maximum of 11 million and even that will be running their system at stress levels," Garry Ross, head of global oil analytics at S&P Global, said.

"A 2-million-bpd Saudi production increase would move the Kingdom's oil production into uncharted territory and would wipe out completely the kingdom's spare capacity," Giovanni Staunovo, commodity analyst at UBS, said.

With supply concerns and dwindling spare capacity and oil market tightness worries, prices are expected to become more volatile over the coming months.

Saudi and U.S. assurances on Monday failed to cool down the markets as crude leapt to its highest in six months.

International benchmark Brent crude futures closed 3 percent higher to \$74.04 a barrel, firing up U.S. inflation markets.

Trump is extremely sensitive to financial indicators and any hard impact may change his decision which apparently is not his own. The decision came after his hawkish security adviser John Bolton argued that pressuring Iran was meaningless with the exemptions still in place.

According to Michael Lynch, president of Strategic Energy & Economic Research in Winchester, Massachusetts, the ultimate impact depends on how hard the Saudis work to fill the gap and how Trump reacts if the crackdown impacts U.S. consumers.

"These last few days, we've seen plenty of stories about rising gasoline prices, just in time for the summer driving season," Lynch said. "What everybody is going to be pointing to is Trump tightening sanctions on Iran."

A "complete cutoff of waivers is unlikely, since the [Trump] administration clearly prefers oil prices that aren't too high," Lynch went on to say.

Edward Moya, senior market analyst at Oanda, told MarketWatch: "While the U.S. wants to see Iran exports fall to zero, they won't."

"If that were to happen, we would see a military escalation in the Persian Gulf," he said, referring to the threat of a Strait of Hormuz closure.

On Monday, Pompeo was quoted to have told a private meeting that the United States would not be seeking a military confrontation with Iran.

Majlist...

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Tasnim quoted the unnamed source as saying: "Whether the waivers continue or not, Iran's oil exports will not be zero under any circumstances unless Iranian authorities decide to stop oil exports ... and this is not relevant now."

"We have been monitoring and analyzing all possible scenarios and conditions for the advance of our country's oil exports, and necessary measures have been taken ... Iran is not waiting for America's decision or the lack of it to export its oil," Tasnim quoted the source as saying.

"We have years of experience in neutralizing efforts by enemies to strike blows against our country," the source added.

Iran has pledged to disrupt oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, a major oil shipment channel in the Persian Gulf, if the United States tries to strangle Tehran's economy by halting its oil exports.

Daesh...

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The first six bombs - on three churches and three luxury hotels - came within 20 minutes of each other. Two more explosions - at a downmarket hotel and a house in a suburb of the capital, Colombo - came in the early afternoon.

Wickremesinghe said the militants had tried to attack another hotel but had failed.