

Iran Releases Lebanese National

TEHRAN (Press TV) -- Tehran on Tuesday freed Nizar Zakka, a Lebanese national serving a jail term in Iran for espionage for the United States, following mediation efforts by President Michel Aoun of Lebanon.

Lebanon's General Directorate of General Security (GDGS) said in a statement on social media that its head, Abbas Ibrahim, was "en route from Tehran to Lebanon, accompanied by Nizar Zakka, after his release by Iranian authorities." Earlier on Tuesday, Iran's Judiciary spokesman

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Kayhan International



Syria, Russia to Give 'Crushing Response': Lavrov

MOSCOW (Dispatches) -- Syrian and Russian armies will respond with "crushing retaliation" to any terrorist attack in Idlib, Syria, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Tuesday.

Speaking at a joint press conference with his Malian counterpart Tiebile Drame here, Lavrov said terrorists systematically stage provocations and attack the positions of the Syrian army and communities and also the Russian air base, Hmeymim, with "multiple rocket systems and drones."

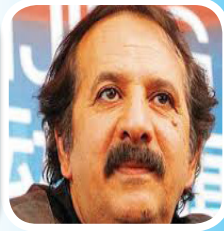
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Viewpoint

Iran & Japan, Both Victims of US State Terrorism

Legendary Director Takes Shot at New Film 'The Sun'



Iran, South Korea Share Spoils in Friendly International



Turkey Chafes at U.S. Pressure Over Russian Defense Systems



Sacred Baqi' Cemetery Awaits Reconstruction

Kayhan Int'l Cultural Desk

Today, the 8th of Shawwal is the 96th anniversary of that doleful day in history when the heretical Wahhabi hordes in their lust for loot and the thousand "Majidi (Ottoman) Riyals" that each vandal was promised by the desert brigand of Najd, Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdur-Rahman Aal-e Saud, desecrated and destroyed the tombs of some of the most venerable Islamic figures in the sacred cemetery of Baqi' in holy Medina, within eyeshot of the sanctified shrine of Prophet Muhammad (SAWA).



In addition to the tombs of the aunts, an uncle, wives, and companions of the Prophet, these Godless hordes destroyed the most hallowed edifice of all, the towering white-domed mausoleum under which reposed in eternal peace, Four of the Prophet's Twelve Infallible Heirs - Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba (AS), Imam Zain al-Abidin (AS), Imam Muhammad al-Baqer (AS) and Imam Ja'far as-Sadeq (AS).

The sacrilegious scene of 1344 AH (1926 AD), which an eyewitness described as "before me, a valley appeared to have been paved with corpses, dried blood staining everywhere all around; there was hardly a tree which didn't have one or two dead bodies near its trunk," was the second demolition of the Baqi' Cemetery which Prophet Muhammad (SAWA) used to frequently visit to salute the souls of the departed with the words:

"Peace upon you, O abode of the faithful! God willing, we should soon join you. O' Allah, forgive the fellows of al-Baqi'."

The first demolition of Jannat al-Baqi' was in 1220 AH (1806 AD) by these same ungodly Najdis, who four years earlier had invaded southern Iraq to sack the pilgrim city of Karbala and strip the domes, minarets, porches and halls of the holy shrine of the Chief of Martyrs, Imam Husain (AS), of gold coatings and Persian carpets, after massacring over five thousand men, women, and children.

On the orders of the Ottoman Sultan, the Egyptian army landed at Jeddah to flush out the Wahhabis from the Land of Revelation, Hijaz, and to send the Aal-e Saudi chief to Istanbul for execution. Ibrahim Pasha, the son of the Khedive of Egypt, Mohammad Ali Pasha, pursued the Wahhabis to their stronghold Diriyya (near present day Riyadh) and completely destroyed Aal-e Saudi clan.

By 1860, the Ottomans completed the rebuilding of the Baqi' Cemetery, renovating canopies, domes, and mosques in aesthetic style, and restoring the glory of towering mausoleum of the Four Infallible Imams.

During World War One, when the Ottoman Empire collapsed, the crafty British resurrected the seditious Saudi clan, helped it seize the vast al-Ahsa region of the eastern (now oil-rich) Shi'a Muslim part of the Arabian Peninsula, aided the blood-soaked seizure of Hijaz (Mecca, Medina, Ta'ef, and Jeddah) in 1925, and in 1932 created the spurious fiefdom called Saudi Arabia to install Abdul-Aziz as king.

Abdul-Aziz after ordering destruction of the sacred Baqi' cemetery intended to demolish the holy shrine of Prophet Muhammad (SAWA), and an ungodly Wahhabi terrorist had climbed the green dome with a pickaxe, when divine wrath struck him. Fear of the Muslim World, which might mount a joint operation against his blasphemous rule, rather than the fear of God, made the desert brigand desist from further blasphemy.

For years, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Muslims around the world have been urging Riyadh to rectify its misconstrued policies and allow the Muslims to rebuild the Jannat al-Baqi' Cemetery, but to no avail, since the Aal-e Saud, as is evident by their policies bow at the altar of the US and do not even want the Palestinian Muslims to regain their birthrights or liberate the occupied Islamic city of Bayt al-Moqaddas from Zionist control.

In view of these facts, it is essential for the Ummah to knit ranks, heed the statements of the Prophet, and press for reconstruction of Sacred of Baqi'.

Unless the holy shrines of the Infallible Imams are restored to their past glory, any talk of liberation of Bayt al-Moqaddas from the Zionist yoke is mere prattle. It is time that the Saudis, along with their state terrorism, were weeded out for good.

New U.S. Sanctions Aim to Kill INSTEX



This image taken from the Twitter account of President Donald Trump shows what looks like a movie-style poster that takes creative inspiration from the TV series Game of Thrones to announce the reimposition of sanctions against Iran.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- The Trump administration is now weighing sanctions on Iran's counterpart to the European special-purpose vehicle for humanitarian trade, Bloomberg says.

The financial news provider quoted a senior administration official as saying that the latest measures will target the Special Trade and Finance Institute, which Iran set up to correspond to Europe's INSTEX in bypassing sanctions.

INSTEX is purported as the European fig leaf to Iran to persuade the country to remain in the 2015 nuclear agreement which the United States unilaterally left last year. The news came as German Foreign

Minister Heiko Maas visited Tehran on Monday to announce that the long-overdue mechanism would be ready soon.

The U.S. government is targeting Iran's Special Trade and Finance Institute (STFI) on the ground that the country has not implemented global safeguards against money laundering and terrorism financing, Bloomberg cited the unnamed official as saying.

It said punishing STFI could doom INSTEX because it raises the possibility of sanctions risk to anyone who is part of the European mechanism.

The initiative, it said, drives home a letter sent by the U.S. Treasury

Department in early May to Per Fischer, the president of INSTEX, arguing that the financial body could face sanctions.

"If they are looking at sanctioning STFI, you're essentially trying to kill INSTEX through the back door," said Ellie Geranmayeh, a senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

The Europeans say INSTEX will support legitimate trade with Iran, applying initially only to non-sanctionable essential goods, such as humanitarian, medical, and farm products.

They have said it will function under the highest international standards with regards to anti-

money laundering mechanisms, combating the financing of terrorism as well as EU and UN sanctions compliance.

U.S. authorities are reportedly worried that other nations, including America's adversaries, could use INSTEX as a model in the future and avoid the U.S. financial system entirely.

"The development of INSTEX is really worrying for U.S. sanction policy in the long run," Emma Ashford, a research fellow at the Cato Institute in Washington, told Bloomberg. "INSTEX sets up a framework other countries can use in the future."

According to Suzanne Maloney, deputy director of the foreign policy program at the Brookings Institution, Washington's bid to crush INSTEX "does call into question what the long-term strategy here is" with the U.S. sanctions.

"If there's no room for humanitarian aid for Iran, literally no viable mechanisms for facilitating those transactions, then clearly this is purely a punitive strategy and one that is intended to wreak maximum havoc on the Iranian population."

The trade of humanitarian goods, such as food, medicine and medical devices, is theoretically allowed by the U.S., but European companies refuse to do business with Iran, fearing secondary American sanctions.

Washington claims the sanctions target the government, but ordinary Iranians are the ones who suffer the most.

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Iran's Petrochemical Industry Defies U.S. Sanctions

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- The CEO of Iran's National Petrochemical Company has shrugged off U.S. sanctions on the country's largest and most profitable petrochemical group, saying they will not impact the industry.

"The newly-announced US embargo will have no effect on the production and sale of Iranian petrochemicals," Behzad Mohammadi told reporters on the sidelines of a ceremony to sign an industrial development agreement.

"The petrochemical industry has been grappling with sanctions for many years, and in this situation, we are looking to develop this industry," Press TV quoted him as saying.

Last week, the U.S. Treasury Department said it had hit Iran's Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (PGPIC) with economic sanctions due to

its ties with the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC).

The IRGC, founded in 1979 after the Islamic Revolution, is tasked with defending Iran against threats, but its civilian branch has been playing a key role in the country's development projects as a strategic partner in many fields.

The Treasury said in a statement that its sanctions aim to choke off financing to the PGPIC and extends to its 39 subsidiaries and "foreign-based sales agents".

The PGPIC group, it said, holds 40 percent of Iran's total petrochemical production capacity and is responsible for 50% of the country's petrochemical exports.

Washington is trying to stop Iran's petrochemical, steel and copper exports, and to disrupt

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From Gaddafi to Haftar: France Plays Both Sides in Libya

LONDON (Middle East Eye) -- What is France's true role in Libya? There are many questions in this regard, especially since the beginning of Khalifa Haftar's offensive on Tripoli in April.

The offensive, led by the eastern Libyan strongman, was heralded by warning signs. Since early this year, Haftar has achieved significant breakthroughs, allowing him to dominate the Fezzan province in southern Libya.

This position, combined with his control over most of Cyrenaica province, has made him the strongest player in Libya. But it was only after Haftar tried to carry out a plan that had been in existence for at least a year - the attempt to capture Tripoli - that he faced an unexpected counteroffensive.

What about France? Officially, Paris is committed to supporting

the internationally recognized government of Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj, formed under the 2015 Skhirat deal. Based in Tripoli, the Libyan executive embodies institutional legitimacy and acts as Libya's official representative.

But France has also cultivated strong relations with Haftar.

A significant indicator is the fact that French forces are operating under cover in Libya: 13 allegedly armed French intelligence officers were arrested in April on the Tunisian-Libyan border. According to Al Jazeera, sources said border guards discovered the group had communication devices that could be linked to Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA).

Three years earlier, three French special forces officers were killed when their plane crashed in eastern

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