

Russian Envoy in Lebanon:

# U.S. Trying to Destroy International Legitimacy

BEIRUT (Xinhua) – Russian Ambassador to Lebanon Alexander Zasypkin slammed Tuesday the U.S. policy all over the world, the National News Agency reported.

“The United States is trying to destroy international legitimacy by withdrawing from the nuclear agreement with Iran, imposing economic sanctions, waging financial wars and weakening the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA),” Zasypkin said during a conference held in Beirut about Arab-Russian ties.

Zasypkin said that these measures will cause serious difficulties for countries all over the world.

The ambassador called for strong cooperation among countries all over the world and the Middle East on the economic level to overcome the challenges imposed by U.S. sanctions.

He also added that Russia is against any form of terrorism while criticizing the West for intervening in other countries’ affairs.



Filipino protesters rally in the capital Manila on July 4, 2015, calling for the pullout of U.S. troops from their country.

## ‘Syria’s Antiques, Historical Sites Ruined by Terrorist Groups’



File photo of the Temple of Baalshamin, a historical ruin in Syria’s Palmyra. The ancient city’s historical sites were badly damaged during the Daesh invasion in 2015.

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Terrorist groups have ruined, stolen and smuggled millions of antiques in Syria during the past several years, a Syrian official says.

Foreign-backed terrorists have stolen and smuggled at least one million pieces of antiques to regions outside the country, especially Turkey, Jordan and the oc-

cupied Palestinian territories, manager of Syria’s museum and historical monuments Mahmoud Hamoud told the Arabic-language website of Sputnik.

He added that at least 10,000 historical sites have been destroyed in the extensive excavation operations by the terrorist groups in Syria.

Hamoud also said that the occupying Turkish forces play an important role in the destruction and looting of antiques in different parts of the lands occupied by them, including Jandaris.

Relevant reports said in January that the Syrian authorities recently recovered two Roman-era artifacts that were stolen by the Daesh terrorists group in eastern Syria.

The Syrian authorities recovered the two Roman-

era artifacts while combing through the Al-Sukhnah countryside during the past week.

“The authorities found two relief busts made of limestone that the terrorists had stolen from Tadmur (Palmyra) city prior to its defeat there with the intent of smuggling them abroad,” it added.

Director of the Homs Antiquities and Museum Department Hussam Hamish, who inspected the artifacts, said that the Roman-era funerary relief busts bear Palmyrene inscriptions and depict men from Palmyra, one with a palm leaf on his hand, and the other holding his attire on his right hand.

The Daesh terrorists left the Roman-era artifacts at an abandoned site in the Al-Sukhnah countryside.

## New Iraqi Kurdish President’s Cousin Succeeds as PM

ERBIL (Dispatches) – Iraq’s Kurdish region named a cousin of its new president to succeed him as prime minister on Tuesday, keeping power in the hands of the family that has governed since the region gained partial self rule after dictator Saddam Hussein’s fall.

The new prime minister, Masrour Barzani, is a son of former president Masoud Barzani, who stepped down in 2017 after a failed independence bid. The regional presidency was vacant for more than 18 months until Masoud Barzani’s nephew Nechirvan Barzani was elevated from prime minister and sworn in on Monday.

The Barzani clan and their Kurdistan Democratic Party have ruled the semi-autonomous Kurdish region since Iraq’s constitution was set up following the U.S.-led invasion that toppled Saddam in 2003.

They have shared power in the region with their main rivals, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, which has appointed presidents for

Iraq’s central government in Baghdad under a system designed to balance power among Iraq’s main ethnic and sectarian groups.

Masrour Barzani, who had been serving as regional security chief, was elected prime minister with 87 votes from the 97 lawmakers present. The regional legislature has 111 seats in total. Several smaller opposition parties, including the Kurdistan Islamic Group and New Generation movement, boycotted.

The Barzani family has been at the forefront of Kurdish politics for generations. Masoud Barzani inherited his position as leader of the KDP from his father Mustafa Barzani, who died in 1979.

Masoud Barzani stepped down as Kurdish president in 2017 after a failed independence bid that prompted a reaction from Baghdad and a political crisis among the Kurds.

Smaller opposition parties in the Kurdish region accuse the KDP and PUK of using their combined dominance of the region’s politics to build business empires for the families that lead them.

## ‘Drug Abuse Among Serving Zionist Troops Rising’

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – A recent report has shed light on a rise in drug abuse among serving Zionist troops, prompting Chief of Staff of the Israeli Army Aviv Kochavi to order establishment of a special committee to fight the phenomenon.

According to Israeli i24NEWS television news network, Kochavi took the measure in the wake of an increasing number of cases against Israeli soldiers using drugs while in their military bases.

The report added that the number of addicted Zionist troops is soaring dramatically despite the fact that strict measures and punitive measures have already been introduced to eradicate the issue.

Among the expected future penalties, the Israeli broadcaster said, are denial of

privileges and benefits given to the serving soldiers, reduction or denial of financial grants and educational privileges. They would also be deprived of holidays.

Last September, thirty five Zionist troops and several civilians were arrested on the grounds of drug trafficking and drug abuse.

The troops were detained following an investigation by the special investigations unit of the Military Police Criminal Investigation Division.

In February 2018, ten soldiers – four females and six males – were arrested after they were found to be in possession of and using drugs.

The troops, who had all been serving at the officers’ training base in the Negev,

were held for questioning after an undercover investigation found that they had been buying, selling and using drugs while on base.

According to a survey conducted by the Israel Anti-Drug Authority (IADA), 54% of Israeli soldiers have admitted to using illegal drugs, specifically marijuana, in the year 2017.

The Zionist regime adopted a lenient policy against drug use that year, allowing soldiers to avoid court martial and any criminal proceedings.

According to Hebrew-language Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper, the policy also allows soldiers to smoke no more than five times a day off-duty and face only internal disciplinary actions if exceeded.

## New... (Continued From Page One)

U.S. President Donald Trump triumphantly tweeted a photograph of himself in the style of an advertisement for the Game of Thrones fantasy TV series, with the tagline: “Sanctions Are Coming, November 5.” In an interview with BBC Persian in November, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo brazenly said Iranian officials must listen to Washington “if they want their people to eat.” Hawkish U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton then used vulgar language to stress that his country wanted to “squeeze” Iran. “It is our intention to squeeze them very hard. As the British say: ‘Squeeze them until the pips squeak.’” For months, European powers have been tinkering with the much-hyped special trade vehicle, raising suspicions in Iran that they might be dragging their feet on operationalizing it in deference to the U.S. government. “We haven’t put much hope in INSTEX,” Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Monday. “If INSTEX was going to help us, it would have done so already.” A stern-faced Iranian Foreign Minister also warned the US that it “cannot expect to stay safe” after launching an economic war against Tehran. “Mr. Trump himself has announced that the US has launched an economic war against Iran,” Zarif said during a joint news conference with Maas. “The only solution for reducing tensions in this region is stopping that economic war.”

## Iran’s... (Continued From Page One)

its ports and shipping services. Muhammadi said, “Sanctions against Iran’s petrochemical industry are not a new thing, because we have been struggling with these issues for many years, and have still been able to build an appropriate production and sale basis.” On Tuesday, Iranian media outlets said the country is pressing ahead with building its third petrochemical hub which will have such capacities as power generation, water production, petroleum refining as well as steel and aluminum production. The hub, being branded as Iran’s second Assaluyeh, will be established in Hormozgan province, facing Oman and the UAE across the Persian Gulf, with a capacity to produce 15-18 million tonnes of petrochemicals a year. “We will use the internal capacity to attract the private sector’s investment in the form of BOO to expand the region,” head of Iran’s state-owned mines and metal holding company IMIDRO Khodadad Gharibpour said.

In September, Iran brought online 3.4 million metric tons per year (mt/y) of new methanol, urea and ammonia capacity at a cost of \$1.85 billion. In the petrochemical sector, the country is seeking to build 25 projects which are estimated to require \$32 billion in foreign investment. The projects range from ammonia and urea to gas-to-olefins (GTO) and gas-to-propylene (GTP) plants. On Monday, President Hassan Rouhani urged European countries to resist U.S. “economic terrorism” against the Iranian nation and live up to their obligations as per the nuclear deal. Rouhani made the remarks here in a meeting with the visiting German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas who visited Iran as part of the Europeans’ effort to salvage the accord. “We expect Europe to stand up to and resist America’s economic terrorism against the Iranian nation and fulfill its obligations in accordance with the JCPOA,” Rouhani said. “The war that the U.S. has waged against Iran since a year ago, will not serve the interest of anybody and the Iranian nation has proved during this period that it will resist against pressure and bullying,” Rouhani said. The Iranian president said U.S. restrictions on the imports of food and medicine to Iran are aimed at exerting pressure on the Iranian people and are in line with Washington’s policy to foment insecurity in the region.

“Regional security will never be achieved through imposing pressure and sanctions on the Iranian nation.” The president noted that Iranian officials have worked out all necessary plans to manage the country’s affairs under any conditions.

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Libya while flying towards Cyrenaica. So, while Par is may claim to be dealing with the Sarraj government, it also maintains close ties with one of its enemies. This has attracted a wave of criticism against Paris since Haftar launched his offensive on Tripoli. France is, in fact, playing both sides in Libya. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, a protector of state legitimacy, France should support Sarraj’s government. Paris also officially supports the UN’s efforts to resolve the Libyan crisis in a way that includes all political actors, starting with Libya’s Government of National Accord (GNA). At the same time, France is dealing with one of GNA’s bitter enemies, Haftar. One of Libya’s main troublemakers, his strong financial and military resources have established his importance in the Libyan political landscape. The logistical and financial support provided to Haftar by the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and most probably Russia is no secret - and this is what strengthens him, at the expense of the GNA. It is on this basis that the nature of France’s relationship with Haftar is most relevant. Paris does not want to isolate itself from the man helping it to gain influence in Libya. This is one of the motives behind France and Italy’s tensions on the Libyan issue. While the Italians are focusing their efforts on the GNA and confining their relations with Haftar to mere protocol visits, France seems to have a far closer and more friendly relationship with the Libyan marshal. There is no ambiguity: France is simply being pragmatic and in line with its own inter-

ests, even if it would rather avoid officially recognizing this. The challenges posed by the ‘migrant crisis’ are obvious, as evidenced by the many attempts to reach European coasts through Libya. The troubled relationship between France and Libya is longstanding. Since 2003 and former leader Muammar Gaddafi’s decision to forego a nuclear program, Paris has shown a keen interest in the energy and commercial opportunities provided by the Libyan market. The diplomatic framework followed during former president Jacques Chirac’s term reached a peak under his successor, Nicolas Sarkozy. The instigator of a strong relationship between France and Libya, Sarkozy nevertheless played a key role in bringing down the Libyan leader.

The presidencies of Francois Hollande and now Emmanuel Macron are maintaining the same course: ensuring that Paris keeps a foothold in Libya. The grounds for France’s involvement in Libya have never been made clear by French diplomacy, which officially asserts general statements on France’s commitment to Libya’s stability. It is nevertheless easy to understand that some of the underlying factors in this relationship go beyond France’s commitment to the “well-being” of Libyans. Among these reasons is the migration issue, with Libya being one of the main embarkation points for many attempts to reach European coasts. France, which is not one of the most welcoming countries for asylum seekers from Africa, is thus looking for ways to contain the migratory flows through its involvement in Libya and close links with its protagonists. Libya’s security is another obvious interest for Paris, not only because of the risks generated by Libyan instability to the European Union, but also because of the effects on Libya’s geographical neighborhood (Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, and above all, Chad and Niger, where G5 Sahel forces - including a French contingent - have been engaged). While several regions of Libya are experiencing serious challenges, the situation on the western and southern fronts is the most problematic. Illegal trafficking, including arms trafficking, and radical groups circulating on both sides of the border are posing a threat to the G5 forces. At the same time, we cannot overlook longer-term, and perhaps more classical goals. Among these is France’s will to secure privileged access to Libyan economic and energy opportunities, and of course, the preservation of diplomatic influence in Libya, which will further strengthen French interests in the region. Given the current situation, is Sarraj right when he accuses France of supporting a “dictator”? Obviously, yes. France’s role in Libya is clear: Paris is dealing with a set of stakeholders with interests that do not converge. This can be regarded as the cost of pragmatism. But Haftar clearly crossed a red line when attacking Tripoli, and this will negatively affect his allies and supporters, including France. Sarraj has always had a restrained, courteous and respectful attitude towards his interlocutors, friends and enemies alike. His accusations against France cannot be based on vague suspicions about Paris’ role in Libya. How should France react? In mid-April, the diplomatic backlash following the arrests of 13 allegedly armed men with French diplomatic passports on the Tunisia-Libya border only fuelled further speculation about France’s real role in the country. Keeping diplomatic channels open with all Libyan stakeholders can be justified by the importance of interacting with all the protagonists. But not to condemn one of these protagonists when he is conducting disruptive actions that endanger peace is reprehensible. Paris’ half-hearted reaction to Haftar’s offensive puts France on the wrong side. It does not take much imagination to figure out what France needs to do to rectify its position: to clearly support the GNA and maintain a critical stance towards Haftar, while at the same time restricting his military activities and his stockpiling of weapons. This may not necessarily inflict a decisive blow or even prevent Haftar from taking action, as he is supplied through several countries. Paris knows that no solution can be found in Libya without Haftar, but it would improve its chances of carving a path that is much more positive for Libya’s future by distancing itself from him.

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Gholamhussein Esmaili said a court had “agreed to Nizar Zakka’s conditional release and he will be handed over to Lebanese authorities.” Zakka, an information technology expert and a permanent U.S. resident, was detained in Iran in 2015 and sentenced in 2016 to 10 years in prison and a \$4.2 million fine for “collaborating against the state.” The Iranian official further said both Aoun and Zakka had filed a request for the convict’s release. Iran examined the request within the framework of the law, said the official. “As per the law, those who are sentenced to up to 10 years in jail, if they have served at least one third of their term and shown good behavior” can be released conditionally. Esmaili added that Tehran had also consulted the case with the Supreme National Security Council as well as Lebanon’s Hezbollah resistance movement. Hezbollah, he said, regarded Zakka’s release as an “expedient” move. Meanwhile, Aoun told the online el-Nashra newspaper that he had intervened to prevent the prolongation of the case. The Lebanese president said that he had “positive interactions” with his Iranian counterpart, Hassan Rouhani, regarding the case. Aoun also said he had tasked Ibrahim to personally follow up Zakka’s case. The White House said it is “thankful” for Zakka’s release from Iranian custody. “The big question is there’s several others and we want to see those people released as well,” said White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders. Ibrahim, who is in Tehran to oversee Zakka’s release, told Reuters on Tuesday morning that he would return to Lebanon with Zakka. “The release of Nizar Zakka will take place on Tuesday after the completion of the judicial proceedings, which are nearly over,” he added. In a post on its official Twitter account, the DGDS shared two black and white images of Zakka shaking hands with Ibrahim after a meeting on Monday night.