

Turkey to Launch Offensive in Northern Syria

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) – Turkey will carry out a military operation in a Kurdish-controlled area east of the Euphrates in northern Syria, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan says, its third offensive to dislodge Kurdish militia.

Turkey had in the past warned of carrying out military operations east of the river, but put them on hold after agreeing with the United States to create a safe zone inside Syria's northeastern border with Turkey that would be cleared of the Kurdish YPG militia.

But Ankara has accused Washington of stalling progress on setting up the safe zone and has demanded it sever its relations with the YPG.

Erdogan said both Russia and the United States have been told of the planned operation, but did not say when it would begin. It would mark the third Turkish incursion into Syria in as many years.

"We entered Afrin, Jarabulus, and Al-Bab. Now we will enter east of the Euphrates," Erdogan said during a motorway-opening ceremony.

The Turkish president also said Ankara has for some time been patient with the United States, which made an agreement with Turkey to implement a safe zone in northeastern Syria, but that "patience has an end."



In this file photo, taken on September 4, 2015, female fighters from the Kurdish People Protection Unit (YPG) take a break on the front line in the northeastern Syrian city of Hasakeh.

Washington revised plans for a total pullout of troops from Syria by saying in February that in total between 800 and 1,500 foreign troops would be sent on a mission to police northeastern Syria in the near future. About 400 of the troops are American.

This is deemed as a reversal of promises by President Donald Trump to withdraw all 2,000 U.S. troops from the Arab country once Washington's alleged fight

against terrorism ends.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu last month warned in an interview with broadcaster TGRT Haber that if the planned demilitarization zone is not established in the northern parts of Syria, Turkey will launch a new cross-border incursion into the Arab country.

Turkey suspects the U.S. and allies are helping the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG)

forces based in the east of the Euphrates river to establish a permanent foothold in the region. Ankara views the armed Kurds in northeastern Syria as an extension of the outlawed Kurdish militants of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Damascus has categorically rejected any deal between Turkey and the U.S. on a buffer zone in northern Syria, describing it as a violation of its sovereignty.

Microsoft Helps Zionist Regime Spy on Palestinians

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Human rights groups have criticized American tech giant Microsoft for funding an Israeli facial recognition company, which is spying on Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.

Microsoft's M12 venture capital arm announced in June that it participated in a \$74 million round in funding for the Israeli company AnyVision, whose face-recognition technology is used by the Zionist troops in the occupied West Bank. Other European and American investors also joined the funding round.

Haaretz published a report in mid-July that said the Israeli army was using AnyVision's technology at checkpoints on

the way into the occupied territories and across a network of cameras within the West Bank.

Referring to the regime's occupation of the West Bank, Amos Toh, a senior researcher on artificial intelligence at New York-based Human Rights Watch, told the American magazine, Forbes, earlier this month that the use of such technology "in a very fraught political context" could be problematic.

"I think it's incumbent on Microsoft to really look at what that means for the human rights risk associated with the investment in a company that's providing this technology to an occupying power," Toh said,

adding "It's not just privacy risk but a privacy risk associated with a minority group that has suffered repression and persecution for a long time. There are special considerations of discrimination there."

According to Forbes, Microsoft was also censured by cybersecurity entrepreneur Matt Suiche, who described the investment in AnyVision as "scandalous."

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) also condemned the investment.

Shankar Narayan, the director of the Technology and Liberty Project at the ACLU, told Forbes he had met with Microsoft officials last year and at

the time the company seemed to be open to the idea of holding back the spread of the facial recognition technology.

However, he added, "This particular investment is not a big surprise to me—there's a demonstrable gap between action and rhetoric in the case of most big tech companies and Microsoft in particular."

Forbes noted that AnyVision has ties to the Zionist regime's spy agency and military, with former Mossad chief Tamir Pardo presiding the firm's advisory board and Amir Kain, former head of the so-called security department of Israel's ministry of military affairs, being its president.

Iran ...

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I did not," said the Iranian minister.

The New Yorker magazine reported on Friday that Senator Rand Paul met Zarif in the U.S. on July 15 and had Trump's blessing when he extended an invitation to the Iranian minister to go to the White House.

The United States imposed sanctions against Zarif on Wednesday, targeting any assets he has in America and squeezing his ability to function as a globe-trotting diplomat.

On Monday, head of Iran's atomic agency urged the Europeans to stand up to the U.S. grandstanding.

"Some European countries are living with a fear that they need to vanquish. They have this capability to withstand America and defend their decisions and commitments," Behrouz Kamalvandi said.

The official also told European signatories to the 2015 nuclear deal Iran would further reduce its compliance in about a month's time if they failed to uphold their commitments.

Iran has already reduced its commitments to the deal by having more than 130 tons of heavy water and more than 300 kilograms of enriched uranium, Kamalvandi said.

"If the other party fails to live up to its commitments in the remaining one month, the third phase of reducing JCPOA obligations will be taken as per what the president as the head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council had previously declared."

India...

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to split the state into two federal territories, one formed by Jammu and Kashmir, and the other consisting of the enclave of Ladakh, citing internal security considerations.

Turning the state into a federal territory allows Delhi to exert greater control.

"Today marks the darkest day in Indian democracy," said one of the leaders placed under house arrest, Mehbooba Mufti, a former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir.

"It will have catastrophic consequences for the subcontinent," she said in a post on Twitter.

India's interior ministry ordered all states to put security forces on "maximum alert" to maintain public order and quash the spread of any rumors.

In Pakistani-controlled areas of the region, there was anger at India, with protests extending to the capital, Islamabad and the southern commercial center of Karachi.

In Muzaffarabad, 45 km (28 miles) from the two countries' contested border, dozens of protesters held black flags and burnt car tires, chanting "Down with India".

Tension had risen in Kashmir since Friday, when Indian officials issued an alert over possible militant attacks by Pakistan-based groups. Pakistan rejected those assertions, but thousands of alarmed Indians left the region over the weekend.

On Sunday, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan said the tension had the potential to become a regional crisis and the time was right for U.S. President Donald Trump to mediate.

In July, Trump said Modi had asked him if he would like to be a mediator on Kashmir, but India, which has been staunch in its position that the issue can only be resolved bilaterally, denied that

Modi sought mediation.

U.S....

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The Academy of Medical Sciences of Iran also wrote to the UN to complain about the illegal sanctions imposed by the U.S. against the Iranian nation, saying the restrictive measures have adversely affected the medical treatment of Iranian patients.

In the letter, which was addressed to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, the Academy's President Alireza Marandi said that he had previously written to the world body in condemnation of the "unjust" U.S. sanctions targeting the Iranian people.

"These sanctions as mentioned in previous letters have led to many obstacles in providing all kinds of medicine and equipment needed for the medical treatment of the Iranian population," he wrote in the letter.

The Lebanese minister, for his part, said his country is eager to import medicines from Iran and promised to facilitate the process of imports for the Lebanese private companies.

Jabak said, "We consider sanctions against Iran unjust and stop at no limits in cooperation with Iran."

The Lebanese minister emphasized that "if sanctions bar Iranian people's access to medicines and foodstuff, it will be a crime against humanity and faced with widespread global opposition."

At the end of the press conference, the two countries' health ministers signed a comprehensive memorandum of understanding for cooperation in all medical fields, including production of medicines, medical equipment, medical education, as well as research and development.

Russia...

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look as unsafe and make it so".

Khanzadi also said the Damavand destroyer, which crashed into a jetty back in January last year, will return to service soon with vertical launch missiles installed on it.

"The destroyer has been fully revived and this has been done in 18 months," the commander said, adding that all defects of the destroyer have been fixed.

He went on to say that the destroyer has been equipped with advanced radar systems that allow it to reach distant targets.

The Damavand destroyer crashed into a jetty on January 10, 2018, killing two sailors of the Iranian Navy. The accident occurred when Damavand was docking at port in Iran's northern province of Gilan. Damavand, a 100-meter-long destroyer weighing more than 1300 tons, officially joined the Navy's northern fleet in the Caspian Sea in March 2015.

More than 700 industrial, research and academic Iranian centers cooperated in designing and producing the military vessel, which is also a training warship.

Germany...

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have continued to reach major customers, especially in Asia.

The U.S. is trying to project its campaign as a bid to secure the Persian Gulf, but "the Europeans argue that Washington created the problem in the first place by trying to kill off Iran's oil exports", the New York Times said.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has called on Japan, Britain, France, Germany, South Korea, Australia and other nations to join the maritime force.

On Sunday, Bloomberg wrote that U.S. efforts continue to bear little fruit, with key ally Australia still undecided about whether to join.

Australian Defense Minister Linda Reynolds, after meeting U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defense Secretary Mark Esper in Sydney on Sunday, said Australia was "deeply concerned" about heightened tensions in the region, and the request made by the U.S. was "a very serious one, and it is a complex one".

"That's why we are currently giving this request very serious consideration, but we will ultimately - as we always do - decide what is in our own sovereign interests," Reynolds said. "But again, no decision has yet been made."

Former Australian foreign minister Bob Carr warned against supporting any U.S.-led mission. Carr told The Australian daily that any mission could not be separated from the Trump Administration's other points of conflict with Iran.

"While some in the U.S. administration pitch this as about freedom of navigation, there are others working furiously behind the scenes to turn this into yet another 'regime change war' in the Middle East.

"It is of concern is that one of those people is John Bolton, the president's national security adviser.

"The best advice for Australian ministers is to cleave closely to the position of our European partners, rather than to the ebb and flow of American alarms," Carr said.

Carr — Julia Gillard and Kevin Rudd's foreign minister — also warned Morrison that there could be a political cost to joining any U.S.-led military action in the Strait of Hormuz.

Taliban-U.S. Talks in Qatar Feature No Third-Party Attendees

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – No third-party representatives have attended the ongoing U.S.-Taliban talks, except for the representative of Qatar, which is hosting the negotiations, a spokesman for Taliban's political office in Doha said on Monday.

The eighth round of talks between the Taliban and the United States started on Saturday in Doha. U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad has expressed optimism over the outcome of the talks that could allow Washington to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan.

"In ongoing peace talks, except for Qatar's representative, no other foreign representatives have neither attended nor have come to attend", Suhail Shaheen said on Twitter.

The United States and its allies launched a military operation in Afghanistan in 2001 after the 9/11 attacks, allegedly staged by the al-Qaeda terrorist group, backed by then Taliban-led government of Afghanistan.

The Taliban and the United States are trying to reach a deal to include the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan and assurances from the Taliban that the country will not be used as a safe harbor for terrorists.

Afghanistan is suffering from an unstable political, social and security situation due to the activity of the Taliban and Daesh terrorist group. The Afghan National Defense and Security Forces regularly conduct joint offensive operations to combat terrorism across the country with support from the international coalition.

'UNIFIL Has Invested \$18mn in Lebanon Since 2007'

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – The head of mission and force commander of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) said on Monday that the UNIFIL has invested 18 million U.S. dollars since 2007 in projects and activities in southern Lebanon, the National News Agency reported.

Stefano Del Col said that "we are working hand in hand with civil authorities in

the south to offer developmental services to citizens in collaboration with municipalities."

The UNIFIL is looking forward to enhancing the strategic capacities of its partner, the Lebanese army, while boosting cooperation with the army in preserving stability and peace in the south, Del Col said during his meeting with Nabatieh

Governor Mahmoud al-Mawla.

Meanwhile, al-Mawla called upon the UNIFIL to voice a firm stance against the Zionist regime's daily violations of Lebanon's sovereignty.

The UNIFIL has been operating in southern Lebanon since 1978 to monitor the withdrawal of Zionist troops from southern Lebanon.