

# 'Daesh Boosted Clandestine Network in Iraq, Syria in April-June'

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – The Daesh terror group was boosting its clandestine network in Iraq and Syria in April-June, the 18th Lead Inspector General report on the Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), issued by the Pentagon, says.

In December, U.S. President Donald Trump said that Daesh had been defeated in Syria and announced the pullout of the U.S. forces from the country, however a new report shows the terrorist group has plans to expand.

"During the quarter, ISIS (Daesh) continued its transition from a territory-holding force to an insurgency in Syria and solidified insurgent capabilities in Iraq. According to the Combined Joint Task Force-OIR (CJTF-OIR), ISIS carried out assassinations, suicide attacks, abductions, and arson of crops in both Iraq and Syria. In addition, ISIS established 'resurgent cells' in Syria and sought to expand its command and control nodes in Iraq," the report's summary said.

The report added that Daesh was also restoring its financial network.

Many supporters of Daesh are sheltering at the Al-Hawl refugee camp in Syria, the report by the Pentagon said.

"The DoD [Department of Defense] described the al Hol [Al-Hawl] camp as a security concern due to the high number of Daesh family members and supporters in the camp, and continued to urge repatriation of Daesh supporters to their countries of origin," the report's summary said.

According to the report, the U.S. Agency for International Development said that refugees in the Al-Hawl and Rukban camps were still facing hu-



Onlookers gather at the site of a car bomb attack outside a police station in Binnish in Syria's Idlib Province on July 19, 2019.

manitarian problems.

Al-Hawl was reportedly designed to accommodate 20,000 people but has significantly gone over its capacity as military operations against the Daesh in the Euphrates Valley have intensified earlier this year. Russia has repeatedly expressed concern over the humanitarian situation in the camp.

Syria has been mired in a foreign-backed war since 2011, with the government forces fighting against numerous opposition groups as well as militant and terrorist organizations.

The Pentagon's report on the OIR also says that Daesh from 14,000 to 18,000 terrorists, operating in Iraq and Syria.

"CJTF-OIR [Combined Joint Task Force OIR] reported based on open source data that ISIS likely retains between 14,000 and 18,000 'members' in Iraq and Syria, including up to 3,000 foreigners," the report said.

According to the report, estimations of the number of Daesh terrorists from different agencies and experts vary greatly.

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

young gifted generation, the Leader said, is to break through the frontiers of science and technology.

Referring to Iran's leading position in nanotechnology, the Leader said, it is expected that the gifted and future generations discover hundreds of new areas like nano and unknown phenomena in science, biology and technology. "Do not forget to establish a heart-felt relationship with God, and to rely on God and ask for His assistance," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

The Leader touched on issues raised by some of the visitors, including problems on the way of the talented scholars.

The problems, he said, should not make the youth disappointed and stop them, "because hopelessness is a poison".

"If the past generations had become hopeless and inactive, we would have still been living in the tyrannical and corrupt Pahlavi era. But thanks to the youth of the past generation, a situation has been averted today in the country where the young intellectuals can stand out and clearly express themselves."

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

in the country's southern coastal province of Hormozgan.

IRGC chief Major General Hussein Salami warned on Wednesday that any act of aggression against Iran will be met with a firm response, stressing that the security of borders is a redline for the country.

Salami expressed Iran's full readiness to safeguard the country's territorial integrity and security as he visited border areas in the western province of Kermanshah.

"Today, the security of borders is a redline for the country's armed forces," he said.

"Military forces are prepared under all circumstances to defend our beloved country's borders and sovereignty and will give a firm response to any act of aggression," he added.

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

attack is a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas? Not far at all," Biden was due to say, according to an advance copy of his speech.

"In both clear language and in code, this president has fanned the flames of white supremacy in this nation."

In Trump, Biden was due to say, "we have a president who has aligned himself in the darkest forces in the nation. We have a president with a toxic tongue who has publicly and unapologetically embraced a political strategy of hate, racism, and division."

Trump was flying Wednesday to the sites of mass shootings in Ohio and Texas, but the divisive Republican risked meeting protests by Americans who blame him for stoking the violence.

Protesters were expected to turn out in both places, even if the president was likely to be shielded from even witnessing dissent.

At the first stop, Dayton's Democratic mayor Nan Whaley bluntly promised to give Trump a piece of her mind, telling him "how unhelpful he's being."

"The people should stand up and say they are not happy," she told journalists Tuesday.

In El Paso, the U.S.-Mexico border town Trump was to visit before returning on Air Force One to Washington, local Democratic congresswoman Veronica Escobar said she'd stay clear. "From my perspective, he is not welcome here. He should not come here," Escobar said Tuesday on MSNBC.

Even the city's Republican mayor offered only a grudging welcome, stressing icily that he would greet Trump in his "official capacity."

Trump's campaign speeches and tweets repeatedly invoke the idea that the southern border is under "invasion." As recently as May, the president laughed and made a quip when a supporter at one of his rallies yelled that they should "shoot" illegal immigrants.

Trump has also railed crudely against a string of Democratic opponents of color.

The 21-year-old El Paso killer, who was captured alive, appeared to be closely inspired by similar sentiments. He released a manifesto declaring "this attack is a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas."

The motives of the Dayton murderer, who was 24 and was shot dead by police at the scene of the crime, were less clear. He reportedly had a history of violently misogynistic attitudes.

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

federal police manned mobile checkpoints across the city, limiting people's movement.

Knots of young protesters threw stones at soldiers, police and a witness said, amid anger over the telecoms clampdown that began on Sunday.

The Huffington Post reported that 13 people had been admitted with pellet injuries to their eyes to Shri Maharaja Hari Singh hospital in Srinagar, citing a hospital official.

It also quoted a resident of the old quarter of Srinagar, Owais Ahmad, as saying he was walking near his house when paramilitary forces fired pellets at him.

The Huffington Post also reported that a 17-year old boy jumped off a bridge into the Jhelum river when he and his friends saw a group of paramilitary police on both sides of the bridge. The Home Ministry had no comment to offer and Reuters was not in a position to verify the report.

India ordered security to be increased at its airports, saying "civil aviation has emerged as a soft target." Security officials have warned of a backlash against the move to withdraw Kashmir's special status.

All telephone, television, and internet connections remained severed in Kashmir. At night, police vans have patrolled the streets with loudspeakers warning residents to stay indoors.

Local authorities have not declared a curfew, but instead clamped down on non-essential travel and gatherings of four or more people, effectively keeping restive people in their homes.

Officials with emergency services such as hospitals and the fire department said their staff were frequently stopped at checkpoints, with access sometimes blocked.

## U.S.... (Continued From Page 2)

sanctions meant to strangle its oil trade by retreating from some of its nuclear commitments under the JCPOA.

Iran's first vice-president, Es'haq Jahangiri, said Macron and Rouhani had during a phone call "discussed many issues".

Rouhani said on Thursday that Iran was ready for the worst in an uphill struggle to salvage the nuclear deal, but that Tehran would eventually prevail.

The E3 grouping of France, Germany and Britain are trying to set up Instex, a barter-based trade conduit with Iran, but an Iranian mirror mechanism has yet to be established. Iranian officials have repeatedly said Instex must include oil sales or provide substantial credit facilities for it to be beneficial.

Al-Monitor cited three anonymous sources as saying Macron had raised the establishment of a \$15 billion credit line.

Asked if the report was accurate, the French diplomat said it was premature to negotiate an amount, Reuters reported.

## Iran... (Continued From Page 2)

Abe Shinzo made a historic visit to Iran in June but as he held talks in Tehran, mysterious attacks on oil tankers in the Persian Gulf dimmed hopes of a diplomatic breakthrough.

Following the attacks, Trump ordered a carrier battle group and a bomber strike group led by nuclear-capable B-52s, as well as another 2,500 U.S. troops, joining the 20,000 already deployed in the region.

## Two... (Continued From Page 2)

Kurdistan province, but succumbed to his wounds en route to hospital.

An unspecified number of terrorists were also killed or wounded and a sizable amount of their weapons and ammunition was destroyed, according to the Public Relations Department of the IRGC unit responsible for the security of western borders. Earlier last month, terrorists martyred three IRGC servicemen during clashes in the Piranshahr county of West Azarbaijan province. One more was injured during the attack, which targeted a vehicle carrying the forces at the entrance to the county.

Iran has urged its neighbors to engage in meaningful and effective counter-terrorism efforts aimed at rooting out malign border activities. Terrorist groups mostly based in neighboring Iraq, including the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK), are linked to Kurdish PKK terrorists in Turkey.

## Saudi Arabia Extends Top Dissident Cleric's Prison Sentence

RIYADH (Press TV) – Saudi authorities have extended the prison sentence of a renowned dissident cleric by four more years, as a crackdown led by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman against pro-democracy campaigners, Muslim preachers and intellectuals continues in the country.

The rights group Prisoners of Conscience, which is an independent non-governmental organization seeking to promote human rights in Saudi Arabia, announced in a post on its official Twitter page that the officials had ordered Sheikh Sulaiman al-Alwan to serve four more years in jail, just after he completed his 15-year prison

sentence.

Sheikh al-Alwan, a specialist in modern science and jurisprudence, is known for his lessons and books, which received praise from leading Saudi scholars, including the kingdom's late Grand Mufti Abdul Aziz ibn Abdullah ibn Baz.

He has long been involved in jurisprudential disputes with members of Saudi Arabia's highest religious authority, known as the Council of Senior Scholars, on several issues.

Back in 2004, Sheikh al-Alwan was arrested for refusing to issue a fatwa (religious decree) in favor of the ruling House of Saud. He was held in prison in-

communicado up until December 2012.

Saudi authorities released the clergyman in 2013, but the Specialized Criminal Court upheld a 15-year prison sentence against him from the date of his arrest in 2004.

The court charged Sheikh Alwan with money laundering, meeting with dissidents and opposition figures, financing terrorism and bomb attacks, and issuing fatwas in rejection of those released by the Council of Senior Scholars.

Saudi Arabia's crown prince and de facto ruler, Mohammed bin Salman, has sought to present himself as a reformist since

being appointed heir to the throne in 2017.

Critics, however, say the jailing of activists under his watch and the treatment of dissidents, including prominent journalist Jamal Khashoggi who was murdered at the Saudi consulate in the Turkish city of Istanbul on October 2 last year, suggests that Riyadh only wants change on its terms.

Saudi Arabia has lately stepped up politically-motivated arrests, prosecution and conviction of peaceful dissident writers and human rights campaigners.

Over the past years, Riyadh has also redefined its anti-terrorism laws to target activism.

## Zionist Regime Approves Plans for More Illegal Settler Units

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Zionist regime officials have advanced plans for the construction of more than 2,300 settlement homes in West Bank, as the Tel Aviv regime presses ahead with its land expropriation policies in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Israeli NGO Peace Now, which monitors settlement activity in the West Bank, said in a statement that the so-called Higher Planning Committee, which is affiliated to the Israeli ministry of military affairs, had issued approvals for 2,304 housing units while meeting over the past couple of days.

"The approval of settlement plans is part of a disastrous ... policy designed to prevent the possibility of peace and a two-state solution, and to annex part or all of the West Bank," the statement read.

Last week, Zionist officials approved the construction of 6,000 new settler homes in the West Bank's Area C, where the occupying regime's army has full control over the management of resources, planning and construction, and strictly limits Palestinian construction or development to less than one percent of the area.

Area C accounts for more than 60 percent of the occupied West Bank, and would form a significant part of a future Palestine state under the so-called two-state solution.

More than 600,000 Zionist live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East al-Quds.

The UN Security Council has condemned Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions.

Less than a month before U.S. President Donald Trump took office, the United Nations Security Council in December 2016 adopted Resolution 2334, calling on Israel to "immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem" al-Quds.

Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent Palestinian state with East al-Quds as its capital.

The last round of Zionist-Palestinian talks collapsed in 2014. Among the major sticking points in those negotiations was Israel's continued settlement expansion on Palestinian territories.

Trump backtracked on Washington's support for a "two-state solution" in 2017, saying he would support any solution favored by both sides.

"Looking at two-state or one-state, I like the one that both parties like. I'm very happy with the one both parties like. I can live with either one," the U.S. president said during a joint press conference with Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington on February 15, 2017.

## Turkish Court Prohibits 136 Websites

ISTANBUL (Reuters) – A Turkish court has banned 136 websites and social media accounts mainly belonging to organizations and people critical of President Erdogan's government, a monitoring group has said, fuelling criticism of state censorship.

Bianet, a foreign-supported group focused on rights, said its site was among those affected by the July 16 ruling which it

said it became aware of by "coincidence." Others included critical news websites and pro-Kurdish social media accounts.

Reuters could not independently verify the ruling, which was published online by Bianet, and neither court nor government officials could be immediately reached for comment.

It was unclear when the ban, which cited national security concerns, was meant to

take effect.

Turkish-based internet users could access some of the sites on the list, but at least five appeared blocked.

Critics say Erdogan has undermined democracy and human rights in Turkey, but the government denies that, saying it has acted justifiably against threats from militants at home and abroad, including a 2016 coup attempt.